

# ISRAELI-ROMANIAN RELATIONS AT THE END OF THE CEAUȘESCU ERA



**YOSEF GOVRIN**

ROUTLEDGE 

ISRAELI—ROMANIAN RELATIONS  
AT THE  
END OF THE CEAUȘESCU ERA

As Observed by Israel's  
Ambassador to Romania,  
1985–89

Israeli—Romanian Relations  
at the  
End of the Ceaușescu Era

As Observed by Israel's  
Ambassador to Romania,  
1985–89

YOSEF GOVRIN

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

*First Published in 2002 by*  
FRANK CASS PUBLISHERS

This edition published 2013 by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

Copyright © 2002 Y. Govrin

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Israeli-Romanian relations at the end of the Ceausescu era

1. Israel — Foreign relations — Romania 2. Romania — Foreign relations —  
Israel — 1944–1989. 3. Israel — Politics and government — 1967–1993 4.  
Romania — Politics and government — 1944–1989

I. Govrin, Yosef

327.5'694'0498'09048

ISBN 0-7146-5234-2 (cloth)  
ISSN 1368-4795

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Govrin, Yosef.

Israeli-Romanian relations at the end of the Ceausescu era/by Yosef Govrin.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p. ) and index.

ISBN 0-7146-5234-2 (cloth)

1. Israel — Foreign relations — Romania. 2. Romania — Foreign relations —  
Israel. 3. Govrin, Yosef. 4. Ambassadors — Israel — Biography. I. Title.

DS119.8.R6 G67 2002  
327.56940498-dc21

A catalog record for this book is available  
from the Library of Congress

*All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a  
retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical,  
photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher of  
this book.*

To my wife Hanna,  
to our daughter Liora and to our son David  
with love

# Contents

[Acknowledgements](#)

[List of Tables](#)

[List of Illustrations](#)

[Prologue](#)

[Introduction](#)

1. [Opening My Mission to Romania, in Three Acts](#)
2. [Romanian Internal Affairs 1986–89: A State in Crisis](#)
3. [Romanian Foreign Policy 1986–89: From Rise to Decline](#)
4. [Israeli-Romanian Dialogue 1985–89 on the Middle East Problem](#)
5. [Romanian Jewry during the Late Ceaușescu Era](#)
6. [Israeli-Romanian Bilateral Relations](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Index](#)

## Acknowledgements

My profound gratitude goes to the L. Davis Institute for International Relations of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and to its former director, Dr Sasson Sofer of the Faculty of International Relations of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, for their support and encouragement to carry out this research.

To Dr Raphael Vago of the Faculty of History of the Tel Aviv University for his wise advice in the writing of this book; to Professor Yosef Hacker, chairman of the Academic Committee of the Magnes Press of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and to its director, Dan Benovici, for their important remarks towards the book's publication by the Magnes Press (in Hebrew); to Frank Cass Publishers for publishing this book in English so that it could also serve the English-speaking world.

To Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to Israel's Ministers Committee for giving me permission to publish this book.

I wish to note the devotion shown in copyediting this text by Ms Fern Seckbach.

Last but not least, to my wife, Hanna, who closely assisted me in carrying out my functions during my mission as Israel's ambassador to Romania. Thanks to her the writing of this book was possible.

Yosef Govrin  
Jerusalem 1999

## List of Tables

1. Demographic Situation of the Jewish Population in Romania in the years 1985–89: According to Data from the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania (FCER).
2. Aliya from Romania, According to the Registration of Immigrants upon their Entry into Israel
3. Imports to Israel from Romania; Exports from Israel to Romania, 1985–88



## List of Illustrations

*Between pages 178–179*

1. Dr Yosef Govrin presents his credentials as Israel's Ambassador to Romania to President Nicolae Ceaușescu in Bucharest on 11 September 1955
2. (Left to right) President Ceaușescu, Ambassador Govrin, Prime Minister Shamir and Minister Roni Milo; taken during Mr Shamir's state visit to Romania, 19 August 1987
3. 'Simhat Tora' in the Coral Synagogue in Bucharest, October 1985. (Left to right) Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen, Ambassador Govrin, Emil Schechter, General Secretary of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, and Ing. Theodor Blumenfeld, President of the Jewish Community of Bucharest
4. The Sephardic Synagogue in Bucharest before being demolished in August 1986
5. The monument of remembrance for the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina, Transylvania, Bucharest, Iasi and Dorohoi who perished in the Holocaust. It was erected in front of the Coral Synagogue in Bucharest in early July 1991
6. A close-up of the monument of remembrance in front of the Coral Synagogue, Bucharest, showing the dedication — in Hebrew — to those Jews who perished in the Holocaust in Romania and Transylvania
7. Ambassador Govrin as the Deputy Director General of Israel's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, unveils the memorial shield in the Coral Synagogue, Bucharest, in July 1991, which is dedicated to the Jews of Bessarabia who perished during the Holocaust during 1941–44
8. Ambassador Govrin welcomes President Ceaușescu to the Israeli Pavilion at the International Fair held in Bucharest in October 1987
9. Ambassador Govrin opening the Israeli exhibition entitled 'Flora and Fauna' at the Romanian Institute for Relations with Foreign Countries in Bucharest on 3 May 1987. To Govrin's right is Dr Hanna Govrin, wife to the Ambassador, Shmuel Meir, the Embassy's Counsellor, and Shlomo Barkai, the Embassy's First Secretary. To Govrin's left is Ion Botar, Chairman of the Institute, and Ion Mielcioiu, Director of the Asian and Middle Eastern Department of Romania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs
10. Clipping from the Journal of the Romanian Jews, *Revista Cultului Mozaic*, 1 November 1986

## Prologue

This book explores for the first time in the historiography of Israel's foreign policy, Israel's relations with Romania, in the twilight of President Nicolae Ceaușescu's communist era, as I observed them during my mission as Israel's ambassador to Romania in the years 1985–89, in the following domains:

1. The internal and external policy of Romania that led gradually to a sharp decline in President Ceaușescu's status such as he had never experienced in the whole period of his rule (1965–89). The wave of revolt against him, within his own people, reached its peak when his regime was overthrown by masses of Romanians in revolt, while he himself was executed on 25 December 1989 in a court martial improvised by the emissaries of the anti-communist revolution in Romania.
2. The political dialogue that took place between, on the one side Israel's leaders and myself, and Romania's leaders and their representatives on the other, on the subject of the Israeli-Arab conflict and how to promote its settlement. This was an intensive dialogue in volume and substance. To a certain degree, it may be said that it prepared the ground for the Madrid peace conference (1991) and the Oslo Agreements (1993).
3. Our diplomatic activities, during my tenure of office in Romania — that ran parallel to the last four years of its communist regime — aimed at (further) developing and strengthening of Israeli— Romanian bilateral relations in the political field, in trade and economy, in culture and science as well as constantly cultivating our connections with the Jewish communities throughout Romania. We were also attempting to create, even under the rigid circumstances of the communist regime, public consciousness for the need to uncover through research and memorial events the atrocities, mass killings and cruel deportations which the fascist regime of Romania, under the rule of General Ion Antonescu (1941–44) committed against the Jewish population in Bessarabia, Bucovina and Transnistria — a tragic chapter of history which the communist regime of Romania officially ignored in its historiography.

I hope that the relationship between the description of the main events of historic significance which took place in all these three domains, and my accompanying evaluations as observed during my diplomatic mission to Romania will serve as a documentary source for researchers and for all those interested in knowing this period, perhaps the most thrilling in the history of Israeli-Romanian relations and the most dramatic in the internal and external policies of Romania during its communist regime.

I based the material for this book based on the following sources:

1. The reports of my political talks held with Romanian ministers and government

representatives, mainly officials of the Romanian Ministry for External Affairs and the Romanian Communist Party (RCP), with my colleagues the foreign ambassadors accredited at that time to Romania, and with local personalities — all accompanied by assessments I made during my mission to Romania.

2. The verbatim of the dialogue held by Israel's leaders with President Ceaușescu and his emissaries, both in Romania and Israel.
3. Romanian press reports and commentaries that reliably reflect Romania's policies during the period of this survey
4. Statistical data of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania on the demographic situation of the Jews in Romania, as well as the information given to me by the heads of the various Jewish communities during my visits to their localities.

Thus far no academic research on Israeli—Romanian relations in the late Ceaușescu era has been carried out. Yet, regarding the period prior to the one surveyed in this book, readers will find useful the memoirs (in Hebrew) of two Israeli ambassadors who preceded me in Romania. Their books are an important source of information:

1. Eliezer Doron, ambassador to Romania 1967–69, *Betatzpit U-ve-Imut: Mi-Yomano shel Shagrir Israel*, ('Observing and Confronting: From the Diary of Israel's Ambassador') (Jerusalem: Keter, 1978). His book contains fragments of his talks with Ceaușescu on political matters.
2. Abba Gefen, ambassador to Romania 1978–82, *Eshnab la-Masakh ha-Barzel* ('A Small Window into the Iron Curtain') (Jerusalem: Maariv, 1983). His book combines memoirs with the political Israeli-Romanian dialogue on the Israeli-Arab dispute. The book also contains an important chapter on the Jewish communities in Romania.

## Introduction

During my mission, as Israel's Ambassador in Bucharest, Romania continued to be the single member state of the communist bloc not to have disrupted its diplomatic relations with Israel. In fact, Romania was the only state of this bloc that had never severed them. This status granted Romania a unique place in Israel's foreign policy, though its significance gradually dwindled in the face of Israel's renewal of diplomatic relations with Hungary in the fall of 1989 and in 1990–91 with the rest of the East European countries, including the USSR, that had severed them with Israel in the aftermath of the 1967 Six-Day War.

Israeli-Romanian mutual relations during my mission, which ran parallel with the last four years of Ceaușescu's rule, were characterized by their continuing expansion in both volume and substance, reaching the climax of the entire history of Israeli-Romanian relations during the communist era (1948–89).

This expansion, a product of gradual development that preceded the period under discussion in this book, imparted to the mutual relations as they crystallised during Ceaucescu's rule (1965–89) a character unique in the communist bloc. Therefore, it seems to me that any debate on Israeli-Romanian relations, from whatever standpoint, should take into consideration this unique phenomenon. All this took place against the background of ideological and political enmity as well as the prevailing trend of anti-Semitism in all other member states of the communist bloc towards Israel and world Jewry, being inspired by the USSR leaders with the active assistance of their colleagues within this bloc, with the exception of Romania's communist leader, President Nicolae Ceaușescu.

I often wondered what made Ceaușescu behave in such an exceptional manner towards Israel, differing from all his colleagues in the Eastern European bloc. Was it because he adhered to a basic principle in Romania's policy: the universality of relations between states, with no distinction as to their regimes and policies? Or perhaps he acted according to Romania's national interests, whose attainment he regarded to be more important than the risk he took upon himself in deviating from the monolithic policy of the communist bloc.

Indeed, the act of disrupting relations between states did not correspond with the political principles of President Ceaușescu. During the whole period of his sway in Romania not a single case was registered of disrupting relations between Romania and other states. The emphasis on the principle of 'universality of relations' in Romania's foreign policy was intended to strengthen the system of international relations and with it the cause of peace, while their disruption between nations made the relations become weaker. Moreover, according to this conception, in areas where tension was mounting between nations, it was of utmost importance that an adequate mechanism be found, through the existing relations, to reduce it. Hence, one may presume that Ceaușescu attributed an importance to the relations of his country with states that were in

confrontation as a means that could be utilised for purposes of mediating between them, thus aiding them to establish peace between themselves. This consideration assumedly was not taken into account by the Soviet Union and the other East European states when they decided to sever their relations with Israel.

In addition, this consideration proved to be useful to Romania for two main reasons: first it gave Romania considerable prestige in the western world, as the single nation in the Soviet bloc that conducted an independent foreign policy and as such deserved to be politically encouraged and economically supported by the USA, western countries, and Israel to an extent that no other state in the Soviet bloc enjoyed. Second, in the Arab world Romania enjoyed a high degree of prestige (as well as political and economic benefit), since she was the only state in the communist bloc that was capable of mediating between Israel and her neighbours. In contrast, the Soviet Union, which maintained close relations with the Arab states, while her relations with Israel were cut off, could not assume the functions of a peace-making mediator between them.

I remember that there were people who claimed that Romania did not break its relations with Israel as it was interested in being the sole East European representative in Israel for intelligence purposes on behalf of the Soviet Union. This should not be totally discounted, though one may presume that the Soviet Union relied upon her own intelligence services more than on those of Romania. Yet there was probably some sort of cooperation between the two. One may presume, moreover, that Romania's decision not to sever its relations with Israel was presented to the Soviet Union, *inter alia*, as a necessity for preserving an intelligence post in Israel, which would be of benefit to the Soviet Union too.

Israeli-Romanian relations expanded during the Ceaușescu era, particularly in the field of culture, the dissemination of information, tourism, communications (Zim and El Al were the first to operate in East Europe on the Israel-Romania line), commerce and economy, and included the regular flow of Jewish immigrants from Romania to Israel and the making of Bucharest into a transit station for Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union to Israel.

These relations were also marked by an ever-growing activity by Israel and its official representatives in Bucharest in the life of Jewish communities in Romania, under the spiritual-religious-national leadership of Chief Rabbi, Dr David Moses Rosen, alongside the relatively liberal policy of the authorities towards the Jewish minority and its national aspirations (in comparison with their attitude to other national minorities in Romania). This policy was an exceptional phenomenon in the communist states. It accorded Romania the image of a liberal state in all that concerned Jewish affairs, thus helping Romania attain political and economic objectives in the USA, the West, and Israel.

Our official involvement in Jewish life in Romania not only openly demonstrated the bonds between Israel and the local Jewish Diaspora, but also helped us to deepen the national Jewish consciousness of this Diaspora and constituted a 'security guarantee' in case of anti-Semitic outbursts.

In addition there was the active involvement of President Ceaușescu in the search for a settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict, an involvement that found expression in the political dialogue that he initiated with the Israeli and Arab leaders, from the beginning of the 1970s and that intensified in volume and substance during the period of my mission in Bucharest. This dialogue, which was held continuously on all levels, in Bucharest and in Jerusalem, had no similarity in the entire communist bloc.

What prompted President Ceaușescu to be so involved in the search for a settlement to the Israeli—Arab conflict; devoting to it much of his time as well as material resources, more than any other East European leader? What was the secret of the confidence that he enjoyed from both sides of the barricade? And what was his contribution to the peace-making process between Israel and her neighbours?

From the talks he held with Israeli representatives for over 20 years and my tracing the sequence of his activities for the advancement of peace between Israel and her neighbours, it seems to me that his involvement in this process stemmed from three reasons:

1. His view that nations of the world - particularly the small ones — must play an active role in settling international disputes by peaceful means with the aim of strengthening the system of world peace and simultaneously limiting the big powers' influence in the determination of the fate of the small countries.
2. His aspiration to place Romania at the centre of the international arena's political activity, thus procuring political prestige for himself, personally, and for Romania, for internal and external purposes.
3. To mediate between the conflicting partners in the Middle East by using Romania's unique status thanks to her good relations with them. And proof is seen in Ceaușescu's contribution to Sadat's decision to make peace with Israel and his support for the Camp David agreements, contrary to the position held in this respect by all the rest of the communist bloc states and even of the UN itself.

In the series of talks that he held with us, on all levels, his position on how to settle the Israeli-Arab conflict may be summarised according to the following principles:

1. Political settlement through direct negotiations within the framework of an international conference (Ceaușescu regarded himself as the father of this idea) with the participation of Israel and the PLO, under the auspices of the five permanent member states of the UN Security Council or, alternatively, under the auspices of the USA and the USSR.
2. With no solution to the Palestinian problem, either by carrying out its right for self-determination, or including the right to establish its own independent state alongside Israel the Israeli-Arab conflict would not be settled. Israel has no better partner to negotiate peace with than the PLO. Any other alternative would be worse.
3. Israel's right to an independent and sovereign existence within secure and recognized borders as well as her right to peaceful relations and cooperation with her neighbours are indisputable. Recognition of these rights according to Ceaușescu, was given by the Palestinian National Council at its session in Algiers on 14 November 1988, and in Arafat's declaration at the Plenary of the UN General Assembly in Geneva on 14 December 1988, in the PLO's reference to accepting UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338.
4. The idea of granting autonomy to the Arabs in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza was accepted by Ceaușescu, providing that it would lead, after an agreed period, to the establishment of a Palestinian state.
5. Opposing any imposed solution from outside and any solution which does not take into account Israel's security and territorial integrity alongside a Palestinian state.

This formula satisfied in part both Israel's interest and those of the Palestinians.

Beyond that, both sides knew that Romania was acting towards establishing peace in the region, not because of her own strategic interest. Hence, the sentiments of confidence shown by the conflicting partners towards Romania.

A study of these principles retrospectively may prove that they did influence to a certain extent the decision taken by Israel's leaders and Arab leaders (including the PLO) to convene the Madrid peace conference (1991).

In the UN, Romania used to vote in favour of the resolutions condemning Israel together with the rest of the communist bloc and non-aligned nations, concerning all the paragraphs and resolutions in reference to the Israeli-Arab conflict, with the following exceptions: condemnation of the Camp David agreements; condemnation of Zionism as a racial movement; the negation of Israel's credentials to the UN and the imposition of sanctions against Israel. In reference to these four subjects, Romania used to abstain from voting, to oppose them, or to be absent.

Israel enjoyed pronounced status in Romania, in the eyes of the Romanian authorities as well as in cultural, scientific, medical, and academic circles. Friendly attitudes were demonstrated towards us, the representatives, wherever we went. A genuine desire on behalf of the authorities was felt — no doubt that this was shown in conformity with the will of the leadership — to develop bilateral relations with Israel and to strengthen them in all possible fields. This desire was not affected by the deterioration of Romanian-US relations (which in the final years of Ceaucescu's rule reached its lowest state), but in certain cases Israel's value was even raised in Romania's political consideration, assuming that Israel was in the position of being able to assist in improving Romanian-US relations. This assumption was probably based on four evaluations: first, Israel's achievements in the domains of defence, economy, technology, and science as well as her prestigious status in the international arena, despite the frequent condemnations applied to her in the UN in connection with the Israeli-Arab conflict. To this, one should add the Jewish organizations in the USA and in the western countries that were considered by the Romanian leadership an influential factor on US policies towards foreign states. Since these organizations were acting, in the majority of cases — as it appeared in the eyes of the Romanian leaders — in full coordination with Israel, the conclusion drawn was that 'the road to Washington leads through Jerusalem'. In this respect, we were often facing a dilemma: should we contradict this myth, cultivate it, or leave it without any comment as a self-understood fact?

Second, was the presence of a relatively large community of Jewish immigrants in Israel from Romania (their number was estimated at 400,000), who were considered to be influential in the domains of trade, economy and local government. Romania was interested in cultivating this community for her own interests such as: the advancement of cultural ties with Israel; the increase of potential tourism from Israel to Romania; encouraging the youngsters of this community to study in Romanian universities, mainly at medical faculties, since acceptance in Israel to such faculties was strictly limited. (During my mission in Bucharest about 1,000 Israeli students studied in Romania.)

Another factor may have been the non-adherence of Israel to the sharp criticism waged in the USA and in the western countries against Ceaușescu regarding his internal policy, particularly against his oppression of human rights.

Finally, value was placed on Israel's efforts to create a favourable atmosphere in mutual relations in spite of the controversies — at times very serious ones — between Israel and the Romanian leadership over its massive political support of the PLO, specially after Romania

recognized — to Israel's great disappointment — the 'new Palestinian State', following the declaration made by the Palestinian National Council in Algiers in 1988.

Alongside Israel's positive image in governmental and public circles 'as a dynamic state which reached most impressive achievements in all walks of life' (as high-standing personalities used to express themselves in my presence), still from the point of view of the Israeli-Arab conflict Israel was depicted in the local Romanian media — all under strict official control — as a militant state holding conquered territories, oppressing by tough means the Palestinian people who 'aspire to carry out its legitimate right' to be independent in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, and refusing vigorously to negotiate with the PLO at an international conference designated to solve the Israeli-Arab conflict. This negative image of Israel was usually presented in a restrained way, so as not to affect the future development of mutual relations. At times we received the impression that this criticism against Israel was designated for external purposes to demonstrate Romania's solidarity with Arab nations rather than to condemn Israel, with whom Romania continued to conduct 'business as usual'. Romania also manifested this approach publicly.

## INTERNAL POLICY

Certain characteristics were discernible in Romania's internal policy during the period under discussion. For example, the centralisation and control of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) became evermore intensified in all media, written and electronic, and in all systems of the economy, society, culture and science, in face of the liberalisation processes that began to be discernible in the Soviet bloc and that were sharply condemned by Ceaușescu who regarded them as a deviation towards capitalism. All political decisions, including statements and voting in the UN, continued to be made only by him.

At the same time manifestations of opposition to Ceaușescu's rule were severely oppressed. At the beginning they comprised a small nucleus of RCP veterans and several writers.<sup>1</sup> Afterwards they spread to protest demonstrations. These manifestations would probably not have taken place during this period if it were not for the 'new winds' starting to blow from the Kremlin and from some neighbouring communist states. Their relative number was indeed small, their imprint however was remarkable. Among the members of the Central Committee of the RCP, the Politburo, and the Defence Forces, no organized opposition against Ceaușescu was felt until the very days of the revolution that spontaneously put an end to him. Ceaușescu himself was unaware of the situation that had arisen in his country. Ceaușescu exercised his full authority on these three wings until he ran away from the mass meeting he himself had initiated to demonstrate the people's loyalty to him. On the other hand, there is some evidence that the army ceased to accept his authority on the eve of the revolution, a situation which, perhaps, precipitated his end.

The personality cult of the Ceaușescus — the President and his wife Elena — became continuously more intense, both in the local media and in public appearances. It seems that Elena Ceaușescu, who held the titles of First Deputy Prime Minister and Chairperson (i.e., Minister) of the State Council for Science and Study, had been prepared as a co-leader with the president, her husband. This personality cult soared to its peak in the final years of Ceaușescu's rule.

Meanwhile the standard of living of the population declined considerably as a result of the repayment of foreign debts at an intensified rate until their final repayment. Accompanying this was a slowdown of economic growth (despite the self-praise of its achievement in daily



propaganda): poor management; poor administration and low motivation; a severe shortage of basic food commodities, since they were designated for export to repay the foreign debts; the distribution by coupons of bread, oil, sugar (outside Bucharest); meat was almost unseen in the shops — all this over 40 years after the end of the Second World War. On the other hand, employment for all was secured; education and (inferior) medical services were provided free of charge; (modest) housing was granted to all needy people, and regular pension payments were made to the retired.

The repayment of foreign debts within a short space of time — as a forced political objective at the cost of the standard of living of the population (numbering then some 23 million) and on the account of Romania's economic, scientific, and technological development rate — could not suggest an immediate improvement of the situation. Hence, the renewal of the industrial and technological infrastructure demanded the investment of large amounts of capital to bridge the gap created between the infrastructure of the late 1970s and that of the late 1980s, in addition to the need to keep up with the rate of development in the West (one of the crucial problems facing Romania's post-communist regime).

A further blow to living standards was the introduction of a programme called the 'Systematisation of the Village', which in practice meant the destruction of rural houses and the concentration of their inhabitants in 'agro-industrial' centres. Even if this policy's main objective was to introduce current innovations into village life such as building multi-storied apartment houses to enlarge the vacant area for agricultural purposes, by the destruction of villages the social infrastructure of the peasants' way of life in the villages was to be destroyed as well. This policy stirred much anger in the West and among the rural population of Romania itself, who revealed passive opposition fearing the terror of the regime. (With the overthrow of the regime, the destruction of the villages ceased.)

The few who resented these policies were immediately removed from party and government hierarchy. No wonder that in the last years of Ceaușescu's rule frequent personnel changes were introduced among the heads of the various ministries. Some of the ministers were removed from their posts quietly, while others were severely criticized as they were accused of being responsible for the regime's failures. In changing the ministers or removing them, Ceaușescu attempted to avoid a situation in which personalities who headed the various ministries would accumulate an amount of power to be used against him in the course of time. Acting in this way, he strengthened his full control as well as the centralisation of power in his hands, as a preventive means in face of the penetrating influence of liberalisation across the borders of Romania.

The consequence of these internal policies was to lead Romania to economic stagnation and to a gradual decline in the population's standard of living and to an economic depression never known before during all the years of Ceaușescu's rule.

## **FOREIGN POLICY**

In contrast with the internal policy's stagnation, Romania continued to be very active during the last years of Ceaucescu's rule in taking up new initiatives in the domain of foreign policy such as the limitation of the arms race (primarily nuclear); disarmament and the reduction of defence expenditures; demilitarization of the Balkan region of nuclear and chemical weapons; the introduction of a new policy in economic relations between the developed countries and the

underdeveloped; the settlement of disputes between countries by peaceful means, including the Israeli-Arab conflict; granting international assistance in the repayment of foreign debts by the underdeveloped countries; the strengthening of the UN status and the system of international relations (*inter alia* by the maintenance of relations between countries of different regimes and the renouncement of a policy of disrupting them among nations); the advancement of peace and security among nations; the abolition of the military alliances of NATO and Warsaw Pact; non-interference in the internal affairs of states; recognition of peoples' right for self-determination (hence Romania's political support for PLO); and respecting the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states.

Within the framework of this activity, Ceaușescu used to invite high-ranking personalities of foreign states to visit Romania, while Ceaușescu and his wife used to pay official visits to their countries. These visits, from Ceaușescu's point of view, were probably designed to raise his own prestige for internal and external consumption, and to present his foreign policy as a dynamic and innovating one for the advancement of peace and friendship between nations and the deepening of the international relations system.<sup>2</sup> They would also strengthen Romania's relations with countries outside the communist bloc to form a common political front and to seek markets for Romanian products, mainly in the developing countries, and also to become integrated in those economies, at times in exchange for raw material from Romania, or promised to be delivered to Romania.

But, whereas in the past scarcely a fortnight passed without a high-ranking state visit to Romania from abroad, in the last year of Ceaucescu's rule (1988–89) the number of visits declined considerably

Personalities from the USA and Western Europe ceased to visit Romania owing to the decline of Ceaușescu's standing in the world. The change was quite drastic. In the past Ceaușescu had been considered a rebel in the Kremlin hierarchy, enjoying thereby the sympathy and encouragement of the West, but in the final year of his rule Ceaușescu lost the image he had as 'liberal' and was suddenly regarded as a tyrant oppressing human rights and subjugating his people limitlessly. There were some who compared him with Stalin (though there was quite a difference between the two of them). Also, from Asian and African countries, with which Ceaușescu had cultivated a special relationship, the number of official visits became considerably lower.

The most visible rift, however, was marked in Romania's relations with East European states, particularly with those which were moving towards the important economic and social reforms (USSR, Hungary, Poland) that aroused Ceaușescu's fierce opposition. Hungary, in addition, began an open struggle in the European and international arena against Romania, accusing her of denying the national rights of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania.

Mikhail Gorbachev's 1988 visit to Romania proved more than anything else the difference between his social and economic manifesto, depicted in the eyes of Romanians as liberal, and Ceaucescu's which seemed to be oppressive. In Gorbachev's view Ceaușescu's Romania was a 'negative showcase of the socialist world's achievements' — the words of a Soviet diplomat, after the visit.

The Romanian population most probably faced a certain paradox when they regarded Gorbachev as a redeemer who might improve their standard of living and enable them to speak out freely without fear, since in the near past the USSR was portrayed through the 'Brezhnev

Doctrine' as a threatening force which might invade Romania as it had invaded Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan. (The stress placed on Romanian nationalism in the education system, in culture, and in local propaganda in general was connected to a certain degree to the fear of this threat.)

Romania's relations with Yugoslavia were also cooling down. They were far from the golden era of Tito's period. Yugoslavia also made harsh claims against Romania for trying to force assimilation among the Serbian minority in Banat as well as for, what seemed to Yugoslavia, an attempt to deprive Yugoslavia from a just division of electric energy between the two countries from the joint power station on the Danube River. The Yugoslav press used to sharply criticize Ceaușescu's economic and social policy. This, too, was a new phenomenon which increased tension in the relations between both countries.

Romania played a major, if not decisive, role in the attempts to form a bloc of Balkan states with the participation of Romania, Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Greece, declaring its aim to be the establishment of economic, industrial and technological cooperation between them. Romania's only achievement was her success in convening these states at foreign ministerial level, including Albania which had refused, in the past, to join this bloc. But the rift between the convening states — Albania against Yugoslavia; Bulgaria against Turkey; Turkey against Greece — was so great that it was difficult to foresee any chance of success in establishing such a bloc in the near future. This periodic gathering, either in Belgrade or in Bucharest, might provide some practical result, but it was the only rostrum, by Romania's initiative, where the participating states could convene to search for common ways to implement this idea.

Romania's relations with the USA reached the lowest level ever marked in their history (with the exception of Stalin's era). In the last years of Ceaușescu's rule, Romania lost her status of 'Most Favored Nation' in the US, causing considerable damage to her volume of exports to the US, against the background of the repeated US arguments concerning Ceaușescu's policy of human rights (oppression of the national rights of the Hungarian minority and of all those Romanians whom he considered opponents to his policies).

For the same reasons Romania's relations worsened with Britain, France, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), and Belgium.

As for Romania's relations with the Arab states, special emphasis was put in the waning years of Ceaușescu's rule on the development of Romania's relations with Iran and Iraq, to whom Romania exported arms. Romania's relations with Egypt were relatively good, whereas with Syria and Jordan her relations were quite tense. Both were suspicious of Ceaușescu for cultivating good relations with Arafat.

To conclude: Ceaușescu's internal policy had direct implications for Romania's foreign relations with East and West alike as both blocs were forming an anti-Romanian front in the international arena, for the first time in the history of the Soviet bloc. The West, from a justified desire to secure the well-being of dissidents in Romania and out of an aspiration to encourage an opposition movement to Ceaușescu's regime within Romania, aroused Ceaușescu's anger and practically 'pushed him into a corner'. He, however, did not reveal, as might have been expected, any signs of renouncing his ambitious programmes to destroy villages or of softening his rigid social and economic outlook. Out of all the friends that Ceaușescu had, only Israel and the Jewish people remained on the one hand, and the head of the PLO on the other.

Israel and the Jews in the Diaspora remembered Ceaușescu's friendly deeds of the past in not having severed Romania's diplomatic relations with Israel in consequence of the Six-Day War; his liberal attitude to the Jews in Romania, allowing them to emigrate to Israel and granting permission to Jewish immigrants from the USSR to pass through Bucharest on their way to Israel; his support of the Camp David agreements; Romania's refusal to vote in favour of the UN General Assembly resolution equating Zionism with racism; his being the first head of a Soviet bloc state to invite Israeli prime ministers, ministers for foreign affairs, and other ministers to pay official visits to Romania, when Israel was excommunicated in the communist world and among the non-aligned nations, after the Six-Day War and until the late 1980s.

Arafat, too, probably remembered Ceaușescu for his friendship as he was among the first in the Soviet bloc to extend him political, material, and military support, when the world still alienated itself from him. Romania received him frequently by Ceaușescu's invitation as a desirable guest and head of state.

The first paradox occurred when, in the last years of his rule, Ceaușescu lost the uniqueness of his relationship with Israel, since its relations with the East European states gradually began to be restored and consolidated. At the same time Arafat was no longer dependent upon Ceaușescu's support to the degree he had needed it previously, as he procured for himself gradual legitimacy in both the East and the West.

The second paradox occurred when the USSR, which adopted Ceaușescu's conceptions on foreign policy and was also assisted by him in its relations with China, began to neglect him. There were also rumours (to the best of my knowledge, unproved) that it supported some Romanian generals in the overthrowing of Ceaușescu.

When Leonid Brezhnev coined his 'Doctrine' that when a member state of the Soviet bloc was facing an anti-revolutionary danger, Ceaușescu strongly opposed it, arguing that this was blunt interference in the internal affairs of a member state in the bloc. But, when Ceaușescu's regime was in such a danger, Gorbachev's USSR did not hasten to save him and his regime. And so Ceaușescu found himself in the final days of his life, defenceless from the outside.

The third paradox occurred in the view the USA and the West had of Ceaușescu. Previously they had looked at him with particular note as the first leader in the Soviet bloc to introduce an independent foreign policy by not being blindly dragged after the USSR's policies, and as the single communist leader who had publicly condemned the Soviet invasion of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan. In the last year or two of his rule, they considered him in a completely different light in face of the social and economic reforms within the Soviet bloc to which Ceaușescu was vehemently opposed, and in view of the Ceaușescu policy of oppressing the dissidents in his country (those opposing his regime), even if he did not put them in jail. Hence, the more East-West relations began to improve and as soon as the East European states, headed by the USSR, started to march towards *Perestroika*, *glasnost*, and political independence, the less the world had need of Ceaușescu's services.

Thus, he had lost his world even before the opponents of his regime executed him following an improvised court martial on 25 December 1989, far distant from the democratic principles of which the revolution against his regime was supposed to be the standard bearer. A balanced attitude towards his rule will probably remember his benevolence to his people in the post-Stalinist era, and his initiatives taken in the international arena aimed at strengthening peace and friendship among the nations, but will certainly not pardon him for his despotism, cult of

personality, oppression of human rights, and the rest of his sins towards his people, which he committed in the twilight of his rule in Romania.

## **A GLIMPSE OF THE PRESENT**

In the post-communist era, Romania has abandoned its political, economic, and military support for the PLO as well as its involvement in the attempts to settle the Israeli-Arab conflict. In the international arena Romania took up a sympathetic attitude towards Israel and during the Gulf War participated in the anti-Iraq coalition. Israel's relations with Romania continue to expand in all fields, particularly the economic one. Romania occupies at present (1999) third place in Israel's trade with East European states. The number of Jews in Romania is constantly decreasing owing to biological reasons (death rate) and emigration to Israel. At the end of 1999, there were about 12,000 Jews left in Romania. Yet the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania (FJCR) institutions continues to function in the areas of social assistance, education, culture, and religion as in the days of the presidency of Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen, who died in 1995. His successors are Professor Academician N. Cajal as president of the FJCR and Rabbi Menachem Hacoen (from Israel) as chief rabbi. Though under the new regime the Jews enjoy full equality of rights, there is a mounting wave of anti-Semitism, a byproduct of the democratisation process in the country, expressed in slanderous articles against the Jews and Judaism. There is a public tendency to rehabilitate Marshal Ion Antonescu, who headed the Romanian fascist regime during the Second World War, who was responsible for the Holocaust of Jews in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria, then under Romanian rule.

Leaders of Romania condemned such manifestations and the president, Emil Constantinescu, in a message to the president of the FCJR, Professor N. Cajal, on the occasion of Holocaust Day in 1997, confessed for the first time the crimes committed by Romania's fascist regime against the Jews, promising that the Romanians would not forget the past.

Romania is still facing the difficulties of transition from a communist regime to a democratic one. A high rate of inflation prevails in the country, accompanied by a high rate of unemployment. The privatisation process has not yet been completed. Progress, however, is being made in the direction of democratisation and Romania is making great efforts to be associated with the European Union and NATO.

In June 1998, Israel and Romania marked the 50th anniversary of their unbreakable diplomatic relations. The event was officially noted both in Jerusalem and in Bucharest. And although Romania has lost its uniqueness as the only country in Eastern Europe never to have broken its relations with Israel, new patterns of cooperation are being set up between both states, based on the traditional friendly relations that were formed, especially at the twilight of Ceauşescu's regime.

The history of Israeli-Romanian relations has faced its ups and downs. The main thing is that the system of their mutual relationship remains strong. I dare to say that it is stronger than with any other East European state. Its basis is strong enough for the further development of those mutual relations in any conceivable direction. All possibilities exist — it all depends upon the initiatives taken by both partners.

## **NOTES**

1. On manifestations of opposition to Ceaușescu's regime, see chapter one in this volume.
2. See Abba Eban's introduction to the book *N. Ceaușescu, a Pioneer of International Relations: Homage to the President of Romania, Nicolae Ceaușescu* (Tel Aviv: Israel-Romania Friendship League, 1988).

# 1 Opening My Mission to Romania, in Three Acts

When I took up my mission as Israel's ambassador to Romania, the country was not entirely unknown to me. Before my appointment I had been involved in Israeli-Romanian affairs as director of the East European Department of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). To a certain extent, my mission to Romania seemed to be a continuation of my previous functions. Yet it differed, as service in the hinterland differs from service at the front. As director of the East European Department, I paid several working visits to Bucharest and also took part in talks with the official guests from Romania during their visits to Israel. I came to know almost all Romanian officials who dealt with their country's relations with Israel and with Arab states. These facts facilitated, of course, the implementation of my mission to Romania, which in those days occupied a distinct and important place in Israel's foreign service.<sup>1</sup> And why was that?

Romania, as I have already mentioned, was the only East European country (and in the communist bloc in general) that had never severed diplomatic relations with Israel. Moreover, Romania aspired to expand them and had even elevated them, shortly after the Six-Day War in 1967, from the rank of legation to that of embassy. Indeed, mutual relations expanded into the political, economic, cultural, scientific, and Jewish domains. More than any other East European state, Romania was involved in the peace-making process between Israel and our neighbours, thanks to its initiatives and retention of diplomatic ties with both sides to the conflict.

Romania permitted the emigration of Jews from its territory to Israel within the framework of 'family unification', also making it possible for the local Jews to be organized in Jewish communities, to cultivate their religious, national, and cultural values, and maintain connections with Israel and the Jewish Diaspora, to a degree matched by none of the other communist states.

Romania was a convenient country for the development of unofficial contacts between Israeli representatives and those of East European states whose diplomatic relations with Israel had been severed since the Six-Day War. There was no fear that information about these contacts would be leaked to the local communication's media. The Romanian security services, which probably knew of them, regarded them positively and were proud that their country was serving as a suitable place to hold them. These contacts served as preparatory talks in the process of restoring diplomatic relations between Israel and the East European states during 1989–90.

For all that, I regarded my mission to Romania as an important challenge, not only to maintain my predecessor's achievements in fortifying Israeli-Romanian relations and those with the Jewish community, but also to add new dimensions to the existent relations, expanding their

volume and make them richer in content. After all, Romania was the only planet in the communist universe in general and in East Europe in particular where Israel had an official diplomatic representation enjoying a distinguished status.

Throughout my four years of ambassadorship in Romania, the Romanian authorities displayed to me a friendly and cordial attitude whenever I applied for their assistance and cooperation, even if not all my wishes were implemented, even if not all my efforts bore fruit. Every initiative we put forward in the domain of our bilateral relations — considering the conditions of the regime — received a constructive reaction. In the majority of cases the response was positive, even if the process of decision-making took some time, beyond that which was in comparison customary in the West. But, the most important fact was the readiness which I and my embassy colleagues encountered to cooperate with us, in all domains and on all levels — ministerial, party, public, academic, and municipal.

The same refers to the cooperation established with Chief Rabbi Dr Moses Rosen, who headed the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania, on subjects concerned with the Jewish aspect of our mission. If it were not for all that and for the close cooperation with every one of our embassy staff in Bucharest, as well as with my colleagues in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem, and Nativ (in charge of Jewish immigration from East Europe) in Tel Aviv, it is doubtful whether we could have implemented our mission and achieved the assigned objectives in our expanding relations with Romania's communist regime under Ceaușescu's rule.

It is possible that the friendly attitude the Romanian authorities displayed toward us was based on admiration for our achievements in all domains of life in Israel and for the status Israel had acquired in the international arena, in spite of security problems surrounded by enemies, and despite all the efforts by the USSR and her satellites to denigrate Israel and blacken her image among communist countries, the non-aligned nations and those Arab states that aspired to remove Israel from the world map.

History has proved that Romania, under Ceaușescu's leadership, benefited from its policy towards Israel, in the bilateral, regional and international domains, whereas the USSR and her satellites were the boosters of hostile policies towards Israel in those three domains generally and in the domain of the Israeli-Arab conflict in particular, being prevented, especially the USSR, from implementing a constructive role in its settlement.

Even after Israel renewed its diplomatic relations with the East European and African states (cut off in consequence of the Six-Day War), after having established for the first time diplomatic relations with the former 15 republics of the Soviet Union, with Egypt, China, India, Vietnam, and Jordan, having also signed an agreement of principles with the Palestinian authority, one should still remember the unique weight carried by Romania in Israel's foreign policy during the absence of diplomatic relations between Israel and the East European states.

## **ACT ONE**

My wife Hanna and I arrived in Bucharest on 3 September 1985. Twenty-four hours later I was invited to the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ștefan Andrei, to present him with a copy of my Letter of Credence, whose original I was supposed to present in an official ceremony to President Nicolae Ceaușescu. The minister, whom I knew well from my previous visits to Romania, greeted me in a very friendly manner and with words of praise concerning ‘the good



traditional relations' existing between Romania and Israel, hoping for their constant development. In continuation we had a very friendly conversation (beyond the given time) in the course of which he asked me about the political situation in Israel, whereupon I answered that Israel's National Unity Government had started a gradual process to improve the state of the economy. It might be possible to achieve impressive results within a short time, if it were not for the fear of a rise in the rate of unemployment. Andrei remarked that Israel's coalition government had the strength to introduce an economic recovery. Romania, he said, was also facing economic difficulties as part of an economic crisis in some of the rich countries. Israel and Romania should assist each other; as the English proverb goes: 'A friend in need is a friend indeed'.

Andrei also remarked that the non-realisation of expectations in the fields of economy and technology between our states did not serve as 'good propaganda' for Israel. I replied that the balance of our mutual relations should comprise the whole system and not be based on this or that aspect. I reminded him, for instance, of our contribution to Romania's obtaining the status of 'Most Favored Nation' in the USA. Andrei hastened to bring up another example: Israel's decision to reduce the percentage of taxes imposed on its tourists to Romania, emphasizing that it was to this he referred when he previously mentioned, *inter alia*, 'the traditional good relations'.

Referring to the Israeli—Arab conflict I mentioned the Arab acts of terror which constituted a serious hindrance to the cause of peace in the region and the PLO's determination to intensify their terror acts against Israel, as in the recent case when terrorist boats attempted to attack from the sea but thanks to Israeli vigilance heavy casualties among the population were prevented in time. Andrei remarked that there had been good chances, in the past, to reach a global peace, but they were missed. (He did not elaborate, but I presumed that he was referring to President Ceaușescu's proposals to convene an international conference for the settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict, rejected by the Israeli government.) I noted that all our governments had been striving to attain peace that was withheld from us from the first day of our declaration of independence. Peace was, however, reached with Egypt by direct negotiations, but not until Egypt accepted Israel's right to exist.

Israel's peace with Egypt continued to be stable despite the controversies between the two partners over Middle East problems, but Israel is determined to continue the process, even if Jordan has tied its hands with the PLO and led the peace process to a dead end — a source of disappointment for the USA, too.

In remarking that time was running out, I said that in light of such a process it was difficult to act with a stopwatch and that it took hundreds of years for the European states to reach their present situation. Andrei said that Syria and the USSR should be involved in the peace-making process to find a global settlement and that without them, he thought, no peace would be achieved.

Towards the end of this conversation Andrei expressed his hope to meet Israel's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yitzhak Shamir, at the forthcoming UN General Assembly in New York (such meetings between foreign ministers were already a tradition in the history of Israeli-Romanian relations). As he received from me a copy of my letters of credence, he expressed his warm wishes for the success of my ambassadorial mission to Romania. 'Your success,' he said, 'will be considered also as ours'.

There were no new elements in this talk, except for mentioning Romania's expectations from Israel. From the very beginning it was planned to be a courtesy visit during which, as was

customary in those days, the host put some questions to the guest and listened to his answers in a polite manner, so that it should not be regarded as a working meeting.

## ACT TWO

During my visit to the chief of protocol, in connection with the presentation of my letters of credence to the president, my host hinted to me that I could pay a courtesy visit to Marcel Dinu, the director of the Department of the Romanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs for the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa. I had in mind, in any case, to phone him and say 'hello,' since we were well acquainted from my previous visits to Bucharest and his to Jerusalem. Indeed I did it, inviting myself to see him. Dinu received me the next day, at the ministry, in a rather restrained but amiable manner.

Dinu directed the department to which Israel belonged for about 14 years (13 years before my arrival in Bucharest). During all this period, my predecessors and I maintained ongoing working relations with him. He was considered to be the greatest expert of the Romanian Ministry for Middle Eastern Affairs in general and for Arab affairs in particular. He adhered to Ceaușescu's policy line and contributed much to the PLO status in Romania. Even if he was known for his pro-Arab attitudes on subjects connected with the Israeli-Arab conflict, in our talks he had always manifested a correct attitude towards Israel and a readiness to advance bilateral relations between both our states, out of a pure Romanian interest, but also out of a deep admiration for Israel's achievements and its status in the international arena. In our conversations he sometimes sounded as if he were boasting from a politically high moral position. His precise language and his exceptional talent to find compromise solutions to complicated problems, when required to make them, as well as his profound knowledge of international affairs, were some of his personal faculties that had made him a most interesting adversary.

All the Romanian ministers for foreign affairs during his many years of service in the ministry (even after the anti-Communist revolution) must have found in him a reliable and faithful ambassador to explain Romania's foreign policy, particularly for Middle Eastern policy. I knew him about ten years before coming to Romania. One year later he was appointed Romania's ambassador to the Federal German Republic. During this year I maintained friendly working relations with him. I used to call upon him frequently at the ministry to discuss current bilateral affairs. In our formal talks, always in the presence of his aides, he sometimes used to deviate from the formal line, making uncustomary assessments. In our non-formal talks he was open-minded beyond expectations. I accumulated long hours of talks with him. The difference between our views was much greater than what we held in common. On one occasion, before he left for Bonn I said to him, partly seriously, partly joking, that if I ever wrote my memoirs about my mission to Romania, I would dedicate a special chapter to him under the title 'Conversations with Marcel Dinu' (as Milovan Djilas named his famous book *Conversations with Stalin*). Dinu did not like this remark. Perhaps I offended him without having the slightest intention of doing so. Two years after the anti-Communist revolution, he revisited Israel in his official capacity as state secretary of the Romanian Foreign Ministry, in the framework of a seminar that we organized in the foreign ministry in Jerusalem for senior diplomats who dealt with Middle Eastern affairs in their respective ministries in East Europe. I initiated this seminar in my capacity of deputy director general of the ministry. Thus, our paths crossed again, under different political circumstances. I would not be exaggerating if I said that my talks with Marcel Dinu were always instructive, adding a special colour to my mission in Romania.

When I paid him a courtesy visit, our conversation, the first in my capacity as Israel's ambassador to Romania, turned to the ceremonial act of my presentation of the letters of credence to President Ceaușescu. Dinu remarked that my speech contained a sentence which if it did not appear would make life easier for him. Whereas, if it remained in the text, the president would have to refer to it in his reply, and it might thus be an opening with an unpleasant polemical tone, already with my first steps. He therefore suggested in a friendly and personal way to simply omit it. At the same time, he praised the 'original contents' of my speech and its 'bright horizon'. His remark referred to my sentence that 'extremist forces' surrounding us in the Middle East were aspiring to destroy us. I told him I was amazed by his remark: first, for censuring my words; second, this sentence, perhaps with shorter wording, had been used publicly by our 'mutual friend', Andrey Gromyko, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, with a slight difference. He identified those forces by saying that they were to be found in the Arab world, while I did not identify them.

Dinu was perplexed. He said he was not aware of this statement by Gromyko, repeating his main wish presented in a personal, friendly tone. To clarify his remark he added that in the speeches by the Arab ambassadors, he was in the habit of omitting entire passages, because they were offensive to Israel and that Romania's striving for balance between the conflicting partners had already become a tradition. I told him that I had forwarded my speech to the chief of protocol, presuming that it would be guarded in its entirety. Since the custom is to send the speech in advance, but not read it out in its entirety at the ceremony, while at the same time the Romanian press could quote passages at will, it would not make any difference whether this sentence would be in or out. The new ambassador has no choice but to accept the custom. With all that, I had to say the censuring of my speech would not contribute to the good image of his country. I had come to carry out my mission in Romania as a friend of his country and as such I hoped to complete my tour of duty.

Dinu apologised several times at that stage, and also when he came to our residence to 'raise a glass' after the ceremony. Even though his remark was marginal within the frame of our general conversations on Israeli-Romanian bilateral relations, it left a discordant echo in my ears, reminding me quickly of the kind of regime to which I had been sent to represent my country.

## **ACT THREE**

On 11 September 1985, on the eighth day since my arrival in Bucharest, I presented my credentials to President Ceaușescu. The week that followed was characterized by many crowded events in the agenda of the president: receiving foreign delegations from the USA, Africa and Hungary; a Congress of the Regional People's Councils (which I was invited to attend even prior to the presentation of my credentials) with Ceaușescu's participation. This event lasted for a few days.

The ceremony was held in a very formal atmosphere. The chief of protocol instructed me to open my speech with a few sentences taken from it, namely: 'I am honoured to present my letters of credence to President N. Ceaușescu, whereupon I was authorised by Israel's president, Haim Herzog, to be Israel's Ambassador to Romania, and I was asked to transmit greetings on behalf of President Herzog, Prime Minister Peres, and Vice Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs Shamir, for the well-being of the president, for the flourishing of Romania, and for the continuing strengthening of the traditional friendship between Israel and Romania and between

their nations’.

President Ceaușescu in reply, uttered a few sentences welcoming my mission to Romania as Israel's ambassador, wishing me success in carrying out my functions and returning his greetings to President Herzog, Prime Minister Peres, and Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Shamir.

The rule to shorten the time of speeches, of which I was unaware before arriving in Bucharest, had come into force two years before my arrival. The media shortened both speeches, as if it was the way they had been given at the ceremony, but whereas from the ambassador's speech only selected passages were reported from the President's speech long passages were extensively reported to stress Romania's declared policy.

The faces of those who accompanied the President, including that of Foreign Minister Andrei, were frozen. Nobody dared to whisper a word. After the toast and exchange of greetings, I was invited by the president to a talk with him, separately from all those present. The Israeli embassy staff, who had accompanied me to the ceremony, were standing together with the rest of the participants. They all looked at us.

Ceaușescu opened his talk focusing on two subjects, first trade relations and economic cooperation. The president expressed his expectations that these relations should reach the same (high) level as the Israeli-Romanian political dialogue, which he assessed to be fruitful, and that the conclusion reached between him and Prime Minister Peres, during his visit to Bucharest in February 1985, should soon be implemented. The president was referring to his proposal, to which programme Peres had agreed, to appoint a minister from each side with the aim of discussing the subject of mutual economic interests — the increase of Israel's imports from Romania, the intensification of Israeli tourism to Romania, technological cooperation, and their markets.

He asked me to act during my mission in Romania to intensify the mutual trade relations and economic cooperation, adding his understanding that because of our war in Lebanon, we were facing many economic difficulties and wished that we should solve them quickly.

In my reply I mentioned that Israel and Romania had marched together a long way and we had attained some important achievements. Yet the potential was even greater and it was my intention to contribute my part to the intensification of our political, economic, trade, scientific, and cultural relations, with the kind assistance of the Romanian authorities. I promised that from our side there was a great readiness for it.

Referring to the peace process in our region, Ceaușescu expressed his wishes to us to succeed in shortly reaching peace in our region. In thanking him I mentioned that all Israeli governments were striving to achieve it, since it had always been one of our greatest worries. But for making peace one needed the agreement of both sides and time for building mutual confidence measures. We had been greatly encouraged by the peace agreement with Egypt, to which he had made a substantial contribution.

These were the main points of the talk held in a pleasant atmosphere. Ceaușescu, in this talk as in future ones held with him, imparted an air of simplicity, lack of formality in his talk, as if he and his interlocutor had known each other for a long time, an image which was entirely contrary to the one he used to give in his public appearances. Yet the main thoughts that he had wanted to communicate at this stage he transmitted through his unread speech (which was handed to me) in reply to my speech (handed to him). For this reason, I shall cite here texts from both speeches.<sup>2</sup>

From my speech:

Mr President

...Profound historic ties, amity and culture bind my people to the people of Romania. Many survivors of the Holocaust that decimated the Jewish people in Europe, and that did not spare Romania, are now with us in Israel. Moreover, the heroic uprising of members of the Romanian people against their fascist regime in those dark years, and their struggle, side by side with the anti-Nazi forces, to wipe out Nazism, are etched in our memory and our consciousness. No wonder, therefore, that the Romanian presence is felt in our daily lives.

The Israeli people and its leadership have always esteemed the principles of the Socialist Republic of Romania regarding its foreign policy, which advocates the universality of relations among the nations of the world, their equal standing, noninterference in their internal affairs and respect for their sovereignty and their right to develop freely, without external pressures or coercion. Experience has shown that the pursuit of these principles, which Israel accepts as well, tends to strengthen the international network of relations and, without a doubt, will increase understanding among peoples. It can, therefore, make an important contribution to the consolidation of peace and stability in the world.

Peace, of which we have been deprived from the first day of our independence, has never ceased to be our cardinal objective. Although this objective has not been realised, or realised only in part, we are anxious for peace today as we ever were. Militant and extremist forces that, unfortunately, still remain in our region have not yet reconciled themselves to our independent national existence. And so long as their objective of destroying Israel is emblazoned on their banner, the much yearned-for peace will continue to elude us, and the prospects for stability and quiet in the region recede into the distance. Nevertheless, our faith remains unshaken that some day we will have true peace in our region. It is a long and arduous process. One often hears talk about peace, but not always do the actions fit the words. Or, as the brilliant representative of Romania, Mr Nicolae Titulescu, once pronounced from the rostrum of the League of Nations: '*Pacea nu se proclamă, pacea se cucerește.*'<sup>3</sup>

In our tireless campaign to bring peace to our area, we derive encouragement and inspiration from the peaceful relations prevailing between my country and the largest of our neighbouring countries. These relations were achieved by direct negotiations between the parties, and we well remember, and deeply appreciate, your personal contribution, Mr President, to the generation of this process. The political dialogue taking place between Romania and Israel, at all levels, along with the friendly ties between our countries, constitutes not only the genuine and characteristic expression of the two countries' sincere wish to explore each the views of the other and, together, to seek a way out of the impasse; but it can and should also serve as a model, in the international arena, of how one can build up mutual confidence and constructive relations between two states even when, at times, there are differences of opinion.

I was preceded, Mr President, by a distinguished gallery of ambassadors who contributed much to the development of bilateral relations in the spheres of commerce, culture, science and tourism. Much, indeed, has already been accomplished; much more can undoubtedly be achieved in the future. With the kind assistance of the authorities in your country, I shall do all in my power to continue the path charted by my predecessors in the development and

expansion of our bilateral relations and rendering these relations ever more meaningful, for the benefit of both our peoples, in the true spirit of mutual understanding and mutual respect that have become a tradition in our relations.

Please accept, Your Excellency, my profound gratitude for any assistance that you may be able to extend to me in the fulfillment of my mission in your country, as well as my sincere personal wishes for your continued good health and for the undiminished prosperity of your people and your country on the road to progress and peace.

From the president's speech (translated from Romanian):

Mr Ambassador,

...As you know, the Romanian Socialist Republic is firmly setting at the basis of its foreign policy the principles of full equality of rights, the respect of independence and national sovereignty, the non-interference in internal affairs, and mutual advantage, the non-use of force and the non-use of threats to use force. We note with satisfaction that, on the basis of these principles, the relations between our countries and nations are developing. Romania participates actively in international life, in the efforts dedicated to the strengthening of peace, to the constructive solution of the large problems facing humanity today.

We are profoundly concerned about the aggravation of the international situation and want to do all [that is possible] to stop the course of events towards confrontation and war, in order to advance the process of disarmament in the world and first of all nuclear disarmament.

We declare ourselves constantly and we act firmly for the settlement of all conflicts and all conflicting problems between countries only by political means, by negotiations. In this respect we attach special attention to the situation in the Middle East.

The events that have taken place in this region have proved time and again that war does not solve — and cannot solve — any problem. It only causes immense human suffering and material destruction, making it harder and more complicated to find a solution in this region. We consider that the only way to follow is through peace talks, conducted in a spirit of full equality, respect, and mutual understanding. Talks, no matter how hard they may be, are always better and preferable to military confrontations.

This is why we declare ourselves in favour of the intensification of efforts to search for a global solution and a long-lasting just peace in the Middle East, to be based on Israel's withdrawal from occupied Arab lands following the Six-Day War, on settling the problem of the Palestinian people by recognizing their right to self-determination, including the right to establish their own independent Palestinian state, on security guarantees and respect for the independence and sovereignty of all countries in the region.

We assess that at present it is more vital than ever to intensify the political and diplomatic efforts in opening a real dialogue between all conflicting parties, and move towards a global solution of the Middle Eastern conflict.

In this respect we assess that it is necessary to organize an international conference, in the framework and under the auspices of the UNO with the participation of all states and interested partners, including the PLO, USSR, USA, and other states who might contribute positively to the settlement of the situation in this region.

What concerns Romania is, she will continue to devote great efforts for the achievement of a political settlement to the conflict, according to the interests of all states and all peoples in this region, for the general cause of peace and security in the whole world.

Mr Ambassador, we consider that the necessary conditions exist for a large development, in the future, of Romanian—Israeli relations, for the intensification of economic cooperation, trade exchanges, and for the expansion of cooperation in other domains of common interest.

I am confident that by the activity which you will invest in Romania, you will contribute actively to the development of these relations, for the cause of mutual interest of both countries and peoples, for the cause of peace and the relaxation of tension throughout the world.

I wish you full success in the mission which you have been accredited to, and I promise to extend to you the full assistance of the State Council, the government of my country, and my personal one.

This was Ceaușescu's basic position concerning the settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict which took up the main part of his speech. Unlike the USSR, Ceaușescu called for Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied during the Six-Day War and not from the occupied territories (as the USSR called it). Also, his presentation of Romania, without mentioning her name, as prepared to participate with other candidate states in the peace-making process in the region, with the aim of finding a global solution on the basis of mutual compromise, is interesting.

Such speech of a pragmatic nature at a ceremony of presenting my letters of credence to him was than considered to be an exceptional phenomenon, symbolising then in my eyes maybe more than on any other occasion where he declared himself in favour of a settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict his profound personal involvement in achieving this task, more than in respect to any other conflict and any other international conflicting problem existing at that time.

Parallel to the presentation of my credentials to the president, I paid my first visit to the chief rabbi of Romanian Jewry, Dr David Moses Rosen, whom I knew from my previous visits to Bucharest and his to Israel. The rabbi and the leadership of the Jewish community received me very warmly. The next day, the Sabbath, I went to the Coral Synagogue, where I was called up to the Torah. I received the blessings of the rabbi and the greetings of the worshippers. Thus I began my first steps.

## NOTES

1. See Michael Landau's preface to the book *Nicolae Ceausescu, President of the Romanian Socialist Republic, the Man and His Policy* (in Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Havaad Leyedidut Israel-Harepublika Hasozialistit Haromanit, 1972); and Abba Eban's preface in *Homage to the President of Romania, Nicolae Ceausescu* (Tel Aviv: Israeli—Romanian Friendship Association, 1988).
2. The presentation of my letters of credence to President Ceaușescu was covered extensively in the Romanian press on 12 September 1985. The ceremony was also screened on television the same day. The Romanian Broadcasting Service gave broad coverage to the main points of Ceaușescu's speech in reply to mine, completely ignoring my text. (See BBC survey of broadcasts to East Europe: SWB, EE 8059/AY/1, 18 September 1985.)
3. This quotation was taken from Nicolae Titulescu, *Documente Diplomatice* (Bucuresti: Editura Politica, 1978), p. 884. It means 'Peace is not to be proclaimed, peace is to be conquered'.

## 2 Romanian Internal Affairs 1986–89: A State in Crisis

During my mission in Romania the prevailing opinion in western political circles was that Ceaușescu conducted a ‘Stalinist regime’ in Romania similar to the rule of evil, threats and liquidations of Stalin. These circles generally used to base themselves on Ceaușescu's rigid policy that did not permit the introduction into Romania of a liberal attitude in the spirit of economic and social reforms that penetrated into Eastern Europe from the mid-1980s; on the Romanian Communist Party's complete domination of all the media, literary and art works, and historical research; on the total centralisation of state affairs in the hands of Ceaușescu with the assistance of the notorious security services (*Securitate*) by their tracing of personal and public life, by their oppressing human rights, and by enslaving the individual to the regime; and on his personality cult and that of his wife Elena that soared to unbelievable heights. Such characteristics made Ceaușescu's regime very similar to Stalin's regime, as many thought in western political circles and western public opinion at large, and to a lesser degree in Israel.

In January 1986, about half a year after having resumed my duties in Bucharest, I referred to this analogy in one of my reports to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem. I noted then that Ceaușescu's personality cult was really very similar to that of Stalin. At times, it seemed even greater. But, from this point to defining Ceaușescu's regime as a Stalinist one was a great leap. At the same time, Ceaușescu was justly depicted as a dictator and tyrant. Yet, he displayed his closeness to the people during his frequent visits to industrial and agricultural enterprises; his talks with the workers; his frequent public appearances at mass meetings, conferences, and assemblies; as well as when receiving personalities from abroad (even those at a lower level than his). He did not chop off heads, as did Stalin, and did not send his opponents from the Central Committee of the RCP, nor those from the local central government, to rot in jails for the rest of their lives. He simply moved them far away from the power centres. Therefore, I claimed that there was no complete similarity between Ceaușescu's regime and that of Stalin. Despite the policy of oppressing freedom of speech in Romania, a complete prohibition on the organization of opposition to the ruling authority and the removal of persons who opposed Ceaușescu's opinions, one could not identify his regime with the era of Stalin's ‘Black Years’ in the USSR, where millions of people were executed.<sup>1</sup>

Though mass executions were not carried out in Romania in the Ceaușescu era, it should be recalled that those who organized the strikes in coal mines of the Jiu Valley and at the Brașov tractor enterprise disappeared. Most probably they were brought to trial and executed for ‘revolting against the regime.’<sup>2</sup>



From this point of view the two cases did not differ. Conversely, the members of Romania's communist leadership who were executed in the communist era before Ceaușescu acceded to power in Romania, were rehabilitated during his era. In addition, one should keep in mind the favourable status of Romania's Jewish community relative to the USSR during Stalin's rule and well after, and Ceaușescu's policy of permitting Jews to emigrate to Israel and to the West (though permission was not granted gratis, but by receiving material revenues to the credit of Romania's treasury), and his activities toward the reduction of international tension, limitation of the arms race, and peace-making among nations. But, even if the similarity between the two regimes was not extensive, Ceaușescu was determined in his opposition to any deviation in the direction of introducing liberal reforms in the economic and social spheres which were not compatible with his communist ideology. Whereas in the past this position of his was aimed at giving no pretext to the USSR to invade Romania because of an ideological deviation, from the mid-1980s this stance was intended to preserve his regime in face of any danger of its disintegration as a result of the reforms introduced in his neighbourhood, including Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies. The only visible deviation was in the direction of nationalist communism that Ceaușescu tried to cultivate within his nation. Perhaps this stemmed, on the one hand, from a wish to compensate for his rigid regime, and on the other, from the creation of a deep consciousness of the need to defend the Romanian motherland in case of any Soviet invasion of its territory (like that of Hungary and Czechoslovakia). No doubt this 'national communism' was used as a means for the compulsory assimilation of minorities into Romanian culture and in particular the Hungarian minority in Transylvania that had caused growing tension in Romanian-Hungarian relations, and had also had a negative impact on Romania's status in the West and in the international arena.

Compulsory assimilation no doubt fitted Stalin's theory maintaining that the national culture of minorities should be socialist in content and nationalist in form. But Ceaușescu's policy negated the cultural expression of the Hungarian minority. The interconnection between the rigid communist regime and nationalism accompanied by a high degree of personality cult, had made Romania in the late Ceaușescu era appear unique in the East European communist bloc, bearing a great influence on Romania's internal and external policy.

Any foreign diplomat who was then living in Romania accumulated a great many experiences which would fill thick volumes. I shall limit myself to certain phenomena which seemed to me to be a distortion, sometimes even an amazing one, of democracy

## **ROMANIA'S PARLIAMENT SESSION**

At the beginning of April 1986 I was summoned for the first time to the Romanian Parliament (that stood empty all year long), together with the other foreign ambassadors accredited to Romania, to be present at the opening of the first debate of the first bi-annual session which was to last two days. Luckily, the ambassadors were to attend the morning hours only. Apparently, this was a well-known cult, similar to our presence at other state events. My colleagues and I played a visible role at a certain stage of this cult by granting foreign state honour to this event. Internal policy matters were mentioned on the first day, while external matters were referred to on the second. On both days of the session the leadership of Romania was headed by the Ceaușescu couple, members of parliament and public personalities were in attendance. Prime Minister Dascalescu delivered the opening speech, characterized by its pragmatic content surveying the economic situation — its achievements and failures — and the struggle for world

peace. Each member of parliament who spoke after him read out a prepared speech without any direct connection to the Prime Minister's report and with a main topic praising President Ceaușescu for all the achievements attained under his leadership, delivering a declaration (almost a vote of confidence) to continue in the direction of fulfilling the aims according to the programmes described in the resolutions adopted by the last Communist Party Congress, bestowing upon Elena Ceaușescu elevated descriptions such as ‘an internationally known scientist’, who led Romania to scientific and technological progress ‘by her radiant and revolutionary personality and multitude of activities’.

Apart from the Ceaușescu couple, mentioned at least six times by each of the speakers, no other name was mentioned, not the government members nor those of the Politburo members. The listener was supposed to reach only one conclusion: before Ceaușescu's rise to power, Romania had not experienced any economic or democratic progress (this is why Ceaușescu's 20-year rule was called ‘the golden era’) and until Elena Ceaușescu's nomination as head of the National Council for Scientific Research (with status equivalent to a minister), Romania had not known scientific progress.

The speakers on external policy repeated the well-known positions of Ceaușescu that were publicly aired many times, the main issue being compiled at this event being ‘The Appeal of Romania's Parliament to the Parliaments and Governments of the World’, calling for the removal of the threat of nuclear catastrophe, calling for a halt to the arms race, foremost among them the nuclear one, and for the move to disarmament (this appeal was mainly addressed by the speakers to the superpowers); the settlement of existing conflicts (the speakers referred to the Israeli-Arab and the Iran-Iraq conflicts) by peaceful means; securing the rights of people to an independent free development, by respecting the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs. At the end of the appeal the parliament solemnly declared that Romania would cooperate with the will of all nations in the world for the realisation of these elevated aims.

The appeal was read out at the end of the two-day so-called ‘debates’ that were characterized by insufferable boredom. They mainly encompassed an endless stream of praises showered upon the Ceaușescu couple, an almost identical chant intoned by each speaker. Some veteran ambassadors who were already inured to such performances put on dark glasses during the marathon of speeches, so no one would notice their eyes closing. Other ambassadors nodded off without wearing dark glasses. Their sleep was interrupted periodically by the parliament members repeated bouts of applause whenever a patriotic slogan was pronounced during Ceaușescu's speech. Our Austrian colleague fainted and was quietly removed from the ambassadors' gallery. Some were on the threshold of collapse. Yet others, somehow, had the strength to remain to the end.

I asked myself why did Ceaușescu summon all the foreign ambassadors, taking them away for two working days. Was it because he wanted to show them Romania's democracy at work? (After all, everybody knew that each speech had been censored beforehand. Moreover, an official representative held every speech in his hands, tracing each pronounced word of it, so that no one should deviate from the content.) If that were Ceaușescu's aim, he achieved the opposite result with the ambassadors. Was it because he wanted to transmit through them to their governments the ‘message of peace’ (that did not contain anything new)? Why, therefore, were all the foreign ambassadors called to the opening parliament session to be present during the two-day ‘debates’?

I formulated three assumptions:

1. The presence of the foreign ambassadors was intended to demonstrate to the Romanian people the sense of respect that nations of the world showed to Ceaușescu as a highly regarded international statesman.
2. By the presence of the ambassadors, Ceaușescu probably wanted to grant Romania the image of a state struggling under his leadership for moral principles, namely: moral *vis-à-vis* nuclear power. This was very important for him in the face of the Western bloc, the East European bloc, and the non-aligned nations.
3. As for his people who saw and listened to this performance, he presumably wanted to import 'democratic values' according to practice of the RCP, accompanied by a patriotic attitude and national pride for belonging to a Romania vigorously active on the internal and external scenes, under his leadership.

### **PUBLIC POLL ON THE REDUCTION OF DEFENCE EXPENDITURES**

Predictably, there were no opponents among the Romanian leadership to Ceaușescu's proposal to reduce the country's defence expenditures by five per cent. The decision to raise the subject for the people's determination was aimed at presenting Romania as the only country in the world that had decided on its own initiative and in a democratic manner to shift from a state of participation in the arms race to one of working for its gradual reduction. The public poll however, held on 23 November 1986 on this issue, made a mockery of Romania's democracy. Instead of displaying ballot boxes and slips of paper for or against and a blank slip for those who wished to abstain from voting, the people were ordered to present themselves collectively at their workplaces and sign their names on the workers' list prepared in advance that bore the heading 'Agreeing to the proposal for arms reduction'. The poll proceeded in the same manner outside of workplaces. The poll included teenagers from 14 to 18 who were ordered to appear at their schools or other institutions and sign their names on lists prepared beforehand. This was how the authorities intended to prepare the young generation to respect the principles of democracy under a communist regime. The world's response, as I remember it, was quite reserved.

With all appreciation for the decision itself but not to its implementation, the poll looked like just another propaganda means for Ceaușescu. The decision taken on the reductions of defence expenditure matched Romania's appeal to limit the arms race. With all that, neither the referendum nor the appeals affected Romania's arms' export to the Third World (including Iraq, Libya, and North Korea) that according to American researchers reached a value of several millions of dollars.<sup>3</sup>

### **PERSONALITY CULT OF THE CEAUȘESCU COUPLE**

The personality cult of the Ceaușescu couple took on many faces.<sup>4</sup> Not once did I wonder: was its cultivation a by-product of Ceaușescu's communist regime (that ruled more years than his predecessors)? Did those surrounding him in his leadership wish to grace him with many crowns, thus pleasing him and his wife, so that they could advance in the Romanian hierarchy or at least preserve their senior status? Or, perhaps, this tendency had come to characterize the Romanian people over a number of generations? More explicitly, was there a natural inclination to bow down to a king or leader, to glorify his name day and night as a human being considered to be

the representative of the Almighty on Romanian soil, to tell of his heroic deeds and present him as the most beloved and admired son of the Romanian people (no matter whether he behaved well or badly towards his people)? To this one should add the custom that had taken root in the communist bloc, particularly in the USSR, to adorn and glorify the leader of the state for all the achievements accomplished only because of his provident leadership. I do not know that these characteristics can provide an adequate explanation for the gradual development of the personality cult that reached a new peak in Romania during my mission there, marked by Ceaușescu's long years in power (1965–1989) as secretary-general of the RCP, as president of the republic, and as supreme commander of its army.

This personality cult was multifaceted. I present here only a number of examples in which it is most saliently expressed. For instance, the speakers at conferences, public meetings, opening sessions of parliament, and at the party assembly, in the presence of the Ceaușescu couple, used to include in their addresses words of praise and glorification to the leader and his wife. In response, the audience (with the exception of the foreign ambassadors) would give a standing ovation and applaud continuously whenever Ceaușescu's name was mentioned, until the chairman gave the sign to stop clapping and sit down. The foreign ambassadors who participated at these events, in a separate gallery, were compelled to stand, out of courtesy, at special references.

I remember that at one of these events we stood 54 times! Counting, on such occasions, became a diplomatic sport. I learned that this sport had been customary in the diplomatic corps also in the periods prior to mine. And as in the USSR when a speaker wanted to beautify his speech he quoted a relevant reference to Lenin's words, so was it customary in Romania to quote Ceaușescu's words. The audience then stood up to cheer the speaker upon hearing the relevant quotation.

The media used to praise Ceaușescu's creative political thought and his contribution to the achievements of Romania, as expressed in Romania's initiatives at the UN for the consolidation of peace and the international system of relations and international cooperation. Literary works, particularly in poetry and music in scores, if not hundreds, of songs, cantatas, and poems of praise were written in honour of the leader, and these were published frequently on the occasion of festive events. Romanian historiography during his rule stressed the centrality of Ceaușescu as the great doer bringing changes to Romanian society. At the Museum of History of the RCP, in Bucharest, very little space was dedicated to the founders of the party and its leaders prior to Ceaușescu's taking over the reins. The most central and important figure was Ceaușescu with his wife in the background. That same display also stood in a special hall dedicated to Ceaușescu at the History Museum in Bucharest, which contained a large collection of presents that the Ceaușescu couple had received from world personages.

Castles all over Romania in which the Ceaușescu couple used to dwell were decorated, according to well-informed sources, with the most famous art treasures taken out of permanent exhibitions in the state museums.

Many sets of prestigious publications containing the works and speeches of Ceaușescu as well as speeches given and articles written in his honour, were printed and distributed in Romania in large quantities with the purpose of showing the Romanian people how greatly their leader was admired in the world. The number of such phenomena and similar ones grew daily in the final years of Ceaușescu's rule.

To the long-time tradition of enlarging his personality cult in Romania were probably also added a political motive to demonstrate the love and admiration of the Romanian people for him, following the criticism heard in east and west alike against his failures in his internal policy, and a national motive to characterize him as one of the greatest leaders in Romania's history, thus emphasizing the direct line connecting him with the giants of the past.

The new element, however, was in enhancing the personality cult of his wife Elena that began a decade before the end of his rule, but which grew on a particularly large scale in his final years. Presented here are some of the entries I registered in my diary in those days. I think they contain a partial answer to the question of why Elena's fate matched that of her husband when the anti-communist revolution broke out in Romania on 20 December 1989.

*8 January 1986.* For two days now the media has been extensively marking Elena Ceaușescu's birthday by presenting long surveys of her deeds and contributions as a 'world renowned scientist' and as a central figure in the leadership of the party and state in her functions as a member of the Politburo, as First Deputy Prime Minister and chairman of the National Council for Science and Research. Also, a congratulatory letter addressed to her was published in full on behalf of the Politburo. Reading it out on radio and television took some ten minutes. Poems dedicated to her and letters of congratulation sent to her from various corners of Romania were also read out. They were written mainly by institutions and regional councils. Maybe this parade of songs and poems of praise, unprecedented in its volume and content, was aimed at preparing her to be the 'natural heir' of her husband.

*8 January 1987.* The media is full of praise for Elena Ceaușescu on the occasion of her 70th birthday (without mentioning her age) owing to her contribution to scientific research and to the political and technological progress of Romania. Emphasis is being put on the publication of her book, *Research in Chemistry and in the Technology of Polymers* (a collection of essays written by a staff of scientists and published in her name as editor by the Academy of Science, Bucharest, in 1983). Mention was made of the fact that the book was translated into other languages such as German, in Switzerland and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), after being published in the USSR, China, Italy, Britain, France, Holland, and North Korea. A message of greeting on behalf of the Politburo praising her achievements was read aloud before a broad forum of party and government members gathered in a solemn atmosphere in the former King's Palace in Sinaia. Last night the reading of the message took up the entire news broadcast and in the morning papers it was published together with exciting congratulatory telegrams from all over Romania. No member of the party or government leadership except the president has enjoyed such extensive publicity in this era on such an occasion. It seems that this is an additional expression in preparing Elena Ceaușescu as co-leader with her husband and his possible heir on her merits.

*15 January 1987.* In a 'thank you' letter to all who congratulated her on her broadcast last night on radio and television, in the news headlines, and on the front page of today's papers, Elena Ceaușescu stated among other things: 'I appreciate these manifestations as an expression of deep feelings of confidence on behalf of the working people and the entire nation toward our heroic and praiseworthy Communist Party, the political force leading the whole nation in whose ranks I began to be active during the youngest years of my life and

which I shall serve with all my being. I shall also act with all my energy in the future for the utmost accomplishments of the party's policy, and for the economic and social development of the country; for the constant advancement of science and culture; for the realisation of the nation's main aspirations and for the victory of peace, cooperation, and understanding between the nations of the world.

*11 May 1987.* In spite of the rumour that an order was given by the leadership to tone down the profile of the Ceaușescu couple's personality cult, this was not discernible at the festive assembly held on the occasion of the First of May. The familiar spectacle of stormy applause continued whenever the 'achievements' of Ceaușescu were praised. It was Politburo member Lina Ciobanu, one of the two main speakers at the gathering, who mentioned Ceaușescu's name 16 times and Elena's name several times in a speech that lasted 15 minutes, emphasizing their achievements in superlatives. None of the past or present activists of the RCP was mentioned, except for the Ceaușescu couple. The May Day celebrations were characterized more by the praises bestowed upon the conductor and his wife than by acknowledging the significance and symbolism of this holiday.

*4 January 1988.* At the festive session of parliament assembled to mark the 40th anniversary of the proclamation of Romania as a republic (i.e., when its last king, Mihai, was deposed), Elena Ceaușescu, much to the surprise of many, was the main and sole speaker on this occasion, in the presence of her husband. The contents of her speech resembled very much those of her husband's, containing all his emphases in the internal and foreign policy of Romania. Although during the march of speeches she was called a 'revolutionary', prominent states-woman and a distinguished scientist with an international reputation, some of the party's personalities told me they hated her because of her domineering, tyrannical, invidious and boastful character. They completely nullified the possibility that Elena Ceaușescu would inherit her husband's tasks. It seemed to me that in their hatred towards her all the Romanian people were united. In a regime where the Ceaușescu family occupied the key position in the hierarchy, nobody could predict how things would develop. If circumstances would compel Ceaușescu to relinquish his post, there were signs, according to some opinions, indicating that Elena would invest all her effort in taking over the leadership of the country, with the assistance of some personalities and organizations that would fall under her control. Would she succeed — and if so, for how long — the future would tell.

*21 August 1988.* Last night at the opening of the 23 August (the day of the anti-fascist revolution) ceremonies at the central stadium of Bucharest in the presence of thousands of people Elena Ceaușescu gave the presidential speech. Another venue to present her as an equal partner in status to that of her husband the president. Her speech lasted for an hour repeating Ceaușescu's central theses on social, economic, and political themes (including the call for an international conference with the participation of Israel and the PLO to settle the Israeli—Arab dispute). This was an exceptional manifestation as in the last years this festive event was opened by a short speech given only by the mayor of Bucharest.

*24 January 1989.* The volume of events to mark Elena Ceaușescu's birthday was this year the largest ever known. This time she was awarded (or she awarded herself!) the Medal of Heroism. In her speech of gratitude, she recalled her 50 years of activity within the RCP and

her contribution to Romania's socialist and scientific development. Her husband, as General Secretary of the RCP and President of the Republic, she mentioned only once, not even by name. The entire content of her speech was aimed at stressing the fact that she reached her present status by her own credit. The many praising articles published about her were according her the image of an equal status to that of her husband. A new peak of her personality cult was thus registered.<sup>5</sup>

*2 February 1989.* There was a decline in the number of people who greeted President Ceaușescu on his birthday (26 January) in comparison with the number of greetings he received on this occasion in the past. This time absent were greetings not only from the West but also from East Europe, with the exception of Gorbachev's greeting (transmitted orally by the Soviet ambassador in Bucharest) and the greetings of Zhivkov, Bulgaria's president. It shows that Ceaușescu is becoming more and more isolated in the international community. Within Romania during five days the media devoted large space to mark the event. Telegrams were published from organizations and regions to an extent never known before. It seems that it was destined for abroad no less than for home needs to demonstrate the 'unity' of the nation around its leader.

The nurturing of the personality cult continued until the outburst of the revolution against his rule on 20 December 1989. Five days afterwards the Ceaușescu couple were executed, following a court martial, by a firing squad in accordance with an order given by the revolutionary leaders. Their corpses were clandestinely buried under false names in the Bucharest cemetery. Eye witnesses say that their graves are always covered with flowers. Their real names now stand on their monuments.

## **NEW ASSIGNMENTS FOR ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT**

In a pragmatic speech given at the People's Regional Councils Congress on 9 September 1985 (to which I was officially invited even before I presented my credentials to President Ceaușescu as Israel's new ambassador to Romania) the President presented a new assignment, as he put it, in the country's economic management, according to which a new system of self-management would be introduced in the various regions of the republic by financing the state provisions out of the self-generated income with the aim of increasing the agricultural and industrial products of Romania.

The assignment reminded me of the attempt made in this direction in Yugoslavia and Hungary. There it was quite successful, being the main factor in encouraging the motivation to increase production by enlarging individual and group responsibility in the domain of economic activity. But, whereas there this attempt was accompanied by giving permission to develop private property in the production process, in Romania this was completely rejected. Yet, this proposal testified to a tendency in search of a new way to encourage personal initiative in the framework of collective responsibility. It was one of the additional means taken by Ceaușescu in his efforts to draw Romania out of its failing economic crisis, particularly in the domains of agriculture.

Actually, it did not have any chance to succeed. Personal initiative did not suit the party's instructions, not only that it was not accepted, but there was a deep fear, as we learned, that the initiator who would act contrary to the party's guidelines would be punished and removed from

his post. Since income was secured in any case for the enterprise directors, they preferred to abstain from taking up new initiatives in order not to put themselves at risk. Moreover, it happened more than once that an enterprise or a certain forum proposed programmes for the improvement of the production level, then when Ceaușescu heard about it he used to nullify them on the spot as an expert on everything.

In those days Ceaușescu revealed in an interview to the editor of the Egyptian journal *October*, that in the last 40 years (1946–86) the industrial products of Romania grew by 100 per cent while the agricultural products by only seven per cent. This data, aimed at praising Romania's industrial achievements, revealed the (shameful) failure in the area of agriculture. This was no surprise.

Following his policy to transform Romania from an agricultural country, in the shortest time, to an industrial one, Ceaușescu uprooted thousands of farmers bringing them to the cities to turn them into industrial workers. By this forced policy he caused a lot of damage to the development of agricultural products. It was his ambition to accord Romania an industrial status equal to that of the other members of the Warsaw Pact and thus reject Moscow's dictate, according to which Romania would have to focus on agricultural production as a traditional agricultural country in the framework of the economic planning of the member states of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA), the common market of the Soviet bloc. The industrial sector, too, did not enjoy much from the uprooted farmers, since a great deal of time was needed to prepare them to be skilled industrial workers so that they could compete with workers of industrialised countries. Since the majority of the farmers lacked such experience the Romanian industry suffered great damage in addition to being badly managed. Ceaușescu, however, refused to admit to reality, and when the expected revenues were not achieved, and the standard of living of the population was constantly declining, he used to accuse the economic ministers of economic failures, as he did in the Politburo's meetings of 6 February 1982, blaming them (he used to change them frequently) for the failing management of the last five-year programme and for the failure to realise it, influencing, as he claimed, the standard of living of the population.<sup>6</sup>

Ceaușescu's greatest mistake — to which he never admitted — was that he never blamed the system of economic planning nor the system of communist centralisation in which he strongly believed without any reservation, but did blame the management and the performance that were actually a direct result of his system.

In an ideological speech held at a meeting of members of the Politburo central committee of the RCP, the People's Council, and the government on 21 January 1987 (that came to greet him on his 69th birthday), Ceaușescu surveyed the achievements of Romania's regime against the background of past inheritance. He admitted that of the mistakes made 'some [were] unavoidable and some could have been avoided', He negated the idea to improve socialism by developing 'small private property', which was not the right way to communism, but an 'optical illusion', as he put it.

He called for a distinction to be made between the laws of socialism and the laws based on exploitation and inequality, warning of the danger in the illusion common to the young generation, according to which the (socialist) revolution had already come to an end and that from now on one could lead a comfortable way of life. He negated the idea of giving permission to economic units to be independent, without the central guidance of the communist party. Romania's foreign debts, he claimed, should be returned 'in the shortest time' (meaning to



compel the Romanian citizens to work under hard conditions to direct almost the entirety of their industrial and agricultural products for export), so that Romania would not be put under pressure by the moneylending states. He did not specify how. He promised that the citizens would be in a better economic situation only after the foreign debts could be paid off. In the meantime, he once again accused the economic ministries of bearing the main responsibility for the economic failures — whose improvement could certainly not have been achieved by changing those who headed them, but rather by introducing radical changes in the organization and management system and by slowing down the rate of foreign debt repayment, which Ceaușescu always rejected on the spot.<sup>7</sup>

In his speech at the Agricultural Council on 1 September 1998, Ceaușescu justified the Romanian communist position according to which ‘it is necessary to implement socialism in the condition and realities of Romania’, adding that it was ‘impossible to build socialism according to models and forms’. In conclusion he said:

We wish to cooperate actively with all the socialist states, to implement with them extensive exchanges of experiences. But every communist country, including our people and state, will independently determine what suits them mostly and how to build socialism. We will not permit anyone, and we will vehemently reject any attempt by any side, to give us lessons claiming that they know better than we do the problems of socialism. Let anyone demonstrate it in their own home and in their people. Thus socialism will best serve each state and the cause of socialism in general.<sup>8</sup>

His words were mainly directed at Gorbachev, following his visit to Romania where he made his opinions known for the cause of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, condemning the calcification of the communist regimes.

In the course of 1989 Ceaușescu frequently referred to the question of economic reforms in the communist bloc. In his pronouncements, Ceaușescu sounded as if he would be the one to lead the conservative camp among the East European bloc (Romania, Czechoslovakia, GDR) *vis-à-vis* the progressive camp aiming towards the introduction of reforms in a front with the USSR headed by Gorbachev, Hungary, and Poland. In an interview, published in the Romanian press on 10 February 1989, that Ceaușescu gave to the correspondent of the Finnish communist journal, he said *inter alia*:

Life shows that what appears to be very well today may, after some time, following ongoing changes, seem unsuitable to the new demands of the socio-economic development. In this spirit we refer to the concerns of some countries in relation to the improvements of socialist society and building. These concerns are justified and vital. Some should have been settled earlier and could have been influenced thus better on the general development. However, some problems are treated in a way that we don't understand and we don't think that it corresponds to the socialist development under the best conditions...

The idea of improving socialist society, like any other society, on the basis of getting to know science and making use of it, takes into consideration the marching forwards and not backwards. This is why we believe that anything that is considered to be a certain renouncement of some principles of socialism, such as the opening of ways to certain types of capitalism, does not correspond to the principles of the improvement of a society on the socialist-scientific basis. It goes without saying that each party and each country should solve its problems according to its needs, and life which is the true judge, will show to what

extent some of these means were right or wrong...

In an article in *Scînteia* that appeared on 31 March 1989 under the title 'Responsibility for the Development of the Romanian Economy', Ceaușescu condemned all those 'who abandon the centrality of the Communist Party, substituting "free initiative", thus causing the diminishing of the party's role to the status of observer...'

Following this statement I then wrote to my colleagues in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem that Ceaușescu sounded like a prophet, being confident that any deviation from the basic principles of socialism as they were crystallised during all the years of the communist regimes in East Europe, including the undermining of the Communist Party centrality in leading the state, society, and economy, were likely to dismantle the structure of the communist regime (as did indeed happen). Hence he held to his adherence to the present, and the non-undermining of the system by introduction of improvements and adjustments to the needs of each country, without being heretical towards the main cause.

On 27–28 June 1989 the plenary of the Central Committee of the RCP was convened, whereupon it decided unanimously to accept the Politburo's recommendation, namely, to re-elect Ceaușescu as secretary-general of the RCP at its 14th Congress scheduled for November 1989. Ceaușescu gave thanks for the expression of confidence given to him, promising that if it was accepted at the 14th Congress, he would continue with his efforts to achieve the goals defined at the plenary session regarding the development of the country until the year 2000.

Upon closing the plenary session Ceaușescu once again referred to the political and economic reforms in the Soviet bloc, this time sharply attacking the multiparty system (in Poland and Hungary, without mentioning them by name). So he said:

The political parties were formed when the world was divided into socially antagonistic classes. The existence of several parties in a socialist regime became anachronistic, constituting a retreat. I am looking forward with concern to the development of several socialist states which may undermine the basis of socialism. The leading role of the Communist Party and its centrality should be secured on all fronts. The same goes for the socialist ownership of means of production. Private ownership contradicts the laws of nature and the socialist development.<sup>9</sup>

On 3 July 1989, I concluded my impressions of this session (the last one during my mission to Romania) by observing that the plenary of the Central Committee served Ceaușescu as a platform for rejecting completely the ideas of the political and economic reforms penetrating East Europe, including the influence of the *perestroika* and *glasnost* ideas promoted by Gorbachev — vehemently opposed by Ceaușescu. Also for demonstrating his power, by showing that the party was unanimously supporting him, and that the Central Committee's decision to re-elect him to the position of secretary-general of the RCP at its forthcoming 14th Congress, following the Politburo's recommendation, showed full confidence in his leadership and policy.

This demonstration took place on the eve of the Warsaw Pact members' conference on 8 July 1989, and in face of manifestations of opposition to his rule by masses of workers, writers, and party veterans who, for the first time, demonstrated the growing gap between the leadership of the party headed by him and the masses of people who were living in unbearable conditions. Their voices were silenced, almost disappearing, just because they dared oppose the reduction in their salaries, and for demanding the supply of basic foods and adequate means for heat during

winter. On behalf of the members of the Politburo and the Central Committee of the RCP, in their unanimous support for him, Ceaușescu probably thought that he had found the right answer to his critics inside and outside Romania.

When addressing, on 5 October 1989, a conference of the RCP dealing with economic problems, Ceaușescu referred contemptuously to the 'free economic market', in which 'a small number of people is getting richer whereas the state and its population are the losers'. Therefore, he declared that there was no place for a 'free market' in Romania, which meant, in his view, 'a retreat to capitalism. It was necessary to maintain price controls. Romania would remain committed to socialist trade'.<sup>10</sup>

Speaking to the opening of the 14th Congress of the RCP on 20 November 1989 in the presence of 3,400 delegates, 115 representatives of foreign parties from 82 countries, Ceaușescu repeated his central theses, declaring that only scientific socialism could change people and society, and lead the state to a stage of full development and equality between classes. 'Romania will not deviate from this way and her struggle for fulfillment of socialism will continue.' He condemned the leaders of the socialist states of the Soviet bloc, who deviated from this way, and for the mistakes that they had made, but refrained from mentioning their names. He concluded by saying that he would continue to solidify socialism and that the Communist Party was the only force to lead the country.

The Congress delegates who re-elected him to the post of secretary-general of the RCP stood upon their feet 67 times to applaud his address. It happened one month before the outbreak of the revolution that put an end to his rule and his life.

The Congress's orchestrated applause, however, did not reflect the isolation in which Ceaușescu found himself within the Soviet bloc. Many of the western ambassadors and several East European ambassadors were demonstratively absent from the ceremonial opening of the Congress. There were communist parties which for the first time declined the invitation to participate at the congress, such as the Socialist Workers Party of Hungary, and the communist parties of Italy, Austria, and Finland. The GDR's press agency, ADN, reported from Bucharest on the opening day of the congress that these parties excused their absence by saying that it was because of the 'continuous oppression of human rights in Romania, the personality cult, and the gross violations of socialist democracy'.<sup>11</sup> The communist parties of Belgium and the GDR sent low-ranking members as observers to the Congress. The same was true for Israel's Labour Party. *Le Drapeau Rouge*, Belgium's communist party journal, wrote as follows in its editorial of 21 November 1989:

The Congress held in Bucharest for the re-election of Ceaușescu as head of the RCP was opened at a moment when there was an almost surrealistic contrast between an incredible dictatorship by a 'leader' along with his family and a stagnant regime that represents a grotesque caricature of principles that he was supposed to believe in, whereas on the other hand a spirit of change was sweeping East Europe in a ever-increasing waves.<sup>12</sup>

The USSR's message to the Congress mentioned the need to exchange mutual experiences, to expose more positively the human potential of socialism, a potential on which the progress of each socialist state was dependent, and the magnetic attraction of socialist ideology all over the world.<sup>13</sup>

These were the comments and greetings that showed Ceaușescu's gradually growing isolation

in both the East and West, without Ceaușescu sensing that his world was slowly disintegrating into nothing. On 3 December 1989 the Romanian press announced that ‘the Romanian Politburo has authorised Ceaușescu to act together with the political parties and revolutionary movements to convene as soon as possible an international conference to discuss problems facing the communist states and the communist movement’. Apparently Ceaușescu decided to move towards the implementation of the idea that Romania should lead conservative communism in East Europe. He probably wholeheartedly believed that each deviation toward liberation in the spirit of Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* would lead the communist countries towards capitalism. No coalescence of a communist regime with a liberal one was possible in his view. His conservatism was encouraged by those who surrounded him, by his family members who were carrying out responsible functions in the administration, and by members of the Central Committee and the Politburo. All these people did not express any opinion contradicting Ceaușescu's views and parroted ‘Yes’ to his ideological way, either because they feared losing the elevated status they had attained in the administration thanks only to Ceaușescu or, perhaps, they did not assess properly and thoroughly enough the fateful test slowly approaching them at home and abroad, for the future of Romania's communist regime and of Ceaușescu's rule itself.

## REPAYMENT OF FOREIGN DEBTS

In his concluding address at the plenary session of the Central Committee of the RCP, held on 12 April 1989, Ceaușescu announced the repayment of all of Romania's foreign debts. His announcement was somewhat dramatic and probably aimed at demonstrating the achievements of his policy: Romania had freed itself from its dependence on foreign countries, especially western countries, thus depriving them of their right to interfere in Romania's internal affairs — particularly in the domain of human rights — and at the same time announcing the coming of a new era of relief for his people. Here is the relevant passage on his statement:

At the end of March we paid off Romania's foreign debts. In 1980 they amounted to 11 billion US dollars. From 1975 to March 1989 we paid 21 billion dollars including over seven billion of interest. These debts do not include those in roubles that were paid off long ago. Now we have to collect the debts that various countries owe us, amounting to 2.5 billion dollars. The repayment of debts, no doubt, demanded great effort. We had to act in such a way so that we should secure the country's economic development and the gradual repayment of all the debts, and at the same time take steps for securing continuous order, discipline, good management of the economy, and all other spheres of activity.<sup>14</sup>

In my report to the MFA in Jerusalem I mentioned that this was an exceptional phenomenon — perhaps an unprecedented act in the contemporary world of finance — and it was doubtful to think that any other regime was in a position to pay off such huge debts in such a relatively short time, on account of the public's welfare and standard of living and on account of economic, scientific, and technological development. This is why I questioned the usefulness of this rapid repayment of debts, wondering what Romania would do with the sums of money used for repayment of debts, and whether Romania would use them for the sake of improving the population's living conditions.

I had no definite answer. But I did try to assess the situation in light of the following concepts:

1. One had to take into consideration that the modernisation of industry, technology, agriculture, science, and medicine would demand an inordinate amount of money to reduce

the present gap. If one factored in the rate of progress in the West, the result would be that the lag behind would be even greater than the present one. One could presume that the Ceaușescu regime, which saw the role of the individual as destined to serve the system and not vice versa, would apply a large amount of the disposable capital for vital investments in economic development and for show window enterprises more than for the population's relief. But considering the growing criticism in the West regarding the low standard of living in the country and its bitter manifestations (which the regime had managed to suppress until then), it might be possible for a certain percentage of the disposable capital to be devoted to improving the population's situation. Would it be enough?

2. As long as Ceaușescu was the omnipotent ruler of Romania, it was doubtful whether the population's economic situation would improve after the repayment of debts.
3. Romania's crucial problem was certainly the essence of the regime and its structure. Without radical change in the direction of liberalisation, there would not be any improvement in the slipshod management of the state's economy.
4. Perhaps in the post-Ceaușescu era a lesson would be drawn from those regimes that had no remedy, and that totalitarianism, oppression, and the suppression of human rights were not the best incentives for prompting the recuperation of the state's economy, nor to insure an adequate standard of living for the people.

Retrospectively one might note that from the time Ceaușescu informed his citizens about the total repayment of foreign debts, in the eight months to the end of his rule, no improvement was felt in the population's difficult economic straits. Moreover, his own situation grew ever-more uncomfortable owing to the shortage of basic foodstuffs and medicines, as well as the lack of heating during winter. The high mortality rate of infants and elderly people continued, though official statistics did not reveal it. Rumours about it, however, spread all over Bucharest.

## THE SYSTEMATISATION OF VILLAGES

In an address on 2 June 1988 to the National Council of Workers and the National Council of Agriculture, Industry, Food, Forestry, and the Water Authority, Ceaușescu repeated the need to introduce modernisation in the villages. On this occasion he remarked that the central commission nominated to deal with this matter was supposed to supervise the liquidation of thousands of villages, concentrating their population in 'territorial units' of an urban nature with the aim of economising state agricultural land destined for collective cultivation.<sup>15</sup>

A month earlier, while speaking to Politburo members, Ceaușescu noted that this plan was for the long run and should be implemented 'without pressure'.<sup>16</sup> He meant it should be treated carefully to avoid opposition.

When informing the MFA in Jerusalem of this plan, I made, *inter alia*, the following remarks:

1. Actually this plan aims to uproot the rural population to a great extent from its homes, land, traditional living conditions, and other assets. At first glance it seemed to be a grand programme unprecedented in East Europe — beginnings were already underway in the outskirts of Bucharest — and the vision of systematisation of the villages, if implemented, would in large part liquidate many parts of Romania of a rural nature and with it the farmer class as it had crystallised in the country from generation to generation, putting their imprint

on the social, economic, and cultural values of the Romanian people. I felt that the destruction of this class would be no less grave than the forced collectivisation system in Stalin's USSR at the beginning of the 1930s.

2. Even if it was necessary to modernise the villages by introducing modern systems for the agricultural cultivation of products — and thus improve the farmers' standard of living — there was no need to plan the liquidation of 2,000 villages to vacate land for agricultural purposes and at the same time house the farmers in three- or four-storey buildings in what was called by Ceaușescu 'agro-industrial centres'.
3. In addition to damaging the Romanian-German-Hungarian rural way of life, Ceaușescu seemed, because of his intention to implement this plan, to be opening a confrontation with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and with Hungary, whose minorities were living in the villages of Transylvania and Banat, areas scheduled to be incorporated in the systematisation. Indeed, the day was not distant when Germany's Foreign Minister, Hans Dietrich Genscher, would send a sharp note to Romania's Foreign Minister, Ion Totu, in August 1988, protesting against this plan and warning that if it were implemented, relations would worsen not only between the two countries but between Romania and the European Community. According to my colleague from the FRG, this note was sent by special messenger to stress the seriousness of the warning. I expressed my presumption that this serious admonition, accompanied by voices in the FRG *Bundestag* calling for the imposition of sanctions on Romania should this plan not be withdrawn, might deter Ceaușescu from implementing it.

At that time we did not hear of any local opposition by the farmers, except for a small group of Romanian intellectuals, headed by Doina Cornea of Cluj, who condemned the plan in her interviews given to the Western media. This helped to shape Western public opinion, which vigorously demanded the abandonment of the plan. It also seemed that the combination of outside deterrence and internal opposition might have influenced Ceaușescu to postpone the implementation of this grand plan for future generations. There was no reference to it in his declarations, but he was determined gradually to implement it, presumably being sure that he would succeed in doing so (as he had in destroying synagogues, churches, and entire quarters within the framework of the new municipal planning of Bucharest).

Undoubtedly, the December 1989 revolution in Romania was nurtured, *inter alia*, by the threat of systematisation of the villages and by the destruction of old churches. The irony of fate was that Ceaușescu's totalitarianism, particularly in Transylvania and Banat, united the Hungarian and German minorities with the Romanian majority. This unity was sufficiently strong to help ignite the flame of revolution in 1989.

## STATUS OF PRESIDENT CEAUȘESCU

An Israeli friend, an historian who visited Bucharest in July 1986 to collect documentary material on the history of Romania's Jews, told me then that he had heard the following from the heads of the Romanian Institute of Military History and Theory.

At the meeting of the Heads of the Warsaw Pact States, held a short time earlier in Budapest, Gorbachev demonstrated a worsening attitude to Ceaușescu. He asked Ceaușescu, among other things, 'Who is your intended heir?' Ceaușescu replied, 'My wife.' Gorbachev said

determinedly, 'By no means,' proposing the name of Ion Iliescu. Apparently, as the Israeli historian was told, Iliescu had studied law together with Gorbachev at Moscow University and had been the most outstanding student of the graduating class of 1953. From then on Gorbachev, it seems, greatly admired him. Being aware of the good relations between the two of them, Ceaușescu had relieved Iliescu of all functions in the party and had him followed relentlessly by the Romanian security services. According to these Romanian sources, Gorbachev had requested that Ceaușescu do no harm to Iliescu. Thus far their remarks in this matter.

The assumption that Iliescu was removed from his party functions because of his good relations with Gorbachev just did not seem likely. Actually, still in the 1960s when Iliescu was chairman of the Communist Youth Union in Romania, he was accused of deviating from the ideological line of the RCP. It was for that reason he was removed from his function as member of the party's Central Committee. He was also removed, some years later, from his candidacy for Politburo membership. These removals were carried out long before Gorbachev became the USSR leader. Even if the reason for them as presented by the Romanian source was unlikely, Gorbachev's proposal to Ceaușescu in 1986 to nominate Iliescu as his heir is most interesting, since Iliescu was indeed nominated to the post of Romania's president at the end of 1989, with the outbreak of the revolution in which he took an active part.

In addition, the Romanian sources revealed to my friend that at that time a group of members belonging to the RCP was living in Moscow 'in reserve', destined to succeed Romania's leader and leadership, although on the surface there was no intention 'to lean towards Moscow', with the change of leadership in Romania.

This information, as taken in by my friend, attests to there having been a small group of Romanian personalities concerned with the subject of leadership changes. As part of the opposition to Ceaușescu, they began to engage themselves in actual preparations to depose Ceaușescu, with the knowledge of Gorbachev. This group, apparently, acted to advance Iliescu, manifesting complete opposition to the possibility that Elena Ceaușescu be appointed as the successor of her husband.

Professor Mihai Botez, known in Romania and abroad as a skilled scientist in mathematics and as an opponent to Ceaușescu's regime, sharply criticized the internal policy of Ceaușescu on Radio Free Europe. At a reception held at the US ambassador's residence on 4 July 1986, we had a lengthy talk, in which he introduced two assumptions which were somehow related to the information given above. He said that in the first stage Elena Ceaușescu or Emil Bobu, a member of the Party's Central Committee (in charge of administration), and the Politburo were the direct candidates to succeed Ceaușescu temporarily. In the second stage, some younger technocrats, of the government kind, would be found who would take up the leadership. In this context, he pointed out Iliescu as a serious candidate who excelled as a talented organizer and a good ideologist, 'not necessarily pro-Soviet', who had a good knowledge of economic planning and despised the cult of personality.

Generally speaking, he went on, there was no opposition to Ceaușescu's rule. 'In a totally dictatorial state, as in the case of Hitler's Germany, an opposition could not develop. Romania's nationalism is deeply rooted in the consciousness of the Romanian leadership and a pro-Soviet turn is not seen on the horizon. All are anti-Soviets, but know 'as Ceaușescu did wisely' they need to preserve correct relations with the USSR'.

The rumours of 'what will happen after Ceaușescu?' were then spread in Romania and

throughout the world, although Ceaușescu continued to appear in public no less frequently than before. In spite of signs of weakness on his face (the rumours at that time focused more on his health than on his opposition), there was no evidence of a paring down of his activities. As to the information we heard, I tried to assess it from various points of view in my reports to the MFA in Jerusalem:

1. If the information given to the Israeli historian by the people at the Romanian Institute headed by the researcher and historian Ilya Ceaușescu, the president's brother, is true, we are learning for the first time of an opposition to the leadership acting from outside it, either from Moscow or from dissidents under home arrest.
2. The economic distress of the Romanian people is so deep that there is no fear, or so it seems, of an opposition taking over the leadership of the country, although the population would be ready to welcome it, even renouncing its national pride (so deeply rooted in its consciousness) and its image of an independent state under the present leadership, if only the new leadership would raise the standard of living by supplying basic food products, adequate medical services, and means for heating in wintertime.
3. It seems that the struggle for power won't bear a personal character, namely will not look for a person who is now in the top leadership (with Elena Ceaușescu most suitable to succeed the leader). Most probably the struggle for power will be held between those who regard dependence on Moscow (acceptance of Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* theories) as a refuge from the personality cult and the state's economic recovery on the one hand, or the continuation of Ceaușescu's domination — harsh in internal affairs, flexible on foreign affairs — on the other.
4. Possibly fear of 'Sovietisation' was the factor prompting Ilya Ceaușescu to reinforce the national consciousness of the people in his research, including shaping the tendency in the Romanian historiography to present Romania's fascism as 'human' and the regime of Marshal Antonescu, Hitler's ally, as a military-nationalist regime rather than a fascist one.

I heard an instructive assessment of the prevailing situation in mid-November 1986 from Hungary's ambassador in Bucharest, who usually had reliable sources of information at the top level of the RCP leadership. Here are his observations which I reported to my colleagues at the MFA in Jerusalem.

He told me that some demonstrations had been held lately in the Romanian towns of Timișoara, Tirgu-Mureș, and Brâila. In Bucharest itself abusive inscriptions were written on walls but removed during the night. In Timișoara a women's demonstration took place with the women holding children in their arms and shouting 'Give us bread!' They were received by the mayor who promised to ensure the regular supply of food.

Further, he reported that Ceaușescu is quoting incorrect and unreal statistics of achievements. He is receiving the data from senior officials without sensing the misinformation they are handing him. He is entirely detached from the existing reality in the country. He is not told of the actual situation prevailing and is therefore unaware of the dismally low standard of living. The Hungarian minority's situation is the worst in comparison to the rest of the population.

Also, he said, there is an industrial plant in Bucharest for assembling buses. Its mechanical capacity is geared for producing 5,000 units a year, destined mainly for export. The annual output reaches no more a few hundred units. The plant imports parts for the buses from Hungary.



In 1986 only 35 parts were ordered. To show that there was no chance to export larger quantities of buses. Soviet experts who came to examine the quality of the buses at this plant and from a similar one in Braşov, with the purpose of exporting them to the USSR, went back empty-handed. They claimed that the quality of the buses was unsatisfactory and could not be recommended for import to the USSR.

Reporting to the MFA in Jerusalem about the ambassador's assessments, I remarked that the ambassador raised additional examples of the sad Romanian reality and that I supposed that his observations attesting to how remote Ceauşescu was from the daily reality in his own country were probably not considered a secret among his colleagues from East Europe. It is easy to imagine to what extent Ceauşescu was hated by them, being the rebellious leader of the East European 'family' and remote from setting a good example of the 'achievements of Socialism' in the communist regimes of the Soviet bloc.

In my evaluation of the situation that I sent to the MFA in Jerusalem in February 1987, I observed, *inter alia*:

1. With Ceaucescu's reprimand of his economic ministers (particularly the minister of energy whom he accused of being responsible for the shortage of fuel for home heating and cooking) and indirectly the Politburo members for bad organization and economic mismanagement, he simply created a sort of confrontation by erecting a barrier between himself and those who were carrying out his instructions. The people, however, probably regarded him as the major person guilty for their desperate situation.
2. For the first time, anonymous leaflets were distributed demanding Ceaucescu's removal. The first, in mid-January 1987, called for a general strike on 23 January 1987 to protest against the distress of Romania's population under Ceauşescu's rule. The second, in mid-February 1987, did not call, as did the previous one, for a revolt against the party leadership, nor did it ask for a change of the regime but rather to change Ceauşescu, the dictator, claiming that he had enslaved the Romanian people causing poverty and distress by his one-man rule and craziness.
3. The people's resentment became increasingly deeper. Citizens who, in the past, had refrained from criticizing the regime at all now began to complain bitterly about their situation. It was the third winter they had gone through without any heat. The electricity supply was limited. There were severe shortages of gas for domestic needs, of fuel for heating and for private cars, and of food (for more than half a year no meat had been for sale in the stores, since it was destined for export).

New regulations that had come into force reduced even further both domestic and industrial consumption of energy, which had been restricted in any case even previously. The freeze had caused a wave of colds, physical exhaustion, and other illnesses. Thus, the number of people absent from work increased considerably. The death rate, particularly of infants and the elderly, increased because of the cold, insufficient food, and a shortage of medicines. Hospitals were unable to absorb the growing number of sick people; thus it happened that two sick persons were hospitalised in the same bed. If elderly persons called for first aid at home they were refused after giving their age. The lines snaking around in front of grocery stores of people wishing to buy food grew longer and longer, and not many people were lucky enough to purchase any food at all. Women of child-bearing age were compelled to undergo a monthly gynecological check to see if they were pregnant. Pregnant

women were under constant observation so that they should not carry out abortions, forbidden by law. (Ceașescu wanted to ensure the increase of Romania's population this way) Under such circumstances, to preach morals about the need to improve work productivity, as Ceașescu did in his public appearances, was a mockery.

4. Much anger was aroused following the destruction of homes (mainly private ones) and ancient churches in the framework of Bucharest municipal planning, to be replaced by the building of the 'Victory of Socialism' boulevard and a new presidential palace at its end. This behaviour was considered a manifestation of contempt for historic sites and an offence against religious people (including Jews). No wonder this clearly demarked a sharp transition from a restrained population, seemingly bordering on the indifferent, to one manifesting anger against Ceașescu's leadership, a mood that gradually gained mass proportions.

Meanwhile, Ceașescu's image was seriously diminishing in the West, owing to economic and social failures inside Romania, despite his political initiatives on the international scene and in spite of the impression (justly) created of his deviation from the Soviet line on matters of foreign policy. In the campaign for human rights he failed completely by his intolerant attitude toward Christian sects, by his discriminatory policy towards the Hungarian minority, by oppressing the Romanians' freedom of speech and by lowering their standard of living. The (correct) impression created in the West was that the harsh economic theories that Ceașescu aspired to put into practice were more important to him than the welfare and happiness of human life. The small amount of prestige he still enjoyed in the West resulted from Romania's relations with Israel, as the only country of the communist bloc not to have discontinued them; and from the granting of permission to Romania's Jews to emigrate to Israel, while the Jewish minority in Romania was enjoying rights equal to those of the other Romanians.

In the Warsaw Pact states, in some of which Ceașescu's image had begun to tarnish long before, an ideological confrontation of a new dimension began to be noticeable between him and Mikhail Gorbachev and János Kádár, against the background of their ideas about the need to introduce democratisation into communist regimes. Here was a communist leader, Ceașescu, head of a member state in the Warsaw Pact, who rose up to condemn the trends toward innovation in the communist economy by declaring that the proposed innovations constituted a deviation from the communist way and were leading back to capitalism. In essence, he presented himself as a true and faithful communist adhering to its principles even more than the Soviet leader himself.

Meanwhile, Ceașescu was confident of his status, relying on his secret security services, on the army under his command, and on the members of the Communist Party Central Committee (who had attained their status thanks to him) and on the remnants of his prestige deriving from his initiatives in the international arena. He assumed that the Western and non-aligned nations would not permit the Soviet Union to interfere with Romania's internal affairs; and trusted that the Romanian people, no matter how difficult their situation, would not apply for Soviet help. He was also relying on the progression of the yearly seasons: after winter, the spring and summer would come, and then, as he might have seen it, the people's anger would also melt away.

## **SUPPRESSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

In addition to the daily difficulties that Romania's citizens experienced under a rigid communist

regime that was far from attentive to their basic needs, the policy regarding respect for basic rights of the individual became harsher. This had a direct negative impact on the advancement of society as a whole. This phenomenon prevailed during all the years of the communist regime in Romania, particularly in the twilight of Ceaușescu's era.

For instance, the right of residence in the capital and the larger towns was limited for outside citizens. No residence permit was issued, unless it were proven with certainty that a citizen's residence in the capital (or another large town) was absolutely vital to the state. Few people could prove that. This meant that passage from town to town or from village to town, and even moving from one place of residence to another within the limits of the town, was conditional upon receiving permission from the authorities.

Also, the right of emigration of an individual and his family was only accorded on the basis of family reunification, after long bureaucratic footdragging that could last more than a year. And even this was limited to a number of citizens in return for 'ransom payments' in the case of Jewish emigration to Israel, people belonging to the German minority to West Germany, and a limited number of citizens who received an emigration permit to the USA, again within the framework of family reunification, thanks to the 'Most Favored Nation' status the US granted Romania. The extension of this status annually depended upon the positive response of Romania's authorities to requests by Romanian citizens to emigrate.

After having submitted their emigration requests, citizens were fired from their work. University students were immediately removed from their departments. The emigration permit was contingent on obtaining the consent of close relatives: in the case of opposition, permission was not granted. Before leaving Romania the potential emigrants were ordered to hand their residences over to the authorities in the best condition possible, to sign a declaration of their acceptance of relinquishing their Romanian nationality and of their having no claims against the Romanian government. This also referred, though it was not stated explicitly, to the right to compensation from their workplace as well as their right to a state pension for all the years they worked in Romania.

Marriage between a Romanian and a foreign citizen involved many obstacles. Years passed before permission was granted.

Romanian citizens who talked to or met with foreign citizens were obliged to report it. Sometimes they were investigated by the secret security services. Any working meetings with foreign representatives, including diplomats, in local institutions were subject to approval by the local official after receiving a clear-cut definition of the purpose of the meeting and the subject of the requested talk from the foreign representative. Such a meeting never took place in isolation. There was always a third person present, who took notes of every sentence uttered. Excluding the Romanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs or the President's Bureau, any appointment I requested, particularly in the party's institutions — the Ministries of Culture and Science, universities — all under the charge of Elena Ceaușescu, as chairwoman of the Council for Science and Research and Deputy Prime Minister, was subject to prior approval. Sometimes I waited over a week for a reply, it also happened that an answer took a fortnight.

Local citizens' approach to the foreign embassies was limited and under strict control. Local police guarding the embassies did so not only to protect them, but with the aim of controlling those who entered them. Local citizens were obliged to identify themselves before receiving permission to go inside. Thus, the authorities could trace their contacts with foreign missions.

Local citizens participating at receptions given by the heads of foreign missions had to obtain prior permission from the security services. Though I do have to note that towards Israel, to a certain extent, their attitude was more liberal than toward other foreign missions. But permission always had to be arranged in advance.

There was serious limitation of contacts between Romanian scientists and their western colleagues. Often, a scientist was not given permission to go abroad to participate in a scientific conference of an international nature. As for conferences of a bilateral nature — namely, working meetings between a Romanian delegation and that of a foreign country — all necessary means were taken, so that representatives of the Romanian security services were included in the delegation. There was a double reason for this: first, for fear that the Romanian scientist might provide state secrets in the course of the conference to his foreign colleagues; second, in case the Romanian scientist might decide not to return to Romania when the conference ended.

But a lack of close scientific contacts was also noted in other domains, with no connection to the causes just given. Because of budgetary shortages — particularly due to the desire to economise on foreign currency earmarked for the repayment of Romania's foreign debts — medical, scientific, and research institutions did not receive scientific publications from the West. I realised this when a senior scientist at the Ministry of Science asked me to get him old scientific publications from Israel (for the past ten years) for perusal by Romanian scientists. No doubt these limitations left their mark on the course of the medical, scientific, and research development of Romania, let alone the domain of social and economic research that was isolated for ideological reasons.

Of all the limitations mentioned here, and those not noted specifically too, the most important one affected freedom of speech and expression, freedom of organization and elections, freedom of creation and publication of works. As in all the other states in the communist bloc, in Romania the tendency was to rule so as to create a monolithic society in which the individual had no rights beyond the dictated norms. Surely enough, this principle was not applicable to rulers and high officials of the country, as in the entire communist bloc, who enjoyed preferential status.

This description would be lacking, if some of the social achievements of Romania's communist regime were not mentioned, since they had a positive effect on the life of the individual while he/she was deprived of many other rights. I have in mind such matters as the abolition of unemployment: everyone was employed and all were guaranteed a minimal income for daily sustenance; every worker was entitled to a month's leave and a week's convalescence; and pension was secured at retirement age (in those days this was an important base for daily existence). Medical services (though quite insufficient) were given free to all, and education was provided free of charge (though not without ideological overtones) to all, from kindergarten through high school. Higher education was tuition free and cultural services provided at a very low fee. The supply of popularly affordable housing (even if space was small) was available to every family at a low monthly rate.

Yet, the suppression of individual rights, the negation of freedom towards pluralistic development at the twilight of Ceaușescu's era when, in the USSR and in some states of the Soviet bloc, liberal processes began to develop through the introduction of economic and social reforms respecting human rights naturally stirred internal opposition to Ceaușescu's dictatorship. The more this opposition grew, the more it enjoyed greater public and political support in the West and the silent acceptance (of this opposition) by the USSR. Having no support for his

policies — neither from West nor East — and in view of the growing hostility to him inside his own country, Ceaușescu had no chance to continue ruling Romania . His regime collapsed as did all the others of the communist bloc in East Europe.

## **FROM MANIFESTATIONS OF OPPOSITION TO REVOLUTION**

Manifestations of opposition to Ceaușescu's rule began to surface one after the other from 1987 on. While in the 1970s the workers' rebellion in the Jiu Valley appeared as a one-off incident, those from 1987 on had the nature of ongoing opposition which encompassed wider circles among the Romanian population and gained impetus that gradually led to the revolution of 20 December 1989. These manifestations — as seen by me during my mission in Bucharest — were aimed first and foremost toward bringing about the downfall of Ceaușescu. During the same period I discerned two focuses of opposition that were intertwined, and after I completed my mission (August 1989), a third and a fourth focus that fitted in well with the first two.

In the first focus of opposition (1987–89), the intellectuals and veteran RCP members, began to publicise manifestos and public letters addressed to Ceaușescu but intended for broad dissemination, and to grant to western media interviews denouncing Ceaușescu's internal policies. Their severe criticism, which itself was an innovation, was aired on Romanian-language newscasts on western radio and reached, thereby, listeners living in Romania.

The second focus of opposition (1987–88) took form when workers at a plant producing vehicles in the city of Brașov rebelled against the local authorities in protest at a cut in their pay and a decline in their economic situation. Their rebellion was exploited by Romanian intellectuals and party veterans to batter away at Ceaușescu's rule.

The third such focus (1987–88) became noticeable with the establishment of the National Salvation Front (NSF) as an underground movement, whose leaders planned to take over the government 'at the right moment' with the help of generals in the Romanian army and with the knowledge of the USSR, but without its direct intervention.

But it was the fourth focal point that lit the fire of revolution. It began with a furious mass demonstration in Timișoara, on 16 December 1989, against Ceaușescu's rule and ended with its swift spread to Bucharest and other cities.

The successful intertwining of these four focuses, supported by public opinion and political circles in the West and encouraged by the liberalisation process going on in the Soviet bloc, prepared the ground for the revolution of December 1989 and the overthrow of Ceaușescu's rule in Romania.

One of the leading intellectuals who expressed his opposition to Ceaușescu's regime through the Western media and did not fear to give voice to his opinions to foreign diplomats assigned to Bucharest was, as I have already mentioned, Professor Mihai Botez, a mathematician. Even though he was known to be a leading Romanian dissident in the late Ceaușescu era, the authorities permitted him, to the surprise of many, to operate freely. I met him for the second time at a reception held by the American ambassador in Bucharest, 14 July 1987, and I was deeply impressed by his personality and his evaluations. At this meeting he told me many things (which at the time were taboo in Romania). He said that recently he had been ordered to leave Bucharest (the centre of his scientific activity) and move to Tulcea. The ostensible reason was that he was needed to run the regional computer centre, but the truth was that the authorities

wanted to exile him there so as to distance him from his frequent contact with foreign diplomats in the capital.

Romania under Ceaușescu's leadership, Botez remarked, was going through a process of 'Albanization'. Such a process meant the gradual ostracism by the USSR and the Soviet bloc owing to Ceaușescu's resistance to economic reforms, and Romania's gradual isolation from the West because of the intransigency of its communist regime. Romania's economic distress resulting from the party's ineffectual management and over-centralisation, the drastic decline in the standard of living, and above all, the suppression of the rights of the individual and the ever-growing personality cult, were further factors. Romania had no way to improve under the rule of the Ceaușescu couple, so the conclusion was that the country would only go from very bad to much worse.

It was said that Ceaușescu's behaviour was not balanced. His wife Elena dominated him and used him to activate her destructive influence. Politburo members 'were only interested in themselves', so they accommodated themselves to his instructions even when they did not agree with them wholeheartedly.

When outside criticism of Romania increased (and Botez had high hopes that Gorbachev would intensify it), the Romanian people would also benefit. He himself had chances to leave Romania, but as a Romanian patriot he would not. He considered it a national duty to fight against his country's regime from within and not from outside, even if this meant putting himself in personal danger. Apparently, the decision to exile him to Tulcea was a first step in that direction. He was not the only scientist or intellectual who dared to criticize Ceaușescu's rule, but they had no influence on the leadership and were, therefore, not considered as organized opposition to the ruler.

During 1987 Botez participated in international professional mathematics conferences outside Romania. I admired him for his courage to openly and sharply criticize sore spots in Ceaușescu's internal policy in western newspapers and in Romanian broadcasts on Radio Free Europe (heard by hundreds of thousands of Romanian inhabitants). At the same time it was quite astonishing that the Romanian authorities allowed him, as the country's leading dissident, to move about freely. When the 1989 revolution broke out he was abroad; he returned to Romania and in the course of time was appointed Romanian ambassador to the United Nations in New York.<sup>17</sup>

*On 15 November 1987*, a revolt broke out in Brașov, a city with 400,000 residents and the second largest industrial city in Romania (after Bucharest). The workers at the Red Flag factory for the production of tractors and cars rebelled at the decision to cut the workers' salary a second time (with the excuse that the low quality of the factory's products made it impossible to export them, causing serious harm to the factory), and against the government's decision to institute additional cuts in the supply of fuel and food to the workers. Joining these workers — who numbered several thousand — were others who lived in Brașov. They marched together on Sunday to the city centre chanting 'Onward the dictatorship', 'Give us bread', and singing the theme song of the 1848 Romanian revolution, 'Awake Romania from the slumber of the past'. On the way to the city square they broke the windows of the party's offices and after entering the offices, threw out furnishings, files, and telephones. They burned Ceaușescu's picture and party slogans. The party secretary who also served as the town mayor was severely beaten by demonstrators and had to be hospitalised in the local hospital. Military, police, and security forces succeeded in breaking up the demonstration, scattering the participants. The rebellion was quashed. A few

hundred demonstrators were arrested. Local and foreign eyewitnesses estimated the number of demonstrators as some 20,000. This was the largest, most violent outburst that we know of from the communist period in Romania.<sup>18</sup>

The Romanian media did not report about this rebellion, and only a few days later did the diplomatic community and foreign correspondents hear of it. Its scope, marching path, and chanting show that this was an organized activity. If so, how did it happen that the party institutions and local authorities did not anticipate it? The assumption was that its organizers and those in charge of them, as well as those responsible for public order there, would have to bear the blame. Questions came up as to how Ceaușescu would react, would he respond favourably to the workers demands in the way he had reacted to the strike by thousands of workers that had broken out ten years earlier in the Jiu Valley? Would he liquidate the organizers of the Brașov riot, as had happened to the leaders of the Jiu Valley strike who were 'incidentally' killed in a car accident?

Reporting about this event to the MFA in Jerusalem a few days after the riots broke out, I noted that it was an outburst of accumulated rebellion against Ceaușescu's rule, inspired somehow by Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to Romania during which he had called for the improvement of life and working conditions of the labourer in the communist bloc states so that they may produce more and live better. He also called upon the leadership to introduce reforms and democratisation into the management of the state economy and public property. The main characteristic underlying this outbreak was the disappearance of fear of possible Soviet intervention suppressing it, or of drastic action by the authorities against the rioting demonstrators. Fear of 'Big Brother' had changed into looking to him for economic redemption. Moreover, I assumed that the demonstrators who marched in the streets had probably heard on Radio Free Europe about demonstrations and strikes in the communist states of East Europe, which served to encourage and inspire them. I concluded my remarks with the following evaluation:

No doubt the workers' riot would leave its imprint, and they might even obtain some benefits. Their organizers will probably be put in prison. It is, however, doubtful whether in the short run Ceaușescu will deviate from his exhibitionistic programmes to continue intensified industrialisation without an adequate infrastructure and to repay foreign debts at an accelerated rate even at the expense of depriving basic foodstuffs from the population and lowering the standard of living.

There is no organized opposition within the leadership and Ceaușescu's activity in foreign affairs proceeds as usual. No one opposing the regime has any chance to overthrow the present ruling power without the assistance of the military, security, police, and party forces, all of which fall at the current time under the Ceaușescu's total authority. The main influential power is in the hands of the masses. Time will tell whether the Brașov riot was an isolated phenomenon or an important link in a chain of riots against President Ceaușescu's rule.

*On 30 November 1987*, I spoke with Professor Alexander Vianu, a Jewish member of the RCP and senior Romanian historian in his seventies. Well informed of what was happening in Romania, thanks to his connections with Romanian leadership, he was able to tell me that the riot in Brașov was organized beforehand. The demonstrators shouted towards the policemen, 'It is better that we die of bullets than of hunger and cold'. They exhibited some heroic manifestations.

On the site of the riot, a Soviet tourist bus ‘happened’ to be parked, and one of them just ‘happened’ to photograph the demonstration. ‘By chance’ that film reached the West. (It was screened on Italian television on 23 November 1987, so that the demonstration was documented for the first time in the world.) Such manifestations of rebellion might, he said, be repeated in other Romanian places. The people's bitterness owing to their economic distress had been stretched to the limits.

Vianu himself thought that this was the end of the ‘reign of Ceaușescu’, a person he defined as unbalanced, close to madness. Ceaușescu had full power and control over the security services; the same was true regarding the party. Members of the Central Committee and the Politburo, said Vianu, ‘are cowards and good-for-nothing’.

*At that time* I reported to the MFA in Jerusalem that Mihai Botez had issued a statement (disseminated among the diplomatic corps and foreign journalists in Bucharest and broadcast by UPI and BBC on 27 November 1987) in which he indicated that the Brașov events should not have surprised anyone. They articulated the rejection of the ‘political and economic strategy of the leadership’, pointing out the gap between its members and the working class. In conclusion he warned that the authorities' policy of suppression would have disastrous implications for Romania and called upon the leadership of the state to consider with the utmost attention the message of the Brașov events.<sup>19</sup>

Silviu Brucan, a veteran Jewish member of Romania's Communist Party, was the former deputy-editor of the party's newspaper *Scînteia* and former Romanian ambassador to the USA and to the UN. From 1966 he was professor of social studies at the University of Bucharest. Following the Brașov events, he issued a statement to the British newspaper the *Independent* (published on 28 November 1987) pointing out that a period of crisis had begun between the RCP and the country's working class which refused from now on to be considered as slaves. He warned (as had Botez) against adopting a policy of oppression that would expand even more the gap between the leadership of the party and the workers (he was very worried about such a development), which would also arouse the anger of Western public opinion, ‘the wonderful force defending human rights’, and would lead to Romania's total isolation, ‘not only in the West but also in the East’. Testifying about himself he said he was speaking on behalf of the great majority of the party and he called upon its leadership to make every possible effort to meet the legal claims of the labourers.

This was the first ‘Communist Manifesto’ of Brucan in Ceaușescu's era that had a great echo in Romania itself and in the West. Brucan, as a Marxist faithful to Communist ideology, attempted, in this way to save whatever was still possible, so that Romania's Communist regime would remain in place without losing the masses' support for it.

Out of all communist parties in the West, the French, Italian, and the Belgian related with the utmost understanding to the Brașov riot against the background of food and energy shortages and the prevailing poor management and called on the Romanian leadership to refrain from any oppressive actions in response to the workers' claims by introducing economic and social reforms. The statement issued by the Belgian Communist Party was the harshest, intimating that ‘it was only too predictable that the absence of freedom and democracy, the authoritarian and personalised style of power, the bureaucratic nature of economic management, the lack of participation by the workers in the country's public affairs, none of which can be explained by foreign debts, would sooner or later give rise to discontent, anger and even popular revolt.



Repression will certainly not bring any desirable solution'.<sup>20</sup>

For 17 days following the outbreak of the Braşov riot, no report of the event appeared in Romania's media. First publication came on the evening of 2 December 1987 with a report on an emergency meeting of plant workers, 'The Red Flag', held one day earlier. It harshly criticized the negative actions of the plant's management and its deviations from the Party's resolutions and the State's constitution by not fulfilling its tasks properly in the domains of management, organization, or the removal of shortcomings that caused the reduction of exports, resulting from the low quality of the products. At the same time the coverage criticized the plant workers 'for lack of discipline, breakdown of order, and the lack of controlling product quality'.

Moreover, the report stated the following:

The meeting decided unanimously to impeach the director-general of the plant, the directors and deputy-directors, the chairman of the workers' council and other members of management. Those who were directly responsible will still be brought to court. Some elements among the workers undertook a series of manifestations alien to Romanian society and the meeting sharply condemned their acts. Those who violated law and order will be transferred to other places, whereas those who were directly responsible would be tried. A new management was elected and measures were taken to improve the situation. The meeting's participants sent a telegram to President Ceauşescu in which they admitted to the shortcomings of the plant and notified him of the above-mentioned means that were decided upon, promising to improve the situation.

In assessing the governmental announcement which I sent to the MFA in Jerusalem I pointed out, *inter alia*, that the official communique was destined to:

1. Officially admit to the existence of the riot (the date of its occurrence was not mentioned) against the background of the great publicity given to it in the West and the information about it spread in Romania.
2. To point out that Ceauşescu was in control of the situation in Braşov and to express full confidence in him and his policy by 'representatives' of those gathered in the plant.
3. To cover up the whole event by presenting it as a local problem that was solved by way of admitting the errors committed, the impeachments, punishments, and promises given to improve the situation.

In conclusion: in a choice between either deciding the method of suppression or that of improving conditions, Ceauşescu apparently decided to go both ways. Regarding the fate of the riot organizers, it became apparent that the easing of punishment referred to by Brucan in his press communiqué of December 1987 did not apply to the organizers of the Braşov demonstration. A reliable Romanian source close to the Central Committee of the RCP revealed to me in February 1988 that 38 people from among the riot organizers had been executed. Some of them were shot, others given extremely high doses of X-rays penetrating their bodies shortly before their release from prison. (Until the end of my mission in Romania, I received no confirmation of this information from any other source.)

On 9 December 1987, I reported about two events:

1. Anonymous persons set fire to tyres near Lenin's statue facing the building of the *Scînteia* editorial, the daily paper of Romania's communist daily. The fire reached the lower part of

the statue causing damage that took workers several days to repair.

2. From a reliable source: in the Romanian town of Alexandria a workers' riot was suppressed soon after it broke out.

*On 14 December 1987*, I reported about two events of which I heard from a reliable Romanian source close to the Central Committee of Romania's Communist Party: student demonstrations in the city of Timișoara were immediately suppressed; and local workers set fire to the Party's building in the town of Buzău.

*In mid-December 1987*, Professor Silviu Brucan issued a second statement to the foreign correspondents in Bucharest in which he asserted that his first announcement, given to the foreign press immediately on the heels of the workers' riot in Brașov, proved to have had a positive effect, since thanks to it the authorities eased the punitive measures imposed on the rioters.<sup>21</sup> (Indeed, Brucan's assertion was correct. In those days we heard from a reliable Romanian source that in the trial of the rioters many were spared sentences of punishment. A few dozen were sentenced to prison for a period of six months to three years, being guilty of a 'violation of order', namely, not for forbidden political activities. The organizers had not yet been put on trial. The source estimated that they should expect to be sentenced to ten years in prison.) Brucan also warned of the destructive results that would accrue from the loss of the support of the working masses for the party as a result of conducting inadequate economic and social policies and appealed to the government to learn a lesson in this regard from Poland's experiences.

*Beginning of July 1988*, an East European ambassador told me that he had heard from a reliable Romanian source that Brucan was expelled from the Communist Party and that when he was defending himself against accusations hurled at him over the publication of his announcements regarding the Brașov riot, he said, *inter alia*: 'Although I was born a Jew, I have always considered myself a Romanian communist faithful to the Communist Party, to the people and to the State'.<sup>22</sup>

In 1990, when he visited Israel as a guest of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on the occasion of an international symposium of researchers on the future of communism, at which he strongly defended his communist theses as an avowed Marxist, I invited him for lunch at Jerusalem's King David Hotel. He surprised me by knowing Jewish customs and even understanding Hebrew. Apparently in his early youth he had studied in a *heder* (Jewish religious school). During my mission in Romania he used to avoid speaking with me at receptions at the American ambassador's residence, perhaps fearing that he would be stuck with a 'Jewish label'.

*Among the carriers of the rioting banner*, Doina Cornea was the best known personality among the intellectuals who, at great risk, opposed Ceaușescu's rule and the communist regime. More than anyone else in Romania, she distinguished herself by raising concrete proposals to introduce political, social, and economic reforms in Romania.

I never met her personally, but according to the rumours spread about her in Bucharest among the opponents to the regime she was characterized as a fearless fighter. She knew how to find important backing in the West as long as she needed it, in governmental and parliamentary circles, in international organizations, and in the media. The more the Romanian Institute quoted her statements or kept track of her, the more her personal confidence increased. As a general rule — and this applies to all dissidents — the more they were mentioned in the Western mass media,

the more valid was their 'insurance policy' in face of the danger of being arrested by the Romanian authorities. When she was forbidden to leave her home because of her dissident activity, and this was repeated several times during three months in 1988, the Western correspondents attempted to get in touch with her at home. When they could not reach her they reported, 'Doina Cornea has disappeared'. Consequently, political and governmental circles in the West began immediately to act by demanding that the Romanian authorities free her at once, not letting up on their pressure until they succeeded in releasing her from house arrest.

One case that I well remember can serve as an example of Western intervention concerning her safety. It happened when my colleague the British ambassador travelled to Cluj to visit her while she was under continuous house arrest. He wanted thereby to demonstrate the western world's attachment to her. When he reached the house she was living in the policemen would not allow him in to visit her. A harsh discussion took place between the ambassador and the policemen who did not give in to his demands. This demonstrative visit — which actually was not carried out — received wide coverage in the western media (in addition to his detailed report to his fellow ambassadors in Bucharest), attaining thus two important goals: first extending valuable encouragement to the dissidents in Romania, by demonstrating personal solidarity with one of them. Second, revealing the Romanian authorities' rigid attitude towards a foreign ambassador who wanted to visit a local dissident in her home, but was flatly refused. In this manner, he introduced personal evidence (widely publicised) of the oppression of human rights in Romania. Before long, Doina Cornea was freed from her house arrest. Luckily for the dissidents, Ceaușescu was very sensitive to his image in the West and they knew how to exploit this to the advantage of the rights' issue as well as for the sake of their own safety.

Doina Cornea was a lecturer in French at the University of Cluj until she was dismissed from her post due to her dissident activity during which she established contacts mainly with Western political circles and the media in France. In her articles and interviews to Western correspondents, she called for the overthrow of Ceaușescu's rule because of his dictatorship and oppression of human rights. As mentioned, she demanded to introduce far-reaching economic, political, and social reforms, the abolition of the 'systematisation of the villages' programme, the establishment of free trade unions and the renewal of the status of the eastern (Unitarian) faction of the Catholic Church. Though she represented the Romanian majority, the Hungarian and German minorities regarded her as a faithful partner in their struggle for equality of rights and the annulling of the 'systematisation of the villages' order which, if implemented, would have destroyed the ethnic constitution of their homes.<sup>23</sup>

*Of the writers opposing the regime*, Aurel Dragos Munteanu, one of the most distinguished literary critics of the weekly *Luceafărul*, in a letter dated 30 September 1988, informed the secretary of the Party's cell on the weekly about his decision to resign from his membership in the RCP in disagreement with its ideological line and with Ceaușescu's plan for the 'systematisation of the villages'.<sup>24</sup>

Munteanu, according to unbiased information, was a son of a Jewish mother and a Christian father. He identified himself to me (and to the chief rabbi of Romanian Jewry, Dr Moses Rosen) as a Jew who learned in his childhood in a 'Talmud Torah' (Jewish religious school). A man of great intelligence, among many other things he wrote an excellent critique on Aharon Appelfeld's book *Badenheim 1939*, when published in Romanian.

A short while after having dispatched his letter of resignation from the Communist Party, he

was dismissed from his job on the weekly's editorial board. Chief Rabbi Rosen offered him a post in the office of the Jewish community in Bucharest, which he gladly accepted. On one of his visits to the central Coral Synagogue in Bucharest, I approached him to greet him and encourage him. This was a moment, he was to tell me at a later stage in his life, he would never forget, since the other worshippers, out of fear, kept their distance from him. Upon the outbreak of the revolution, he was appointed chairman of the Radio and Television Authority. Later on he became Romania's ambassador to the United Nations in New York, maintaining friendly and cooperative contacts with our ambassador there, Yohanan Bein.

Munteanu was the second Jew, after Brucan, who voiced his opposition to the regime, even after having presented his letter of resignation. But, whereas Brucan was expelled from the party against his will, Munteanu resigned of his own free choice.

Two well-known Romanian poets, Mircea Dinescu and Dan Deşliu, openly joined the critics of the regime. Both were expelled from the party: Dinescu, following an interview he gave to the French newspaper *Liberation* on 9 March 1989; Deşliu, after writing a sharp letter of criticism against the regime that he distributed by himself among Romanian writers as the voice of despair of a poet and a veteran Romanian communist.<sup>25</sup>

Dinescu was immediately dismissed from his post as editor of the literary weekly *România Literară*, organ of the writers' union. He was unique in the sense that he was regarded as the representative of the young generation, having been born in 1950, and a product of the communist regime. With the breaking out of the revolution in 1989, he took a leading part in it. He, too, was a frequent visitor to our receptions in Bucharest, oozing amiability and optimism.

On 10 March 1989, the existence became known in Bucharest of an open letter addressed to Ceauşescu signed by six central figures, former members of the Politburo and Central Committee of the RCP — actually the best known among them. They were: Corneliu Manescu, former minister of external affairs and president of the UN General Assembly; Gheorghe Apostol, former chairman of the trade unions; Alexander Birladeanu, former chairman of the State Planning Committee; C. Pirvulescu and Grigore Răceanu (both founding members of the RCP); and Silviu Brucan, mentioned previously.<sup>27</sup>

The six complained bitterly about the regime's dictatorship violating the Constitution by denying human freedoms, the ever-increasing economic distress, the destruction of villages, preparing Romania for her political isolation *vis-à-vis* the West and the East and for imposing forced assimilation onto the minorities thereby causing the emigration of Germans, Hungarians, and Jews. Aiming at putting an end to this process 'adversely affecting the internal and foreign affairs of Romania', they called upon Ceauşescu to take 'a first step' by the following means:

To declare in a most clear and determined way the abolition of the 'systematisation of villages' plan; to reaffirm the legislative guarantees concerning citizens' rights — such a step would enable the implementation of the resolutions of the Helsinki Final Act regarding the respect of human rights, countersigned by Romania. To put an end to the exploitation of food that threatens the biological existence of the nation.

The signatories phrased their letter in a sophisticated and non-polemical but definitely resolute manner. Even though they were considered ex-leaders, they offered themselves to cooperate in finding a solution to the economic and social distress of the Romanian population and to improve Romania's image on the international arena. A scornful expression was included in the letter,

namely, that 'Ceaușescu had succeeded in changing the rural panorama in Romania, but he would not succeed in transferring Romania to Africa' (an allusion to his frequent visits to Africa and to the danger of dragging Romania down to the status of a developing state as in Africa).

Ironically, those who had signed the letter had belonged in the 1950s to the RCP leadership that put a Stalinist imprint on their country. This was the first time a group of top personalities, founders of the RCP and formerly its most active members, had taken a critical position against Ceaușescu. Knowing their position, their call was understood, even if not explicitly stated, as asking for the removal of Ceaușescu from the government of Romania and for the setting up of an alternative to him as part of the immediate need to change priorities in internal and foreign affairs, as well as an expression of their readiness to cooperate in solving the problems without undermining the communist regime.

Their letter was widely disseminated (clandestinely) in Romania. It was quoted time and again on Radio Free Europe. Masses of people in Romania probably read it, heard of its contents, and knew it. Its wide distribution — together with the demonstrations, protests, and all the other previous manifestations — had great influence on the Romanian people, taking in the course of the following nine months the form of spontaneous revolt leading to Ceaușescu's overthrow and actually to the end of the communist era in Romania. They were assisted by the overthrow of the communist regimes in the neighbouring countries, by the process of liberalisation in the USSR and by Romania's isolation from the West and the East.

*At the beginning of April 1989*, it became known that a letter of protest signed by seven writers, Stefan Augustin Doina, Dan Haulica, Octavian Paler, Geo Bogza, Mihai Cora, Andrei Pleșu and Alexandru Paleologu, was addressed to the secretary of the Romanian Writers' Union, protesting the dismissal of the poet Mircea Dinescu and expressing solidarity with him. Their letter was distributed among the diplomatic corps in Bucharest and among Romanian and Western intellectual circles. Despite its restrained style, the letter sharply accused the Writers' Union for not having defended its members and for the alienation rife between Romanian culture and its themes.<sup>26</sup>

*On 16 December 1989*, the fire of the revolution ignited in Timișoara. Masses of people gathered in groups to defend the priest Lászlò Tökés from arrest by the *Securitate* men owing to his activities against Ceaușescu's policy on the 'systematisation of the villages' plan and the discrimination against the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, and in the areas of education and religion. The *Securitate*, chasing him on 15 and 16 December 1989 through his hiding places, prompted many demonstrators onto the city's streets in condemnation of the Ceaușescu regime. By the president's order, the Romanian soldiers opened fire against the demonstrators.<sup>28</sup> The rumour that was spread about thousands of casualties among them (at a later stage their number was estimated in hundreds) stirred thousands of Romanian citizens and in this respect the majority of the Romanians and the minority of the Hungarians were united. With the aim of declaring a public condemnation of the 'riot' in Timișoara and thus underscoring the people's confidence in Ceaușescu, Romania's leadership called for a mass meeting in Bucharest's Revolution Square on 20 December 1989.

Contrary to this aim the mass meeting metamorphosed into a mass rebellious demonstration against Ceaușescu. The stormy protest apparently frightened Ceaușescu and made him escape in an uncontrolled manner and actually forced him to abandon the power in his hands without his noticing it.<sup>29</sup>

An observer on the side will never know what made him act the way he did. Yet, clearly his call for a mass meeting to demonstrate solidarity with him in face of the acts of killing in Timișoara attested to his lack of reasoning, being unaware of the people's feelings for him. It is also possible that he was purposely misled from the beginning to initiate the mass meeting to express their anger against him and against his tyrannical rule. Perhaps he himself was blinded by the masses' (artificial) worship of him, as he might have perceived it, by the constant personality cult campaign adoring him and his wife. Perhaps, this kind of veneration made him believe unthinkingly that he was admired and loved by the masses. Also, the Politburo and Central Committee members' requests, at his last meeting with them, to renounce his declaration of intent to resign (whether he meant it is doubtful) in consequence of the order given by him to open fire against the demonstrators in Timișoara, might have also created the misleading impression that the Politburo and Central Committee members were siding with him, and with them — as he probably thought — the army and security services.<sup>30</sup>

In those days I tensely followed the development of events in Romania, not only from the angle of my post as deputy director general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in charge of East and Central Europe. I was still living in the atmosphere of my mission as ambassador to Romania, which had ended a few months prior to the revolution. I was closely acquainted with some of the regime's leading opponents who were immediately nominated to head the 'National Salvation Front' (NSF) and who actively participated in the opposition movement that gradually led to the outbreak of the revolution, under the geo-political circumstances prevailing then in the Soviet bloc. Along with many others the world over, I viewed the court martial of Ceaușescu and his wife shortly before their execution. Like many people, I could not believe what my eyes saw on the screen.

Had these events been foreseen?

I heard, and not only once, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shimon Peres, arguing that the Sovietologists in Israel and abroad had not anticipated the happenings in the USSR and in the Warsaw Pact states, with all due respect to their experience and broad knowledge accumulated over a long period in the sphere of their activity. Even if this argument is reasonable, one should take into consideration three basic facts not to be overlooked: the Sovietologists did not have intelligence agents, from whom they could obtain verified and up-to-date information; the revolutionary waves were spontaneous, and in the majority of cases the masses were carried away by them, after having lost the sense of fear that had characterized them in the days of Stalin and well after, when their aspirations for freedom were cruelly suppressed during almost all the years of the communist regime in their states. These spontaneous waves of revolution could not have been foreseen; leaders of East Europe themselves, including Gorbachev, the father of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, did not properly evaluate the actual situation. The same goes for Ceaușescu, who had always impressed me with his vast knowledge of what was going on in the Middle East, a great deal more, as reality proved, than he understood about what was happening in his own country and among his own people.

Like many others, I was wondering whether there had been any outside intervention that might have influenced the revolution in Romania, perhaps an avoidance by the military of opening fire against the demonstrators at the mass meeting in Bucharest. Had there been any pre-arranged agreement between the heads of the revolution calling themselves the NSF and the high commanders of the Romanian army, or between them and the USSR?

A news item that reached us at the MFA in Jerusalem from our ambassador in Bonn, Benjamin Navon, on 18 December 1989 — before it became known that a mass gathering had been called at Revolution Square in Bucharest — noted that according to rumours that had reached the FRG's administrative circles, there would be an attempt to overthrow Ceaușescu 'by the end of the week'. This rumour, which proved to be true, attested that the intelligence services in the West were aware of the intention to overthrow Ceaușescu, while he had no foreknowledge of it.

The noose around his neck had, apparently, been prepared a few months earlier when the NSF had been established and first become publicly known through a letter that its leaders addressed to the delegates of the 14th Congress of the RCP, scheduled to convene in November 1989 in Bucharest. In their letter the founders of NSF repeated in greater detail the components of the 'open letter' of the six veterans, addressed to Ceaușescu on 10 March 1989. By pointing out the shortcomings of Ceaușescu's regime, they issued a call to the delegates to discuss political, economic, and social subjects that had drawn Romania into a severe crisis and political isolation. And, although they did not present a programme of activities for solving the critical situation it was perfectly clear, through its content, that they were calling to overthrow Ceaușescu as the central figure of the leadership responsible for the shortcomings and crisis and incapable of improving the difficult situation.<sup>31</sup>

It was the first time that the NSF had revealed itself as an alternative to the ruling power, without Ceaușescu's awareness of their whereabouts, and in spite of the security services at his disposal. Moreover, in an interview that Silviu Brucan, then a member of the presidium of Romania's provisional government after the revolution, and general Nicolae Militaru, the then minister of defence, accorded to the Romanian newspaper *Adevărul* (published on 23 August 1990), they revealed, *inter alia*:

1. As early as the 1970s, several party veterans had gathered with some generals to plan the overthrow of Ceaușescu, by a *coup d'état*, but then they did not have the backing of the people, therefore they postponed its implementation to an appropriate time. They planned to appoint Iliescu as head of the NSF during the revolution, and afterwards as head of the provisional leadership until he could be elected Romania's president.
2. Parallel to the establishment of the Front, the Military Committee of Opposition (*Comitetul Militar de Rezistență*) was also set up, composed of 20 generals and brigade commanders maintaining close contacts with the NSF leaders.
3. The two reported to the USSR representatives about their intention to overthrow Ceaușescu (Brucan was also received in the Kremlin, shortly before the revolution broke out). According to their comments in the interview the Soviet's attitude to their plan was sympathetic, stressing that they would not intervene in the action.

The USSR's sympathetic attitude to their plan<sup>32</sup> probably gave a lot of encouragement to the NSF in continuing their activities, by cooperating with some military commanders who ordered their units not to open fire against the demonstrators. The third pillar, the army, on which Ceaușescu relied for consolidating his power (in addition to the *Securitate* and the Central Committee of the RCP) collapsed. And thus was forged the combination of all the opposition foci that led to the outbreak of the revolution.

The bloodshed in Timișoara had a destructive influence on Ceaușescu's position in the West

and the East, but mainly in the West. For the first time, since Ceaușescu acceded to power, leaders in the West (the president of France, during a visit he was paying to the GDR, as well as the ministers of foreign affairs of France and Britain) called upon the Romanian people to overthrow the tyrant, condemning most vehemently the killing of thousands of demonstrators by Romania's security forces. Voices of sharp criticism, without calling directly for the overthrow of Ceaușescu, were heard from leaders of the USA and the FRG. The Soviet minister of foreign affairs expressed deep sorrow for the loss of citizens whereas the chairman of the GDR's Communist Party announced that in light of all that happened (in Romania) the GDR's government would have to consider the possibility of negating all the honours it had conferred upon Ceaușescu.<sup>33</sup> News of all this was broadcast, in Romanian, by Radio Free Europe, encouraging the citizens of Romania to demonstrate in the streets of their cities against Ceaușescu's regime. This urging was, no doubt, one of the important factors that prompted the Romanian people to shake loose from the fear that had characterized them during the communist regime's era.

For the first time, East and West together stood up against Ceaușescu (each in its own way). He must have felt betrayed and helpless. Apparently, when he saw during his flight that all had abandoned him, he placed his hopes in the hands of the army and the *Securitate*. Military men who stood by the leaders of the NSF caught him and kept him and his wife Elena under arrest, until they were tried and executed,<sup>34</sup> whereas in the long run the *Securitate* men could not continue their fight against army units. Moreover, the quick execution of the Ceaușescu couple abolished the reason for which they were fighting. At that time the leaders of the revolution acted as quickly as possible to seize the Radio and Television Authority, through which they announced the fleeing of the Ceaușescu couple, the establishment of a provisional government by the NSF on 22 December 1989, and the execution of the Ceaușescus on 25 December 1989 in line with a verdict handed down by an improvised military court martial, far away from the process of democratic judgment, out of fear that those loyal to Ceaușescu within the *Securitate* might soon reach the place where they were being held and rescue them.<sup>35</sup>

Even now, the NSP leaders reiterate their opinion that the Romanian people alone implemented the revolution, with no outside military assistance.<sup>36</sup> Yet, their claim is not so clear-cut in light of the political assistance they received from East and West, the neutralisation of the army as Ceaușescu fled, including the intentional deviation by his faithful pilot during his attempted escape; the total paralysis of the Politburo and the Central Committee members during the drama taking place in their presence, and the process, shrouded in fog, that yielded the quick decision to run away. All of these remain unknowns. Even though we do not possess unequivocal facts that would confirm the assumption of a concerted effort toward the overthrow of the Ceaușescu and his regime, the rapid evolution of events may attest to its existence. At present, however, it is unclear if it existed and to what extent it was exercised.

On 20 December 1989, the Romanian ambassador in Israel, Iulian Bituleanu, phoned to tell me that he had asked to be urgently received by Foreign Minister M. Arens, as he had been instructed by his superiors in Bucharest. The reason for this request was to transmit to the foreign minister the text of Ceaușescu's speech given two days earlier at the Iranian Parliament while visiting Teheran. Since the minister could not receive him, he referred the ambassador to me. We arranged to meet at my office in the MFA on Sunday 24 December 1989. When the revolution broke out — and no one knew how it would end — the ambassador phoned me again the same day in the evening to complain about a large demonstration that was taking place in front of



Romania's embassy building in Tel Aviv. The demonstrators, he said, were chanting slogans of hate defaming President Ceaușescu. The ambassador was alarmed, fearing that such a demonstration might be detrimental to the cause of good Israel—Romania relations. I knew the ambassador well as a quiet, serious, wholly pleasant person, who devotedly tried to contribute his part for the improvement of our bilateral relations, within the framework dictated to him by his superiors in Bucharest. Yet, on more than one occasion I had found him somehow threatened by ‘what Bucharest would say’ about him. This time when he informed me about the demonstration gathered in front of his embassy building condemning Ceaușescu, he sounded quite agitated. I tried to calm him by saying that in our country demonstrations are rather a common phenomenon, part and parcel of our democratic regime, and that the police — present there, according to his information — would probably act to avoid any damage to his embassy building. I do not know whether the ambassador's appeal to me was made in coordination with his superiors in Bucharest or came from his own initiative. At any rate, no doubt, he was surprised, even shocked to hear the abusive shouting of the demonstrators condemning Ceaușescu, since the government of Israel, including all its ministers, avoided making any public condemnation of Ceaușescu's policy regarding Romania's internal affairs, including the acts of killing by Romanian soldiers in Timișoara. This also stood in contrast to the Israeli media, which reported extensively on the voices of opposition within Romania, including the outbreak of the rioters in Brașov and its aftermath. The prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs, who were kept abreast of events in Romania, either through my current reports or by all that was published about them in Western countries, purposely refrained from condemning Ceaușescu. Why? It was not customary in Israel's foreign policy — not then nor now — to condemn a head of a foreign state with whom Israel was maintaining friendly relations for his failures regarding the internal affairs of his country. Our relations with Romania were of a unique character: the only country in the communist bloc not to break off diplomatic relations with Israel and that permitted the Jews to emigrate to Israel and to preserve the values of their cultural and religious heritage.

These facts were no doubt known to the MFA in Romania and to its ambassador in Israel. Therefore, one could assume that Romania expected from Israel, though it was never mentioned explicitly, a correct attitude toward Ceaușescu different from that in the West.

When it was learned that the NSF in Romania was taking over Ceaușescu's regime, I phoned the ambassador on Saturday evening, 23 December 1989, to ask him whether the date for our meeting, set for 24 December, was still actual? The ambassador answered, ‘Definitely yes.’ For a moment I wondered what Ceaușescu's speech in Teheran had to do with the new inchoate reality in Romania?

Indeed, the ambassador visited me at the appointed hour, in a very good mood, and instead of Ceaușescu's speech, which he had intended to hand over to me and which had been the reason for his request to be received, he presented me with a note on behalf of the provisional leadership in his country — to which he had already declared his fidelity, one of the first Romanian ambassadors in the world — appealing to the government of Israel to accord it recognition. The same day I transmitted to the ambassador an announcement (that I drafted and which was confirmed for transmission and publication) on behalf of Israel's MFA in Jerusalem as follows:

Israel warmly welcomes the establishment of democracy in Romania and wishes the people of Romania consolidation of its freedom and prosperity. Israel expresses deep sorrow for the loss of life of thousands of Romanian citizens in the recent events in their country. Israel

extends its condolences to the bereaved families of the Romanian people and expresses its hope that the NSF will succeed in putting an end to the bloodshed in Romania and will begin to lead the country under conditions of a proper democratic regime. It is our hope that the change of regimes will not cause any harm to the remnants of the Jewish communities in Romania and their leadership, that their well-being will be secured along with that of the entire Romanian population. Israel extends its assistance to Romania's provisional leadership and will continue to act for the further development of our friendly bilateral relations and cooperation with the people of Romania and its leaders.

Ceaușescu's era is gone. Romania has moved on to the introduction of a free democratic regime. The models of behaviour under communist rule have not been entirely uprooted. Yet, the country's efforts toward being an integral part of the free world in the political, social, and economic domains continue, with many difficulties but not without partial success.

## NOTES

1. See Julia Vishnevsky's article, 'Stalinism Past, Present, and Future,' *Radio Liberty Research*, 1 March (1983).
2. A similar fate befell the rioters at the Brașov tractor and automobile plant in November 1987. On the other hand, veterans of the RCP who protested against Ceaușescu's policy in March 1989 were not arrested. The most active member among them, Silviu Brucan, was the only one to be expelled from the party. All were closely followed.
3. See Vladimir Socor's article, quoting American research sources on Radio Free Europe, BG 14, 23 February (1983).
4. See Rene de Flers article on the Ceaușescu clan in senior posts, Radio Free Europe, BR 135, 23 July (1984).
5. This was the second time Elena Ceaușescu received the distinction of 'Hero of the Socialist Republic of Romania', the highest honour accorded by the country, by order signed by her husband. The first time she was awarded it together with her husband in 1981. This time she received it alone, upon her 70th birthday.
6. *Scinteia*, daily newspaper of the RCP, 7 February 1986.
7. *Ibid.*, 27 January 1987.
8. *Ibid.*, 2 September 1988.
9. *Ibid.*, 28–29 June 1989.
10. *Ibid.*, 6 October 1989.
11. Quoted from Kevin Devin's article, Radio Free Europe, BR 212, 1 December (1989).
12. *Ibid.*
13. According to Radio Moscow (in English), 20 November (1989). Quoted from Michael Shafir's article, Radio Free Europe SR 9, 14 December (1989).
14. *Scinteia*, 13 April 1988.
15. *Scinteia*, 3 June 1988.
16. *Scinteia*, 4 May 1988.
17. See Botez's memoirs: M. Botez, *Romania, a Case of 'Dynastic' Communism* (New York: Freedom House, 1989).
18. For a detailed description, see: V. Socor, 'The Workers Protest in Brașov,' *Radio Free Europe Research (RFER)*, 4 December (1987). The riot broke out on the day scheduled for the holding of Municipal Elections to the local government.
19. For further details, *Ibid.*, p. 3.
20. For further details, *Ibid.*, p. 3.
21. Reported to the MFA in Jerusalem in my letter of 21 December 1987 together with the statement. Brucan's assertion was correct. In that period we found out through a reliable Romanian source that at the rioters' trial, many were absolved of punishment. Several dozen people were sentenced to six months' imprisonment and other to three years for violation of order, and not for forbidden political activity. The organizers of the riot, at that time, had not yet been put on trial. The source assessed that they were expected to receive ten-year prison sentences.
22. See Brucan's memoirs: Silviu Brucan, *Geneva irostită, memorii* (București: Univers, 1992). On p. 174, Brucan notes that on 17 June 1988 he was summoned to the faculty where he lectured (presumably to the party cell) to be told that he had been

expelled from the party. 'The procedure was short. Few hands were raised up voting for the decision'. There is no reference to what the Romanian source told the East European ambassador, just as there is no mention of his studies at *heder*. His Jewish origin is briefly mentioned in the book in connection with his exclusion from the university (owning to his being Jewish) during the Second World War.

23. For a more detailed description, see: *Radio Free Europe Report*, 246, 30 December (1988).
24. My letters to the MFA of 31 October, 18 November, and 16 December 1988. No 105.1.
25. My letter to the MFA of 22 March 1989, 105.1.
26. My letters to the MFA of 12 April and 3 May 1989, 105.1. After the outbreak of the revolution, Mirai Şora was appointed as Minister of Education and Andrei Plesu as Minister of Culture. For a more detailed description of the seven writers, see: Crisula Stefanescu, *Radio Free Europe*, 4 May (1989).
27. My letters to the MFA of 12 and 14 March 1989, 105.1. For biographical notes on the six, see Michael Shafir, *Radio Free Europe* Sr. 3, 29 March (1989).
28. On the evolution of events in Timisoara, see: Interview with the priest Laszlo Tokes, *New York Times*, 14 March (1990).
29. For the description of the run away, see Ricardo Estariul, based on an interview with Colonel Malotan, the pilot of the helicopter in the Ceauşescu couple's escape, in the Spanish daily *La Vanguardia*, 7 January (1990); also Eduard Behr, in the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*, 21, 26 January (1990).
30. Article by an eyewitness who participated in the Politburo meeting. Romanian daily, *Adevărul*, 14 January (1990). According to this witness, Ceauşescu said: 'Let them elect another secretary-general'. The witness notes that if the Politburo members had let him go, 'the bloodshed in Timis.oara would have been avoided'.
31. The full text appeared in the *Lupta* (Romanian journal published in Paris), 128/129, September, October (1989).
32. In his memoirs, Brucan writes that in his secret meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev, secretary-general of the CPSU, in Moscow, he had reported to him about the 'letter of the six'. Gorbachev knew about it and said: that 'he agreed to the activity of the six aimed at the overthrow of Ceauşescu, under the condition that the existence of the RCP as a leading force in Romania would not be harmed'. Gorbachev then agreed, according to Brucan, 'that the RCP should remain on its feet, otherwise there would be chaos,' noting categorically, 'that he won't intervene in Romania's internal affairs as he had not done it in other East European countries'. Gorbachev added that he regarded the 'principle of non-interference is a sacred matter'. Hence, he declared 'don't expect any assistance from us, even if we would like to see the end of Ceauşescu's regime'; adding that they (the Soviets) would find a way to defend Brucan's personal security in face of the *Securitate's* scheming. The *Pravda* correspondent in Bucharest was ordered to visit Brucan's home frequently 'to signal to the Romanian authorities of the Soviet interest in his personal security' (p. 188).
33. *The Jerusalem Post*, 22 December (1989).
34. The verdict on Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu was announced by Radio Bucharest Broadcasting Service on 25 December 1989. It was said, *inter alia*, that their trial was held in a specific military court, in which they were accused of: genocide (more than 60,000 victims fell during the revolution); organizing military activities against the people and country; destruction of public properties; undermining the basis of the economy; attempting to escape the country; and having deposited \$1,000 million in foreign banks. For these crimes, it was said in the announcement, Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu were sentenced to death and to the nationalisation of their property. (*Jerusalem Post*, 26 December, 1989)
35. Detailed account by Petre Roman, one of the revolutionary leaders and later prime minister under the presidency of Iliescu in *Tiempo* (Spanish) 26 March (1990); in *Paris Match*, 12 January (1994).
36. *Times* (magazine), 3 January (1990), p. 6. *Ha'aretz* (Hebrew), Supplement 27 January (1994), p. 80.

## 3 Romanian Foreign Policy 1986–89: From Rise to Decline

Romania during Ceaușescu's era was the only country in the Soviet bloc to have developed a multifaceted foreign policy, independent both in its bilateral relations with foreign states — making no distinction among their regimes — and in taking up initiatives on the international and regional scenes aimed at reducing world tension such as putting an end to the arms race, moving towards disarmament, first and foremost nuclear; renouncing the use of force and the threat of force in international relations; settling conflicts by peaceful means; intensification of cooperation between states, and noninterference in their internal affairs; global solutions in paying off foreign debts of the developing countries including the establishment of a new economic and international order in this respect.

This policy, which at the outset enjoyed the encouragement of Western states and their establishments in face of Romania's independence, much to the chagrin of the Soviets, reached its peak in the mid-1980s. From then until 1989 this policy declined to the lowest level ever, during Ceaușescu's era. Regarding these two phenomena — the zenith and the nadir — I asked myself certain questions.

The first question was: What prompted Ceaușescu to pave an independent path in foreign relations for his country within such a fortified camp as the Warsaw Pact, built under Soviet leadership upon a monolithic policy during the Cold War atmosphere prevailing between both blocs?

I assumed then and still do that the reason for it could be found in two interrelated aspects. One was Romania's geopolitical situation as a Latin island in a Slavic sea, with a mainland frontier with Hungary. Her cultural roots and national ascription belonged somewhere in the West, and even the dominating communist power and the copying of cultural patterns from neighbouring Russia could not uproot her Western underpinnings. The orientation toward western space was, as in the pre-communist era, an attempt to escape from the Slavic ring suffocating her. Hence Romania's national communism became a vital need for strengthening national identity and securing its preservation in a cultural space alien to her.

Second, Ceaușescu was raised to power when Romania had already been liberated from Soviet domination. It seems that his main task in the foreign policy of Romania was to reinforce its attachment to the West in order to cultivate its national identity in East Europe without renouncing the regime's principles in internal affairs and without giving the Soviet Union a pretext to accuse it of 'ideological deviation'. In addition, Romania initiated political activity in

the international arena, thus emphasizing its uniqueness, which did not always correspond with the Soviet bloc's policy and at times even contradicted it.

This aspiration stemmed, *inter alia*, from the lessons of the political situation in which Romania found herself on the eve of the Second World War (when her fate was determined by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in the secret protocol attached to the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement of mutual non-aggression signed in Moscow in August 1939, and according to which regions were torn away from Romania's territory without her knowing about the plot against her). The main lesson that Romania tried to derive from the situation in which she found herself implicated was to be active in the international arena, aiming at expropriating from the Great Powers' hands the trusteeship of the world's destiny.

These two intertwined aspects and their crystallisation should have given Romania practical benefits in the political and economic spheres during the period of the Cold War, until internal and external factors caused her to lose her prestigious status in East and West, and to become involved in a worsening situation that led gradually to the collapse of the Communist regime in Romania.

In outlining its policy during my mission in Bucharest (1985–89) Romania acted, *inter alia*, in spheres and directions that had in part an Israeli—Romanian aspect as well as a partly Israeli—Middle Eastern one. Their impact was quite significant for us, since at that time Romania was the single Communist country maintaining friendly diplomatic relations with Israel and the only one of them to play a constructive role in the peace-making process between us and our neighbours (even if we did not like it when Romania granted political recognition to the PLO).

The second question was: What were the main factors driving Romania's foreign policy to descend from its heights to depths never known before the twilight of the Ceaușescu era?

In the following pages I will enumerate three spheres in which Romania's foreign policy ran into conflict as a result of its internal policy, and which had a decisive influence on Romania's decline, both on the international scene and in the East European arena: Romania's relations with the USA, the USSR, and Hungary.

## **ROMANIAN-US RELATIONS**

From Ceaușescu's rise to power (1964) until the mid-1980s, the USA considered Romania a favoured nation in the communist bloc. Consequently, Romania enjoyed a sympathetic attitude from the USA in the domain of their bilateral relations. It is doubtful that any other country of the Soviet bloc enjoyed a similar attitude. The reason was Romania's deviation from the monolithic policy of the Soviet bloc as characterized during the Cold War, expressed by Romania's efforts to develop its own autonomous foreign policy. Thus, Romania was the only country in this group to sharply condemn the Soviet invasion of Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968), and Afghanistan (1989). Also, Romania officially resented the 'Brezhnev Doctrine', according to which the armies of the Warsaw Pact countries should immediately rush to assist any member state of the Pact threatened by 'anti-revolutionary force'. Romania was the first in the Soviet bloc to establish diplomatic relations with West Germany (FRG) and the only one among them known not to have broken off diplomatic relations with Israel, following the Six-Day War, and once again the only member of that bloc that favoured the Camp David agreements and the Israeli-Egyptian peace accord (much to the sorrow of the USSR which

regarded it as a *Pax Americana*).

US presidents, secretaries of state, and other American personalities used to visit Romania more than any other East European state. Also, Ceaușescu and his wife, Elena, used to pay state visits to the USA bearing the nature of mutual friendship during the Cold War period.

According to a Romanian—US trade agreement signed in 1975, the US accorded Romania the status of a ‘Most Favored Nation’ (MFN). The US accordingly occupied second place (after FRG) in Romania's trade with the West and third place in Romania's world trade (after the USSR and FRG).

Romania enjoyed this status in conjunction with the ‘Jackson— Vanik Amendment’, passed in the American Congress as an integral part of the Trade Law, stipulating that the granting of MFN status to communist countries should be conditional upon the granting of permission to emigrate to its citizens. Romania's good fortune began to change direction when the American Congress conditioned the extension of the MFN status to Romania on a yearly basis contingent upon the human rights situation. In addition to the demand to permit emigration to its citizens Romania was required to permit freedom of religious services to all her citizens, to respect the national rights of all minorities and human rights to all its citizens by refraining, *inter alia*, from harassing people who voiced criticism of Romania's internal policy.

Romania invested great effort in developing political and economic relations with the USA, especially in her struggle to obtain the annual extension of the MFN status which provided important economic benefits through the exportation of its goods to the US without being obliged to pay customs duties. Thanks to the MFN status Romania expanded the volume of its exports to the US, competing with American products in the US itself and with products from East European countries exported there that did not have the benefit of this status. In its struggle for the prolongation of the status Romania was assisted, year by year, by the chief rabbi of Romania, Dr Moses Rosen, who served as an advocate for Romania's leadership among the American administration and public opinion by praising the freedom of religious observance and the national rights that Jews enjoyed in Romania. Israel's prime ministers and ambassadors in Washington and Bucharest joined Chief Rabbi Rosen's activity as intercessor, as did Jewish organizations in the USA which were impressed by the relative liberty exercised by Romania's Jewish minority in cultivating its national and cultural heritage. They also took into consideration Romania's policy of permitting Jews to emigrate to Israel (though not at the desired rate); that it had not broken off diplomatic relations with Israel; the fact that Romania did not vote for the anti-Zionist resolution in the United Nations, and in enabling free access (but always closely monitored by the security services) of Israeli official representatives in Bucharest to maintain contact with Romania's Jewish communities. All this was, at that time, an outstanding phenomenon in the Soviet bloc countries.

On the other hand, Hungary operated actively, particularly in the late Ceaușescu era, to hinder Romania's request to get an extension from the USA of its MFN status, under the pretext that Romania was oppressing the national rights of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, where two million Hungarians were then living. Some American congressmen supported this arguments, also the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), whose member states sharply criticized Romania in their discussion on minority and human rights in that country, causing much damage to Romania's image. From my observation point in Bucharest, I reflected the situation as it then looked to me in my reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in

Jerusalem, as follows:

On 15 December 1985 the US Secretary of State, George Schultz, visited Bucharest. The main purpose of his visit, as defined in the American media, was aimed at focusing his talks with his Romanian interlocutors on the following subjects: (a) the cessation of the persecution of clergymen and the destruction of churches; (b) the increase of the rate of emigration from Romania to the USA; and (c) the warning of the Romanian leadership that if there would be no improvement on these matters, there would be a serious danger that the Congress would not ratify the extension of the MFN status for Romania, in its deliberations scheduled to take place in summer 1986.

I thought that Ceaușescu might want to update himself on East-West subjects for the Reagan-Gorbachev summit meeting set to take place in Geneva at the end of November 1985, including the US role in the peace-making process in the Middle East. Therefore I remarked to my American colleague, Ambassador Roger Kirk, that considering Schultz's sensitivity to international terror he would probably mention to Ceaușescu the danger of PLO terror. As to the volume of *aliyah* (emigration) of Jews from Romania to Israel, I noted that although the figures of the second half of 1985 were more encouraging than those of the first half, the mere fact of mentioning his hope to increase the quota of emigration to Israel 'would guarantee that the present stream would continue', in light of the fear that it may decrease. As for the ambassador's question: 'Does Romania support the PLO's terror?' I assessed that although Romania officially denounced terrorist acts by the PLO, at the same time one could assume that it was rendering military training to the PLO, within the various frameworks.

As I learned later from a reliable source Ceaușescu adopted a rigid position in his talk with Secretary of State Schultz saying that 'as the Romanians did not give in to Soviet pressure, even in return for economic benefits, so they would not give in to pressure by the American Congress opposing the renewal of the MFN status for Romania', accusing the Congress of interference in his country's internal affairs. According to this source, Ceaușescu claimed that the religious denominations in Romania enjoyed full freedom, and as an example he brought up the Jewish religion, adding that the Romanians would not compromise with the fascists and ultra-nationalists (hinting at Hungarian attempts to undermine Romania's position in the American Congress). At the end of the visit foreign news agencies quoted Schultz as saying that in his talks with the Romanian leadership he warned against the danger that the Romanian government might lose its MFN status in the US if human rights were not respected in Romania.

At the same time, Chief Rabbi Rosen told me about the conversation he initiated with Ceaușescu a week before Schultz's visit to Bucharest, with a double aim: to report to the president about his activities in the US among Jewish and non-Jewish circles for the improvement of Romania's image in connection with Romania's policy toward the Jewish minority; also to report to him about the unfriendly attitude toward Romania he encountered on the part of the American administration and in other public circles in all that was connected to respect for human rights in Romania.

According to the chief rabbi, the president rejected the American accusations about repression of human rights in Romania. He even exhibited indifference to the danger of losing the MFN status, claiming that the US was interfering too much in Romania's internal affairs and that Romanian—US trade relations would continue to develop even without it. The rabbi added that, contrary to previous occasions, this time the president asked neither him nor the Jewish

organizations in the US to act on behalf of the extension of Romania's MFN status. I had the impression that the rabbi had initiated this talk with the president upon the advice of senior officials in the Romanian administration who were responsible for the MFN status and for Romanian—US relations, and who had avoided informing the president about the bitterness towards his human rights policy in Romania for fear of letting him know about things he did not want to hear. This is why they preferred that the rabbi do their job.

In mid-February 1986, Rabbi Arthur Schneer, president of the Appeal for Conscience Foundation, Alfred Moses, president of the American Jewish Committee, and Jack Spitzer, president of B'nai B'rith, arrived in Bucharest for talks with Ceaușescu. Before their meetings with him I gave them a short briefing about Israeli-Romanian relations, the volume of *aliyah* from Romania to Israel and about my impressions of the Jewish community's status in Romania which seemed to me to be a great deal better than the situation of the Jewish communities in the rest of the East European countries. I stressed the importance of our support — and that of the Jewish organizations in the USA — for Romania's appeal to receive an extension of the MFN status in the US.

I heard from them that in their talks with Ceaușescu they emphasized the difficult position of Romania in the American Congress, according to which Romania might lose its MFN status because of the prevailing opinion in the Congress about Romania's strictures against its Christian sects. They proposed that Ceaușescu make a gesture by allowing the import of New Testaments to Romania, mentioning that this act would make it much easier for the Jewish organizations to fight for the renewal of the MFN status, 'if the Romanian administration would thus help them to assist Romania'. Ceaușescu rejected the accusation regarding the Christian sects but revealed his readiness (without committing himself ) to receive from the Americans the paper needed for the local printing of the New Testament. The guests expressed their satisfaction to Ceaușescu at the Romanian treatment of Jewish subjects. They requested and received Ceaușescu's consent for the performance in the US of the Romanian Jewish Youth Choirs, in May 1986, and arranged to have them flown by Tarom free of charge. As to Arab terror (a subject which they raised upon my advice) Ceaușescu claimed that he distinguished between the struggle of a national liberation movement and individual acts of terror, adding that he himself opposed Arab terror reaching political destinations in the world, in Israel's administrative territories and in Israel itself within the 'Green Line' borders. Mentioning Romania's official statement condemning the Arab terrorist acts in Rome and Vienna, Ceaușescu added that Romania also condemned Israel's military acts in Tunisia and the interception of a Libyan aircraft by Israel, since such deeds bring in their wake an escalation of terror.

In my report to the MFA in Jerusalem about their mission, I mentioned that except for the permission given for the performance of the Jewish Youth Choirs of Romania in the US (a positive act in itself), it seemed that they left Bucharest empty-handed. Their struggle focused on getting permission to import New Testaments to Romania, they had made themselves out to be more Christian than the Christians. I added that raising the topic of Arab terror was timely. It was important that Ceaușescu received the notion that American Jewry was concerned about his relations with the PLO and Arafat. Ceaușescu attributed an importance to the Jews' 'unique weight' in the US. This was more of an advantage than a deficiency. If Romania were to be deprived of the MFN status, it might be that the Romanians would claim that the Jews had failed. If, however, the status was extended, they would know that it had been achieved with their assistance.



On 28 April 1986, Milton Rosenthal, the American chairman of the mixed economic Romanian—US commission, arrived in Bucharest. His talk with Ceaușescu — as I was informed by my American colleague — turned out to be quite difficult, like the previous talk with the Jewish leaders from the US. Ceaușescu exhibited a rigid attitude which was (partially) reflected in the Romanian press announcement the morning following the talk, saying: ‘The meeting dealt with aspects of economic cooperation, on the basis of the principle of full equality in rights, the respect of independence, national sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and mutual benefit’.

It was Ceaușescu's uncompromising position in the face of American pressure. However, it came to my knowledge that 800 problematic cases of Romanian citizens who were refused emigration to the USA had been dealt with at Romania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (out of a longer list presented by the American embassy in Bucharest). It seemed that the Romanian authorities met the American demand in this sphere on the eve of the raising of the subject of the MFN in the American Congress.

On 3 June 1986 a partial amnesty amendment was published in Bucharest, reducing the levy of punishment imposed on prisoners whose offences were not specified. This did not apply to those guilty of causing death, acts of violence, acceptance of bribes, and similar offences. Hence I presumed that the amendment did cover prisoners tried for ‘political deviations’, and that knowledge of the amendment was intentionally publicised shortly before the debate about the MFN was scheduled to take place, thus allowing the US State Department the possibility of seeing it as a source for a positive attitude in face of those (in the Congress) who opposed the granting of an extended MFN status to Romania against the background of the oppression of human rights in Romania.

Indeed, a month later the extension was endorsed by a small majority vote in Congress, following President Reagan's recommendation. The Romanian leadership relaxed until summer 1987, when the struggle for an additional year's renewal began; this time it was much harder.

On 14–15 November 1986, American Deputy Secretary of State John Whitehead visited Bucharest as part of a get-acquainted tour he was making in East European states. Among the items he reviewed in his conversation with Ceaușescu, according to a reliable source, were US readiness to invest in joint projects in Romania and USA-Romanian cooperation in the exchange of information and evaluation in curbing terror.

Ceaușescu gave his consent to both proposals, suggesting the MFN status to Romania be based on a multi-annual basis.

I do not know how Whitehead reacted to Ceaușescu's proposal, aimed at avoiding having to bring up the subject of the MFN status extension each year for Congress endorsement on the basis of the human rights situation in Romania. But not much time passed until we heard that the US would not be willing to accept Ceaușescu's proposal. Since then the annual test has made it possible to put pressure on the Romanian leadership to react positively to the demand to increase the number of exit permits for Romanian citizens wishing to immigrate to the US and to respect human and minority rights in their country. Over time it was proved that the annual test was a useful means to achieve some of these aims.

In summer 1987 the American Congress decided to suspend the endorsement of the MFN status to Romania for six months, until it became clear that Romania had improved the situation

of minority rights. The decision was accepted owing to the heavy pressure of the Hungarian lobby in the US. Consequently, the Romanian media published the following declaration on behalf of Agerpress, Romania's news agency, on 28 July 1987:

Public opinion in Romania received with surprise and astonishment the US Senate's decision which has recently voted by 49 votes in favour and 44 votes against the draft proposal to suspend for six months the MFN status of Romania. This decision does not correspond with the good relations between both states and nations, contradicting entirely the interests of both states, the GATT principles and the norms of relations between states. The government of Romania is of the opinion that such an amendment contradicts entirely the Romanian—US Trade Agreement, establishing the mutual granting of the MFN status, on the basis of principles of full equality, respect for independence and the non-interference in internal affairs — principles which Romania is continuously implementing with all states of the world.

It is a surprising fact that some American senators exploited the Senate debates to libel, to distort, to degenerate the deeds of the Romanian people and its achievements, Romania's policy regarding social-economic development, peace and cooperation between the states of the world. It constitutes an impermissible interference in the internal affairs of Romania, a violation of norms for mutual respect which should prevail in the world.

The government of Romania believes that the relations between all the States, with no distinction as to size and social regime, must base themselves on a strict respect of the principles of equality of rights, independence, and mutual benefit. Adhering to these principles, the Romanian people cannot permit any interference in its internal affairs, no matter from what side it stems. Romania resolutely rejects any kind of interference in the internal affairs of the Romanian people, any pressure or conditions concerning her relations with other states. The MFN status is mutual and should serve the economic relations between both states. The responsibility for reducing the economic ties between Romania and the US will be put on those who took the decision. Romania will also act in the future, consistently, for broad international cooperation, on the basis of principles of full equality of rights, respect for independence, and national sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and mutual benefit.

In the spirit of these principles Romania will persistently develop her relations with all the states of the world, including the US, taking into consideration that this is the interest of all the nations to reduce tension and strengthen cooperation and peace in the world.

A few days after the publication of this declaration I talked about it with a senior Romanian diplomat at the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After having expressed to him my sorrow that our efforts in the American administration and in Congress to impede the suspension did not bear fruit, he answered that the decision suspending the status came as a shock to the Romanian authorities, even though their assessment had been that it might happen. It seemed that they were now more aware than in the past of American sensitivity to the topic of human rights and to the increasing power of the Hungarian lobby in the American Congress, and that they believed that their embassy in Washington did not act energetically in explaining Romania's policy and in neutralising its opponents in Congress. Consequently, Romania's ambassador to Washington would be called back soon and 'would not ever be sent to another mission': they very much appreciated the Jewish and Israeli help for the extension of the MFN status. If it were not for that

help the result of the voting would have been more shameful, and the supporters of the suspension do not understand that through it they are limiting the manoeuvrability of Romania's independence. In other words, this suspension might increase Romania's dependence upon the Soviet Union.

I received the impression then that despite Ceaușescu's pretence in his talk with the president of B'nai B'rith and other Jewish leaders that the whole problem did not matter to him, the officials of the Romanian MFA revealed to me their fear and anxiety for the future.

The immediate question that we posed to ourselves in Bucharest and in Jerusalem was whether Congress's decision to suspend Romania's MFN status might possibly harm our relations with Romania, the immigration of Jews from Romania to Israel and the status of the Jewish community in Romania.

My answer at that time to the MFA in Jerusalem was: our relations with Romania were crystallised before the US accorded Romania MFN status and that it was reasonable to presume that the nature of our relations would continue, even if Romania were deprived of the MFN status. Hence, I did not expect any deterioration in the system of our mutual relations. The same went for Jewish immigration to Israel which continued as usual, and even, to a certain degree, at a higher rate compared to the period before the agreement on MFN status in 1975. Therefore, I presumed that Ceaușescu would not restrict the flow from Romania to Israel.<sup>1</sup> We proved to the Romanian authorities that we supported their request to extend MFN status, which they greatly appreciated. If, in the final stage, the status was denied, they would like to secure our support for them in the future, and for that reason, too, I did not expect any deterioration in our mutual relations. Consequently, our support for Romania and the backing of the Jewish organizations is a kind of gesture and reward for Romania's policy towards Israel and the Jewish minority living within her borders. If the suspension were cancelled, we could take some credit for ourselves and take advantage of the according of the status, with the Americans, to put pressure on Romania regarding the increase of the *aliyah* rate, if and when it should be necessary. If the status were negated Romania's being in need of our support as well as that of the Jewish organizations, would not weaken.

When the six-month suspension was over, the US came to the conclusion that there had been no improvement in the situation of the Hungarian minority and in other spheres connected with human rights in Romania. Therefore, the American administration was not inclined to extend the MFN status to Romania. This was an additional blow to Romania's leadership. The negation of the status after the suspension was likely to cause great economic harm to Romania's exports to the USA due to high customs duties, which until now Romania had been exempted from paying. In addition, Romania lost much of her political prestige in the West and the East alike, being the single East European state to be deprived of the status.

Instead of looking for a compromise with the US by introducing a revision in his human rights policies, Ceaușescu preferred to act before the US in announcing Romania's decision to renounce the status. In this way he hoped to save Romania's national prestige, demonstrating her determination not to surrender to the US demands. The surrender of his policy was presumably regarded by him to be more sacred than the economic benefit which Romania could have enjoyed as a result of the extension of the MFN status.

This dilemma — the necessity to choose between capitulating on human rights issues or choosing to remain steadfast to principles — was given expression in an official statement of

response published in the Romanian media on 28 February 1988 by Agerpress. This is the full text:

The Socialist Republic of Romania always acted for the development of economic and techno-scientific relations of cooperation with all states, without distinction of their social regime and without any condition, but on the basis of principles of full equality, the respect for independence and national sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and for the mutual benefit, according to the international norms recognized by all and the GATT agreement. In this spirit Romania outlined her policy, broadening and diversifying her economic and trade relations with the USA too. On the basis of these relations were the understandings signed by the governments of both states.

According to the Romania-US trade agreement of 2 April 1975, Romania and the USA accorded one another MFN status. Romania fully implemented its commitments of the agreement, acting for the constant development of the relations between both states. On the other hand the USA, referring to the Jackson-Vanik Amendment conditioned unilaterally each year the granting of the status by submitting political demands that constitute an impermissible interference in Romania's internal affairs that are by no means connected with trade relations between Romania and the USA. Moreover, hostile circles who oppose the development of Romanian—US relations took advantage of the procedure of the status' annual renewal as a means for denigrating Romania and interfering in her internal affairs, so that the discussion on the renewal of the status became an obstacle in the path towards strengthening bilateral relations.

The government of Romania drew the attention of the US government, on several occasions, to the fact that Romania will not permit any damage to the relations between both states constituting a violation of principles and norms in international relations and the trade agreement, and stands in contradiction to the GATT regulations signed by both countries. Considering this situation, Romania has informed the US government that it does not accept any longer the extension of the MFN status under the conditions of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and asked for the initiation of talks on the development of economic relations on the basis of the existing trade agreement, opposing any pre-conditions for that.

Before the start of the bilateral consultations for the clarification of the problems connected with the MFN status and the further continuation of the development of economic relations, the US government published on 26 February 1988, a statement announcing that the granting of the MFN status would expire on 3 July 1988, customs duties (on imports from Romania) will be increased and financial, economic and other steps will be taken in its relations with Romania. Considering the declared means which the USA is about to undertake, the government of Romania is declaring, once again that it does not ask by any means whatsoever to reserve the MFN status under the stipulations of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, and that it will consider the problems involved in the implementation of the MFN status with the USA, the customs duties, fees and other facilities stemming from American imports into Romania.

The government of Romania believes that it is absolutely vital that representatives of both states meet as soon as possible, to discuss ways for the development of trade exchanges and economic cooperation between both states. Romania will act as it had done in the past to develop economic relations with the USA, on the basis of the well-known

principles of international law, equality of rights, and mutual benefit. Romania exposes its trust that the USA will act in a constructive spirit of cooperation which will enable the finding of solutions and the removing of any obstacles strewn in the path to the development of traditional ties between Romania and the USA, for the benefit of both states and nations and international cooperation.

In my report to the MFA in Jerusalem, I then made the assessment that by publishing its statement renouncing MFN status, the government of Romania was aiming at four goals: (a) saving its national ego, by appearing as an accuser instead of defendant; (b) getting rid of the humiliating situation in which Romania found itself: the need to be judged year after year for her sins facing an anti-Romanian campaign becoming ever more difficult in the USA; (c) negating the possibility of Hungary putting pressure on Romania concerning the Hungarian minority's situation in Transylvania (especially in light of Ceaușescu's plan for the systematisation of the villages) — such pressure was activated by the annual deliberations on the extension of MFN status for Romania along with assistance from the Hungarian lobby in the USA, focusing on the demand to cease the destruction of the villages inhabited by members of the Hungarian minority for generations; (d) leaving an open door for its future negotiations with the USA towards re-acquisition of MFN status not linked to the Jackson—Vanik Amendment, and on a multi-annual basis, promising beforehand to continue the policy on emigration to the West within the framework of family reunification, with no connection to its policy towards the USA. Hence, the Romanian struggle for an improved MFN status would continue.

As for Israel I estimated the following:

1. Romania had freed us from the duty to fight alongside her against public opinion in the USA that had a critical view of the Romanian government, and where the chances for success were dismal. As in the past, now too, I did not expect any deterioration in Romania's policy on both the issue of *aliyah* and that of the Jewish minority. In the process of intensive Romanization, there was also a tendency to get rid of the 'foreign plant' that was not taking root through assimilation among the Romanian people.
2. American commentators told me that they estimated the loss to Romania from being deprived of MFN status would amount to some \$250 million. In addition Romania could lose, according to the spokeswoman of the US State Department in her statement of 26 February 1988, US support for receiving a credit from the American Bank for Import and Export. It is almost certain that in this situation, as well as over the course of Romania's attempt at retrieving MFN status on its conditions, it would wish to have Israeli assistance and cooperate with us, both because of the influence in the US it attributed to us and because of our trade agreement with the US. Thus, even after losing MFN status, Romania would have an interest in maintaining close relations with Israel.

My evaluation proved to be correct. Israel was regarded by the Romanian leadership as a political asset that it needed, particularly when its relations with the USA had deteriorated to a great extent. Therefore, the Romanian authorities were cautious not to harm their relations with Israel regarding the continuous flow of *aliyah* and the situation of the Jewish minority in Romania.

In the course of a conversation on 15 July 1988 between Israel's Minister of Trade and Industry, Ariel Sharon, and Romania's Foreign Minister, Stefan Andrei, in Bucharest — with my participation — Andrei referred to Romania's renouncement of the MFN status, saying that when

the Romanians applied to the Americans requesting their (financial) support to pay off their foreign debts, the Americans replied that they could not help; yet when the Romanians attempted to pay off their foreign debts by themselves on account of the population's living standard, the Americans claimed that Romania was facing economic distress.

‘And how did the USA reward Romania?’, he asked:

...when Romania did not break its relations with Israel, despite the economic boycott that Arab states imposed on Romania; or for its support for a solution to the problem of Vietnam; or for its urging the superpowers to start negotiating on disarmament; or for criticizing the USSR due to its invasion of Afghanistan? It is not correct to say that Romania renounced its MFN status of its own free will. It was forced to do so. Why? Because it could no longer stand the hostile campaign waged against it in Congress in an attempt to interfere in Romania's domestic affairs. Independence has its cost. The loss as a result of relinquishing MFN status is the price Romania has to pay for its independence.

The Romanian leadership hoped that after the election of George Bush as American president (in November 1988), the US attitude toward Romania would improve. Romania also hoped to be compensated by the USA in the domain of mutual trade, following the loss of MFN status. A high-ranking Romanian delegation, headed by Dr Olimpia Solomonescu, deputy minister for foreign affairs, who visited the USA in this connection, returned empty-handed. America showed no willingness to separate the human rights issue from the granting of MFN status to Romania, especially in light of the repressive acts undertaken by the Romanian authorities towards Romanian dissidents, owing to the publication of their declarations criticizing Ceaușescu's internal policy in autumn 1988 and spring of 1989. Against this background, Romanian-US relations — like Romania's relations with France and the European Community — entered into a stage of sharp confrontation, at a level never before witnessed during Ceaușescu's long era.

In mid-March 1989, Bucharest's diplomatic community learned of a severe note the US ambassador in Bucharest, Roger Kirk, was instructed to present on behalf of the US government to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Solomonescu. It stated, *inter alia*, that the US was joining the European community and its member governments in expressing concern about the possibility that measures accepted in police states were being used against Romanian people, who were exercising their right to freedom of speech by sending an open letter to the Romanian leadership. There were reports, it said in the note, about possible actions that would be taken against senior Romanian personalities following their appeal to President Ceaușescu to introduce changes in the regime's policy on offences against freedom speech. These constituted a violation of Romania's commitment regarding the respecting of human rights, including those stated in the final Helsinki document and the Vienna concluding document, signed by Romania. Romania's failure to honour such commitments would be seen as an insult to the international community and would have direct implications on Romanian US relations.

President Bush's July 1989 visit to Hungary and Poland, bypassing Romania, angered Romanian leadership, who vented their feelings in articles and commentaries published in the Romanian press. *Romania Libera*, on 10 July 1989, published an editorial accusing President Bush of intentions to split the East European bloc countries and of encouraging them to relinquish the basic principles of socialism, so that they could re-establish private ownership and become again a Western-style democratic regime. The article saw the purpose of the visit, and of the accompanying declarations Bush made, as an act of interference in the internal affairs of the

countries in the region and as an offence to their independence and national sovereignty. *Scînteia* repeated, in its 11 July 1989 issue, the main thesis of *România Liberă*, published a day earlier, accusing the USA and the West of striving to return to the Cold War days by undermining the socialist regimes in East European states and attempting to interfere in their internal affairs. An editorial in *Scînteia* of 14 July 1989 accused President Bush of intending to undercut the stable socialist regimes of Eastern Europe by pushing them to anti-Socialist reforms of a capitalist nature, by conducting selective diplomacy dividing them into 'bad' ones and 'good' ones according to the needs of the capitalist superpowers...turning history backwards. To what extent this would succeed remains to be seen. The editorial concluded: 'It seems that there are circumstances according to which these truths are forgotten or ignored...Nobody can pay such a high price [renouncing socialist ideals] in exchange for three coins of promises'.

Such articles symbolised more than anything else the depths to which Ceaușescu's relations with the USA and the West had dropped. Ceaușescu used them, however, to present himself as the faithful leader and protector of the Socialist faction in East Europe, without sensing its imminent collapse.

## ROMANIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS

Apparently, the relations between Romania and the USSR, as members of the same bloc, proceeded in a normal manner. But, beneath the surface, relations were tense during the Ceaușescu era when seen from political and national aspects. In the twilight of that era one should add the ideological aspect too. In the eyes of the Soviet Union, Ceaușescu was probably regarded as a rebellious leader among those of the Soviet bloc. He opposed holding Warsaw Pact manoeuvres and rebuffed the placing of Soviet missiles in Romanian territory. He was sharply critical of the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan. He developed relations with the West, particularly with the USA and West Germany (FRG) — something that did not always correspond with Soviet interests. Romania supported the Camp David Accords leading to peace between Israel and Egypt, while the Soviet Union together with all other communist states condemned them.

In the international arena, Romania strove to reduce tension between the Eastern and Western blocs through actions. Romania called more than once for the dismemberment of both the Warsaw Pact and NATO alliances — whereas the Soviet Union in the pre-Gorbachev period raised inter-bloc tension more than it reduced it, despite her declarations that she was striving for a policy of 'peaceful co-existence'. Among her own people, Romania cultivated a national ideology (dubbed in the West 'national communism'), leaving hardly any space for the Soviet Union. Romania's official historians (there were no others who could have published studies that were not on the country's behalf) began in the final years of Ceaușescu's rule to uncover the fact that Romania had fallen victim to the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement in 1939, according to which Bessarabia and North Bucovina were ripped away from Romania and annexed to the Soviet Union, with Nazi Germany's consent.

Among the Romanian public — as I experienced myself more than once during my mission to Romania — a deep but restrained enmity existed towards the Soviet Union, either because it did not forgive the USSR for annexing Romanian territories following the plot contrived with Nazi Germany, or because the unloved communist regime was identified with the Soviet Union. It was not until Gorbachev's rise to power and the introduction of his theories of *perestroika* and

*glasnost* preaching for social and economic reforms in the Soviet bloc countries, that the attitude of the Romanian public towards the Soviet Union started to change from negation to acceptance, in the hope that these theories would redeem the Romanian population from its difficult economic and social situation. At that time the relations between Ceaușescu and Gorbachev began to be tense in consequence of Ceaușescu's resistance to the introduction of social and economic changes in Romania in the spirit of Gorbachev's reforms; Ceaușescu's unilateral positions on the Warsaw Pact and CEMA (the common market of Soviet countries); his rigid policy towards the Hungarian minority in Romania, condemned by the CSCE with the USSR's support; and the Ceaușescu cult of personality. This tension in their relationship led to the gradual isolation of Ceaușescu's Romania in East Europe; the situation changed only after the December 1989 revolution that ended Ceaușescu's rule and the communist regime.

Thus a paradox developed. Just as in the pre-Gorbachev period, Ceaușescu was seen as deviating from the monolithic foreign policy of the Soviet bloc, so during Gorbachev's rule in the USSR, Ceaușescu was considered as one of the greatest conservatives of the Soviet bloc countries, in all that was connected to internal policy on economic and social issues.

This is how I observed the dynamic of decline of the relations between the two countries during my mission to Romania, according to the observations and reports I made at that time. I shall now survey some relevant milestones, presenting them in chronological order.

*23–27 December 1985.* The Romanian press covered the visit of Romania's Foreign Minister, Ilia Văduvă, to Moscow in a low key. To that we must add the definition of the talks as held in an atmosphere of friendship, openness, and mutual understanding. From this we may conclude that besides the importance of the minister's first meeting in Moscow with his Soviet counterpart, the visit did not signify a *rapprochement* between the two sides. Some of the western ambassadors in Bucharest told me that according to reports of their colleagues in Moscow, Văduvă proposed to his Soviet hosts that they invite Ceaușescu to pay a state visit to the USSR. Whereupon he was told that actually Ceaușescu and Gorbachev had already talked to each other in the past few months (during the Warsaw Pact meetings in Sofia and Prague) and since then there had not been much more to discuss.

*5 February 1986.* The Romanian media is marking the 38th anniversary of the signing of the Romanian-Soviet Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance convention. The media are praising the convention's achievements emphasizing that the Ceaușescu—Gorbachev meetings last year (at the Warsaw Pact conference 1985) were of 'great political importance'. But, *inter alia*, it is worth noting the critical tone in the following passage from *Scînteia* of 4 February 1986, indicating the gap between Romania's expectations from the Soviet Union on one hand, and the lack of Soviet response, on the other: 'The Romanian-Soviet economic cooperation is developing also on the multilateral level, within the framework of CEMA, and in this respect there is a great actual need to seek together solutions to a number of problems, such as the supply of oil and raw materials in larger quantities, machines, and modern technological equipment'.

*Beginning of February 1986.* A Western colleague of the diplomatic corps told me that he had heard a negative assessment from the Soviet ambassador, in respect of Romania, according to which the relations between the two states are at a low level. The Soviet ambassador mentioned three reasons for that situation: Ceaușescu's cult of personality that Gorbachev could not stand, with all its implications for the way the state is being lead; Romania's inferior economic status that constitutes a negative model of a socialist-communist regime in action; Romania's blunt



behaviour at the Cultural Forum of the CSCE held in Budapest several months ago that resulted in the failure to reach a unanimous, joint East—West resolution. (This Forum recommended according educational and cultural rights to the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. Romania declared that it regarded this as an interference in its internal affairs and therefore opposed it.) To this my colleague added another factor, part of his own evaluation, namely that, the equal manner in which Romania treats both the USA and the USSR on issues concerning disarmament, and Ceaușescu's proposal to the Warsaw Pact states to unilaterally limit its arms race, which the Soviets took to be a confession by the West that the military of the Warsaw Pact was superior to NATO, and would thus cause the negotiations between the two alliances to be more difficult.

*End of February 1986.* Ceaușescu's speech at the 27th Congress of the CPSU in Moscow was characterized by the difference in the usual attitudes between him and the Soviet Union more than by signifying the political and ideological identification between them. The distillation of his ideas can be defined as: the diverse paths to socialism strengthen rather than weaken (namely, Romania continues to follow her own way); the balance of power between both superpowers should be reached not by increasing their military arsenal but by reducing it to its lowest level; Romania acted and continues to act towards the resolution of the differences between 'several Socialist States', in this respect Romania welcomes the normalization of relations between China and the Soviet Union; cooperation among CEMA members should be based on new relations of full equality and mutual benefit; it is the right of each nation to proceed in its own way towards development, without outside interference.

*9 March 1986.* *Scînteia* reports that at the Romanian Politburo deliberations of 7 March 1986, 'deep appreciation' was expressed for Ceaușescu's activity in Moscow and for 'the excellent' manner of presenting Romania's position at the CPSU Congress and in his conversation with Mikhail Gorbachev, secretary-general of the CPSU. The report again mentions the main lines of Romania's position, including the divergent ones. It seemed that in publishing this report there was an intention to show the Soviet Union, the Soviet bloc states, and China that Ceaușescu's declared position in Moscow received the full support of RCP's central bodies.

*15–17 May 1986: Gorbachev's visit to Romania.* On the eve of Gorbachev's visit to Bucharest, the Romanian media stressed the Soviet Union's achievements and its government's push for self-criticism and the taking up of initiatives to improve the economic management of the country. Gorbachev was praised for his initiative in reaching agreements on disarmament with the USA; satisfaction was noted on the pace of the development of Romania's relations with the Soviet Union, of the cooperation in the domains of economic, especially CEMA, technology and science on the basis of 'the principles of full equality, the respect for independence, national sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs'.

It was reported that simultaneously in Moscow and in Bucharest a collection of Ceaușescu's and Gorbachev's speeches were published and that the Romanian Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries inaugurated a photo exhibition of Soviet life.<sup>2</sup>

On subjects regarding Romania's internal policy, we find the 'Facts and Figures' on the 'democratisation' process of the economic management in Romania was published, as well as on Ceaușescu's intensive activity over the past 20 years (dubbed in RCP propaganda as the Golden Age of Nicolae Ceaușescu).

Regarding issues of foreign policy, the reports emphasized Romania's political and multilateral activity (particularly in the last two weeks) aimed at impressing the guest with Romania's

relations with East and West, the Middle East, and the developing states.

## **The Main Points of Ceaușescu's and Gorbachev's Speeches**

Ceaușescu repeated the basic points of his internal and foreign policy. There was nothing new in that. Gorbachev subtly criticized Romania's state management by obliquely pointing out faults in Soviet society and economy that could be put right and adjusted for the new era by reforms in the administrative system. He spoke like a guide who could draw conclusions without imposing them on others, but did not leave any doubt among his listeners that their implementation in the Soviet Union and in the Soviet bloc countries would have a collective, positive influence on their developmental path, including Romania who was facing 'economic problems and daily difficulties'. The achievements of Romania he ascribed to the credit of the workers, the Communist Party, and to the cooperation between her and the rest of the communist countries. He expressed his appreciation to the Party's veterans — thus contradicting Ceaușescu's personality cult to which Romania's propaganda was attributing credit for all achievements.

## **28 May 1986: Main Points of the Joint Statement**

The statement expressed the desire for the continued development of mutual friendly relations in the future, on the basis of full equality of rights, respect for independence and national sovereignty, noninterference in internal affairs, mutual benefit and international solidarity. (Ceaușescu took this paragraph to mean a guarantee for the continuation of Romania's independent policy and the prevention of Soviet interference in Romania's internal affairs. An additional element that he was continuously striving for was a joint statement with the Soviet Union insuring the principle of equality between both states.)

Ceaușescu presented the revolutionary changes and achievements in Romania under the communist regime, particularly those in the past 20 years that ran parallel to Ceaușescu's rule, including the 'democratic' methods in collective and self-management of the State economy. (The purpose of this paragraph was to argue with Gorbachev that the economic and administrative changes that he was calling for had long ago been implemented in Romania. From Gorbachev's reaction it was apparent that he did not accept Ceaușescu's arguments.)

Gorbachev surveyed the tendencies of the change in Soviet society: expansion of workers' rights; abolition of excessive rights customarily enjoyed by some in Soviet society and the opening to criticism of areas formerly impervious to it; the importance of information distribution, encouragement of personal initiative and transparency of actions, the cessation of formalism, 'declarationism', bureaucracy, and the system of giving orders from above for everything concerning economic and social management.

The statement stressed the important function of the elected authorities, their control of their staff, the professional and moral quality of the workers, and their sense of understanding the demands of the masses and consideration of them, the aim of *perestroika* (rebuilding) to 'insure a better life for the citizens of the Soviet Union, the deeper rooting of social equality, the establishment of more progressive social forms of organization, the enhancement of the attractiveness of socialism'.

On the bilateral plane, the statement underscored increased cooperation and its expansion in the areas of ideology, politics, economics, science, culture and industry, including the

establishment of joint societies for production and research on the bilateral and CEMA levels.

On the political plane, Romania stated its support for the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact proposals concerning disarmament; for the halting of imperialist policy aimed at inciting nations; and for the cessation of anti-communist, racial, nationalistic, chauvinistic preaching. It stressed the need to act for the education of nations in the spirit of friendship, cooperation, and peace.

Romania and the USSR stand for the development of relations with all developing socialist and non-aligned states as well as with the other states of the world, with no distinction as to their social regime (as we know the relations between Israel and the USSR were then cut off). Both are in favour of settling conflicts by political means, through negotiations and on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and independence of nations and for the right of each nation to determine its own destiny. Both expressed their solidarity with the nations fighting for their freedom, independence, and social progress as well as for the demilitarization of the Balkans, both of chemical and nuclear weapons.<sup>3</sup>

### **Concluding Remarks on the Visit**

In the course of the visit, Ceaușescu attempted to draw the attention of his guest to the achievements of Romania's socialism in building and development. Elena Ceaușescu occupied a humble position over the course of the talks. For Romania's people it was a good opportunity to hear a vigorous, critical Soviet leader who understood the welfare of the individual and society. As he appeared at the Romanian-Soviet friendship rally Gorbachev could see for himself the manifestations of Ceaușescu's personality cult as he was obliged to stand up 19 times during Ceaușescu's speech, together with the 'public representatives' who attended the rally.

Romania's MFA information services emphasized the following points: Romania appreciates Gorbachev's reform plans for the Soviet Union. Each socialist state has its own conditions for development (meaning Romania's government does not believe that the reforms are applicable to its own country; Romania had already introduced reforms corresponding to its needs and development). Ceaușescu repeatedly emphasized Romania's independence, in other words, that it would not give in to pressure. Romania is in favour of cooperation within the Warsaw Pact states but does not lean towards integration (as Gorbachev has proposed) within the Pact. Full understanding was reached on international subjects. In the bilateral domain the hope was expressed strengthening the relations mainly by receiving larger quantities of oil from the Soviet Union than in the past. (In this regard serious divergencies between the two countries remained unsolved, neither during the visit nor afterwards.)

Implications for the future indicated that Ceaușescu had given no sign that he had been influenced by Gorbachev's reform ideas on the decrease of his personal involvement and centralism or of the RCP's in managing the economy of the State. Hence, one could foretell that the regime's damages would continue and for that reason Romania's economic and social situation would probably deteriorate. The Romanian people would probably continue to hope for social changes that, perhaps, might be implemented in the post-Ceaușescu era. In the meantime, the people would be compelled to find consolation in the regime's large dose of nationalism, relative independence of Romania, and the prestige of its leader — diminishing on the international scene.

Most likely, the Soviets believed that radical change in Romania would occur only after

Ceaușescu disappeared from the country's leadership. Until then they would try to reinforce relations on the party plane in anticipation of his successor.

Gorbachev's visit to Romania served both sides. It enabled Gorbachev to talk to the Romanian people over Ceaușescu's head and present the human side of the economic and social reform in which he believed, for the sake of strengthening the communist regime. The journey unmasked for Gorbachev the sickness of Romania's regime and the impenetrability of the leader, who opposed the introduction of fresh ideas beneficial to his people. To the Romanian people the visit offered positive faith and hope for the future, helping them rid themselves of fear of the Soviet Union. Ceaușescu gained prestige as host of a great superpower leader.

*On 2 November 1987*, at a festive meeting held in Moscow to mark the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, Gorbachev justified the USSR's decision to sign a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. He was attempting, thereby, to contradict Western historiographers who claimed that the agreement led to the outbreak of the Second World War.

*On 25 January 1988*, at a festive gathering on the occasion of his 70th birthday, Ceaușescu contradicted Gorbachev's justification (without mentioning his name) of the agreement, saying:

No agreement signed with Hitler's Germany served the cause of peace and independence, on the contrary, it accorded Germany a powerful support for her striving towards war, for which mankind paid a high price, particularly the Soviet Union.

In this statement, Ceaușescu added his voice to the opinion prevailing in the West. He was actually the only leader in the Soviet bloc to align himself against the Soviet theory (reconfirmed by Gorbachev) arguing that the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement did not have any ramifications on the outbreak of the Second World War.

Such pronouncements, from both sides of the barricade, were not mere commentary on history. Ceaușescu probably used his (justified) argument to hint to Gorbachev that Romania remembered the territories torn away from it by the Soviet Union by virtue of this agreement. And, although Romania did not demand the return of these territories from the Soviet Union, it still had a moral right to possess them. Contemporary Romanian national historiography also expresses this attitude. Should Romania's tone on this become more strident, then Romania and the Soviet Union would face a political confrontation on this issue.

*Since the beginning of May 1988*, the Romanian press has been reporting on 'the official visit of friendship' that Gromyko is about to pay to Romania during the third week of May. In this context, Ceaușescu's views on internal and foreign matters are presented. Among the subjects related to foreign policy, notable place is devoted to Afghanistan, following the Soviet Union's invasion into its territory. The main points taken up are: Ceaușescu welcomed the agreements reached in Geneva and reiterated that 'Romania from the very beginning thought that the Soviet army's entry into Afghanistan was a mistake and has always called for its retreat. We have discussed this matter more than once with our Soviet friends'. The agreements reached (in Geneva) are difficult ones for Afghanistan which is confronting problems it did not have ten years ago. The political solution should ensure the democratic and independent development of Afghanistan. Actually, the present circumstances are much more difficult than those existing at the time of the Soviet military intervention in that country. An end should be put to any outside intervention. The right of the Afghani people to decide by themselves what route their development should take must be respected. The lessons learned from Soviet intervention in

Afghanistan, the Vietnamese in Campuchea, and the Americans in Nicaragua justify the Marxist theory opposing the export of revolution and the export of counter-revolution. This should not be interpreted as the renouncing of solidarity with progressive anti-imperialist forces. But solidarity does not mean military intervention.'

## **15 May 1988, Main Points of the Joint Statement Issued at the End of Gromyko's Visit to Romania**

*Internal Affairs:* Ceaușescu presented his views concerning the economic management of Romania 'insuring the workers direct partnership'. Gromyko offered the main ideas of *perestroika*, intended to liquidate past failures and increase consciousness promoting democratisation of society and economy.

*Cooperation:* Again stress was placed on the principle of strengthening cooperation between the two states, as stated during Gorbachev's Romanian visit, by respecting the interests of each state, respect for the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs and full equality.

*Foreign Affairs:* The statement praised the understanding reached between both superpowers on disarmament. The attempts at revisionism to correct the European frontiers were condemned. Their non-violation is a condition for peace and security in Europe. Also condemned were incitement and encouragement of anti-communism, racism, chauvinism, and nationalism. The Soviet Union congratulated Romania and Bulgaria on their efforts to transform the Balkans into a region of peace, cooperation, and good neighbourliness, free of nuclear or chemical weapons. Support was expressed for the initiatives taken up by other states in transforming Europe and other regions of the world to be nuclear- and chemical-weapon free. The need was emphasized to solve regional conflicts by peaceful means on the basis of respect for the rights of each nation to decide upon its own destiny.

In assessing the joint statement, I pointed out to our MFA in Jerusalem the following:

1. Both sides defined their individual positions when a common denominator did not always unite them, including respecting the principle of non-violation of borders and preventing chauvinism directed by Romania towards Hungary. The Middle East as a focal point was not mentioned, but both sides concluded by using, in this respect, a general term calling for a 'settlement of the problem by peaceful means'.
2. A reliable Romanian source told me that the Ceaușescu— Gromyko talks centred on the need to increase economic, technological, and scientific cooperation and that the main new element was the repeated emphasis on the summing up made during the Gorbachev visit to Romania. As to my question asking if Gromyko had applied some pressure on Ceaușescu to obtain concessions that Gorbachev had not attained, the source replied in the negative.
3. In comparison with Gorbachev's visit, Gromyko's was soft-pedaled. My Romanian source told me that Gromyko's speech was published only in part. His references to the economic and social reforms were deleted. Moreover, his replies to Soviet journalists at a press conference held at the Soviet embassy in Bucharest appeared in the Romanian newspapers in a general, selective form.

To conclude: both sides had an interest in continuing the political and ideological dialogue and in increasing cooperation. Ceaușescu needed this visit to glorify his prestige in Romania and to

reinforce his status in the East European region.

*23 August 1988, The Soviet Union's Greetings on Romania's National Day* are characterized by the divergence of views between the two states. Its central message, as I analyzed it, reads:

Communists and labourers in the Soviet Union, by implementing consistently *perestroika* and society's revolutionary renewal, devote special attention to the deepening of cooperation with socialist states, constituting a preferential target in Soviet foreign policy. We build our relations with Romania and its working people on a permanent basis of equality, respect for sovereignty, mutual benefit, international solidarity, and responsibility towards the working people in our countries and the general interest of socialism and peace. An important task in the development of mutual relations is integration of the socialist economy in the direction of greater in-depth links and specialisation toward which the CEMA activity is now directed.

Two views expressed in this message were unacceptable to Ceaușescu. The first was that economic and social reforms are of vital interest to the workers, socialism, and peace. Ceaușescu believed that the reforms constitute a deviation from socialism towards capitalism. The second approach he opposed was the Soviet Union's proposal for economic integration among all Soviet bloc states in the CEMA, whereas Ceaușescu called for cooperation among them, which, in his view, would preserve their independence better.

*5 October 1988, Ceausescus Visit to Moscow.* This was the first and last working visit that Ceaușescu paid to Moscow in the Gorbachev era. It lasted no more than a day. As in his previous meetings with Gorbachev, in this case too the ideological aspect took centre place in their talks. Apparently this visit widened the gap between their declared positions rather than bridging it.

Ceaușescu's and Gorbachev's speeches in the Kremlin, as well as the joint Soviet-Romanian statement published in the Romanian press on 6 October 1988 were, once again, characterized by divergence of opinions between the two of them over the question of implementing economic and social reforms in each of the Soviet bloc states and by the need to reduce the Party's involvement in the management of the state economy. Whereas Ceaușescu stuck to his known position, Gorbachev clearly implied his definite resentment, stressing that the achievements of each of the states would be considered the success of all, while the failure of any one of them would be seen as the failure of them all.

The Romanian press praised the importance of the visit in expanding mutual relations but ignored the divergence of opinions. (In the text of the statement published in Bucharest, Gorbachev's reference to the need to reduce the party's involvement in economic activities was simply omitted.)

A senior official of the Romanian MFA told me that in Moscow Ceaușescu took up the line, 'Whatever may be the difference of opinions between us, they should not influence the development of our mutual relations'. True, in this domain Romania did attain certain achievements. Yet, the chargé d'affaires of the Soviet embassy in Bucharest intimated to me that Soviet-Romanian relations would deteriorate more than they would improve 'in the present situation'. He was indeed right.

*7–8 July 1989, Warsaw Pact Meeting, Bucharest.* An East European colleague who was present at the meeting told me about the serious divergence of opinions prevailing between those who advocated the economic and social reforms and those who opposed them. In the course of the

deliberations, Gorbachev declared that 'the era of the Cold War is over'. Whereas Ceaușescu asserted that the Cold War still existed. Moreover, Ceaușescu surprised the participants by proposing to renew the validity of the 'Brezhnev Doctrine', while Gorbachev declared its time had passed. Ceaușescu's proposal attests to his fear of a rebellion breaking out in his country without his having the ability to quell it (as did indeed happen). In contrast to the not-too-distant past when he himself had condemned the Doctrine, which he regarded as an interference in the domestic affairs of Soviet bloc countries, he now appreciated its value as an extremely important means to preserve a communist regime.

*November 1989, the Question of Bessarabia becomes a bone of Contention.* As is known the Soviet Union annexed to its territory on 28 June 1940, Bessarabia and North Bucovina, then part of Romania, following a Soviet ultimatum to retreat from there within 48 hours. Only after the Second World War had ended did it become public knowledge that this ultimatum rested on a secret appendix attached to the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement of August 1939, concerning the division of 'areas of influence' between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. By virtue of this agreement Germany initiated its attack on Poland in September 1939. Half of Poland was conquered by Germany and its eastern section was annexed by the Soviet Union.

Bessarabia, geographically situated between the Prut and Dniester rivers, had been annexed to Romania from Russia, at the end of the First World War in 1918. From that time until the submission of the Soviet ultimatum to Romania, the Soviet Union never ceased demanding it back from Romania.

During the years 1941–44, Bessarabia and North Bucovina were once again annexed to Romania, since they were conquered by the German and Romanian armies in the course of Germany's attack on the Soviet Union that began on 22 June 1941. When this area was liberated by the Soviet Army in March 1944, it returned to being an integral part of the Soviet Union: North Bucovina as part of the Ukraine Republic, and Bessarabia receiving the name (as in 1940–41) 'Moldovian Socialist Soviet Republic'. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the area's name became 'Moldova'. The majority of its population is Romanian, and communist Romania did not reconcile itself to this annexation by the Soviet Union.

Romanian historiography began, in the late Ceaușescu era, to raise this topic of the Soviet annexation of this territory on the basis of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement more often than it had done during all the years of the communist regime in Romania. No doubt the main reason for this was the overemphasis put on nationalism in Romania's policy, on the one hand, while on the other was the adoption of a stance against the Hungarian demands to accord national rights to the Hungarian minority in Romania with Gorbachev's support.

As the ideological controversy between Ceaușescu and Gorbachev intensified, voices sounded in Romania reminding the Soviet Union of its sins in signing an agreement with Nazi Germany that led to the outbreak of the Second World War and annexing to its territory, by virtue of this agreement, not only half of Poland (September 1939) but also the Baltic states (June 1940).

In addition to Ceaușescu's public statement condemning the agreement (as previously mentioned) in November 1987, he referred to it once again, extensively, in his speech at the 14th Congress of the RCP in November 1989, a month before the outbreak of revolution in Romania that put an end to communist rule and to Ceaușescu's life. His warnings to the Soviet Union about the real danger in deviation towards capitalism in consequence of social and economic reform, along with the following statement, brought the deterioration of Romanian-Soviet

relations to an all time low. He said:

Never to be forgotten is the lesson of history and the fact that Hitlerite Germany received encouragement to initiate the Second World War as a result of a policy of concession to Nazi Germany...Never should we forget that the agreement between Hitler's Germany and the Soviet Union did not abolish the threat of war...Hence Romania believes that one should move towards taking up means to settle problems that remain unsettled. It is particularly important to adopt a clear and unequivocal position in condemning and cancelling all agreements with Hitler's Germany, by reaching practical conclusions to do away with the results of all those agreements and dictates.

Soviet response to this appeal was provided by the TASS (Soviet news agency) commentator, who said that no serious or responsible politician could bring up the question of post-World War borders, including the Soviet-Romanian border. Simultaneously to Ceaușescu's statement, the Romanian media began to point out in its reports the national (Romanian) awakening in the Moldovian Republic and the calling of voices for reunification with Romania. Undoubtedly, Romania revealed a sympathetic attitude to such a development. And, here arose the following questions: Didn't Ceaușescu see in this development a by-product of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, without which such manifestations in the Moldovian Republic would not have taken place? Did he not sense the contradiction between his call for a revision of borders and his warning of an imminent danger to the existence of communist regimes?

It seems that, more than intending to demand the return of Bessarabia (and North Bucovina) to Romania — which surely did not appear to be realistic at that time — Ceaușescu intended to warn the Soviet Union against interfering in Romania's domestic affairs (such as the overthrow of its regime) by concocting plots (of a type like the Ribbentrop—Molotov agreement) with the USA at the Bush-Gorbachev summit conference scheduled to take place, at that time, in Malta.

And so the lowest ebb ever in Romanian-Soviet relations on the ideological and political level was reached and had a significant influence in two directions: First on the Romanian dissidents, the veterans of the RCP who were striving to unseat Ceaușescu and to introduce radical changes in Romania's domestic policy and economic management, along with the determination of economic priorities aimed at the immediate improvement of the people's standard of living — without aspiring to overthrow the communist regime. These dissidents enjoyed Gorbachev's sympathy, even though he avoided demonstrating his feeling for them publicly. Thus, the Soviet Union did support the outbreak of the revolution in Romania by not interfering directly in the events, by avoiding the 'Brezhnev Doctrine', and by expressing its sympathy for the dissidents. The thousands of demonstrators streaming on to the streets of Romania demanding the overthrow of Ceaușescu were quite sure that neither the Soviet Union nor the Warsaw Pact states would interfere in their affairs.

Second, the deterioration in the relations between the two states directly influenced Romania's status within the Soviet bloc itself. Romania, whose policy was to come closer to the West politically and economically but not ideologically, found itself isolated within that bloc, being one of the last conservative regimes until its destiny was determined by the December 1989 revolution.

## **ROMANIAN-HUNGARIAN RELATIONS**



Romanian-Hungarian relations, during my mission in Bucharest, were characterized by a growing degree of tension against the background of three main factors: first, Hungary's repeated demands to accord national rights to the Hungarian minority in Romania, in the regions of Transylvania and Banat, by preserving its language, culture and historic heritage, and also to enable it to maintain connections with its 'historic homeland'.<sup>4</sup> This struggle intensified — it even reached the international arena from the mid-1980s, when it became widely known that President Ceaușescu intended to destroy the Hungarian villages in those two regions and replace them with agro-industrial centres as part of his plan of systematisation of the villages.

A second factor was the publication of a research work by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest, in November 1986, on the history of Transylvania, according to which this region had been under Hungarian domination for many generations. Since the three-volume work had been produced under official auspices, the Romanians interpreted this as a sign of Hungary's ambition to take back Transylvania (that had belonged to Hungary until 1920).

Finally, Ceaușescu considered the economic and social reforms introduced by Hungary's government as a threat to the future existence of the (conservative) communist regime in Romania.

These three factors acted both together and separately in the progressive increase of tension in the relations between the two countries. We followed this issue closely as it had ramifications on the 'triangular relationship of Israel—Romania—USA, and parallel to Israel-Hungary in the absence of diplomatic relations between these two countries.

Here are some fragments from my notes and reports sent to the MFA in Jerusalem concerning the intensified confrontation in Romanian-Hungarian relations, which was one of the main factors in the erosion of Romania's standing in the West — and in East Europe, to which both countries belonged.

On 26–27 February 1987, in a joint meeting of the Workers Council of Hungarian and German Minorities in Romania, with the participation of President Ceaușescu, the speakers, including Ceaușescu himself, spoke vigorously against the attempts by Hungary's leadership and personalities in cultural and scientific circles to denigrate Romania in the international arena, to negate its historic right over Transylvania and to slander her libellously regarding her degrading attitude towards minorities (Hungarian, German, and others). The speakers from the Hungarian and German minority who were chosen to respond, in addition to the president, strenuously rejected the accusations hurled at them defining them as 'chauvinistic and extremely nationalist', inciting trouble between both nations.

In my report on this event, I remarked, *inter alia*:

1. To the best of my knowledge it was one of the sharpest official confrontations organized in the Soviet bloc on behalf of the Romanian leadership against the Hungarian leadership, following the Hungarian material distributed in Vienna, at the CSCE session, February 1987, and Hungarian pronouncements condemning the policy of repression applied toward the Hungarian minority in Romania. All this against the background of the publication of the above-mentioned research work on the history of Transylvania by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.
2. Whereas the Hungarian leadership announced that it was studying the anti-Hungarian 'Romanian outburst', the Romanian press continued to publish letters written (probably on

command) by Hungarian and German minority members praising Romania's policy, condemning the 'chauvinistic extreme nationalist' tendencies of Hungary towards Romania.

3. It may well be that Ceaușescu wished through this campaign not only to reject the accusations applied to him, but also to boast in the eyes of his people as its national hero that he was not one to hesitate to defend their national interests within the Soviet bloc. This kind of policy was probably not coincidental in its timing, when the Romanian people faced one of the most serious periods of economic distress in the Ceaușescu era.

*8 March 1988.* In conversation, Hungary's ambassador to Romania, Pál Szuts, with whom I maintained friendly relations (in the period of disrupted diplomatic relations between our respective countries) described to me aspects of the tense Hungarian-Romanian relations at that time. He said that Romania's enmity toward Hungary was very strong. In Romania's perception, Hungary is its greatest enemy. Lately, a stand-by alert had been declared several times in Romania's army, in case of a confrontation between both states.

The Romanization of Transylvania, he went on, which is forcing assimilation on the Hungarian minority, began after Ceaușescu's rise to power. It has intensified considerably recently. Hungarian educational, and cultural institutions are closing down every year. For example, if in the era of Gheorghiu Dej (Ceaușescu's predecessor) there were 12 faculties in the University of Cluj, where teaching was conducted in Hungarian, today in the same university there is only one department for the study of the Hungarian language — with six students. The graduates of this department were recently sent to teach French in Moldova (an obviously Romanian area).

He told me that there is a growing number of Romanians, including members of the Hungarian minority, who run away to Hungary. This is a constantly growing phenomenon, putting the Hungarian authorities in an embarrassing position. Hungary is incapable of absorbing these people in housing, employment, and education. Yet, Hungary cannot send them back to Romania, for humanitarian reasons. Western countries are not inclined to receive them, the gates of Austria are barred to them. It is not true that Hungary is keeping these people in camps. They are scattered among family members and acquaintances. As a result of the mass flight of Romanians to Hungary, the Romanian authorities have considerably reduced the volume of Romanian tourists to Hungary, mainly cases of family visits that until recently were carried on routinely. Hungarian authorities were ready to negotiate with the Romanian authorities with the aim of solving problems, but despite their efforts, no conclusion has thus far been reached with the Romania authorities on the opening of a constructive dialogue.

On the bilateral level, the volume of mutual trade has decreased considerably. In the domain of cultural relations, the ambassador finds himself unemployed. His attempts at interesting the Romanian authorities on this subject are in vain. A ceremony of according a membership certificate to a Romanian scientist on behalf of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was postponed, at the last minute and at a later stage the ambassador learned that Elena Ceaușescu, then the chairman of the State Council of Science and Research, claimed that she herself had not yet become a member of that academy, and for that reason, would not permit others to be members of it, either.

And the ambassador summed up his remarks by noting that this process would continue as long as Ceaușescu and his wife ruled Romania. Since there is no organized opposition against them one might reasonably presume that their policy would not be changed. There is no intention

in the Soviet bloc to interfere in Romania's internal affairs. The sensitivity of its leaders is very high. Hence, the strong emphasis on the cultivation of the national feeling in Romania. True, some personalities in the Romanian Politburo are capable of rescuing the country from its critical situation, but they lack influential power.

In continuation of the ambassador's remarks, which I reported to the MFA in Jerusalem, I added my own assessment of the other side of the coin — from the Romanian point of view — by observing the following aspects:

1. Romania, as is known, is fearful lest Hungary demand the return of Transylvania, on the basis of the Hungarian minority's desire to be annexed to its historic homeland. Because of this the Romanians claim that Hungary is actually interested in the cultivation of Hungarian patriotism in Transylvania so that it would have a pretext, at the given time, to annex this region to its own territory. This fear feeds on the growing pronouncements in Hungary itself on the state, party, academic, and public levels, condemning Romanian policy towards the Hungarian minority.
2. The Romanian authorities regard Hungary as the main factor inflaming the anti-Romanian sentiments in the American Congress and Senate in order to deny Romania MFN status. The leaders of the Hungarian lobby in the USA have not hidden their attitude during their visits to Romania.
3. The riots that raged in the Braşov automobile factory found a significant echo in Hungary and, in Romania's estimation, more than anywhere else. The Romanians interpreted it as open interference in their domestic affairs. There were remarks that it was not actually Romanians who 'created the disturbance' in Braşov, but people belonging to the Hungarian minority.
4. Hungary has refused to send back Romanian refugees to Romania.
5. The purpose of the extensive academic discussion going on in Hungary is to prove that the 'Trianon Peace' (according to which Transylvania was handed over to Romania with the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1920) was in truth an imperialist act, so Romania has no right to Transylvania.<sup>5</sup>
6. The Hungarian authorities' tolerance towards the different public organizations in Hungary that make daily declarations of 'solidarity with the poor and persecuted Romanian people' and allow the Romanian refugees to organize themselves into an association calling itself 'Free Romania' was seen by Romania as a hostile act.

In summing up I noted that this was the first time open hostility had broken out between two Warsaw Pact members over a national problem, which ostensibly had been resolved with the establishment of communist regimes in the Pact countries. As long as Ceauşescu's regime continued the process of forced assimilation of the Hungarian minority in Romania, so would opposition against him continue to grow. The national problem had existed in East Europe for a long time. It was only uncovered and intensified during the Gorbachev era, not only between Hungary and Romania but also, as we are witnessing, within the Soviet Union. But the Romanian-Hungarian confrontation accelerated when western countries, particularly the USA, accepted Hungary's argument against Romania as part of the general struggle for the respect of human rights in the communist bloc.

27 June 1988, following a protest demonstration by tens of thousands of Hungarians in front of Romania's embassy in Budapest, against Romania's policy towards the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, the press in Romania published a statement of censure on 28 June in the name of the German and Hungarian National Councils addressed mainly to the Hungarian leadership, for permitting for the first time in the history of relations between two socialist states the holding of a mass demonstration on the territory of one against the other (Romania). The Hungarian leadership was accused of organizing it.

Speaking, on 28 June 1988, to the Plenary of the RCP Central Committee and the Council of the Democratic Front and Socialist Union, Ceaușescu severely criticized (according to the Romanian press on 29 June 1988) the Hungarian leadership charging it with 'Horthian tendencies'.<sup>6</sup>

The crisis erupted, as I previously noted, over Ceaușescu's plan for systematisation of the villages. The Hungarians (and the Germans) accused the Romanians of intending to uproot people belonging to those minorities and to dispossess them from their rural properties, even though the plan for urbanising the villages was aimed toward the general rural population. In their sharp response, the Romanians claimed that this was an act of interference in their domestic affairs, accusing the Hungarian leadership of masterminding the anti-Romania demonstration in Budapest and providing patronage for chauvinistic and nationalistic circles to act against Romania with the purpose of taking back Transylvania. As an act of reprisal, the Romanian authorities decided to close Hungary's Consulate in Cluj as of 1 July 1988 and Hungary's cultural centre in Bucharest. This was a strident, unprecedented act in the course of relations between two states in the Soviet bloc.

Reporting to the MFA in Jerusalem about these acts of reprisal, I noted, among other things:

1. One could presume that the two institutions closed had also been collecting information about the Hungarian minority's situation in Transylvania and Banat, encouraging them to separatist tendencies. It well might have been that the Romanian authorities had been interested for a long time in halting these institutions' activities and had now found an appropriate pretext for doing so.
2. To the Romanian people the demonstration in Budapest was presented as an anti-Romanian one and not as a protest against Romania's policy regarding the Hungarian minority, particularly against the destruction of dozens of Hungarian villages in Romania as part of the systematisation of the villages.
3. The Romanian authorities were shocked by the scope of the demonstrations in Budapest. (The Hungarian ambassador told me that the Hungarian authorities had expected about 100,000 demonstrators but only 40,000 actually took part.) Against the background of their traditional suspicion towards Hungary 'in face of their intention to get Transylvania back', the Romanians made statements using expressions bordering on hysteria.
4. In his response, Ceaușescu played on Romanian nationalistic themes, taking advantage of this situation to enhance himself in the eyes of the Romanians (God knows for how many times!) as a national leader who held the good of his country above all.
5. Although there was a Romanian trend to seek out a way for negotiation with the Hungarian leadership, it is doubtful whether the proposed meeting of representatives of each of the sides could reduce the grating tension between the two states. It would certainly not uproot

the Romanians' suspicion and their traditional hostility towards Hungary.

In those days, I discussed the subject once again with the Hungarian ambassador and he said that the Hungarian authorities deemed it necessary to inform the Romanian authorities about the forthcoming demonstration and to ensure that all necessary steps would be taken to prevent any riots or damages to the Romanian embassy building in Budapest. The Romanians tried threatening that if the demonstration took place they would employ countermeasures. The Hungarians did not yield to the Romanian threats. The ambassador feared lest the demonstration would cause the closure of the embassy and perhaps the disruption of relations. I reminded him that the Romanians — as seen in the case of Israel — stood for the principle of not breaking relations between states.

From his remarks one could understand that the initiators of the demonstration were the party and state authorities of Hungary, who were aware of the detrimental affects this might have on bilateral relations. But, they also regarded it as a means of bringing the problem of the Hungarian minority in Romania to the knowledge of East and West European public opinion and perhaps stir the minority to resist the decrees imposed on it.

Prior to the demonstration, according to the ambassador, a series of notes were exchanged, on the initiative of the Romanians, proposing to hold a meeting of the general secretaries of both parties to discuss trade relations, economic and technological cooperation. Hungary answered that it was fully prepared to talk about these subjects, but they would like to include in the agenda the subject of negating educational and cultural rights from people of the Hungarian minority. The Hungarians based their intervention on the basis of the fact that tens of thousands of Hungarian citizens had relatives in Transylvania and that they were the ones applying heavy pressure on the Hungarian government to intervene on their behalf. The Hungarian leadership cannot but respond to their pleas and therefore the problem is not exclusively Romanian.

The Hungarians assured the Romanians that Hungary had no territorial claims on Romania and that it was solely interested in making it possible for the Hungarian minority to enjoy national rights according to the Helsinki agreements. To that the ambassador added that even if the disputed region, Transylvania, were returned to his country, it was doubtful whether Hungary would have accepted it, since it was heavily populated by an overwhelming majority of Romanians. This would only create problems for Hungary and foment troubles that any clever person would avoid.

The situation of the Hungarian minority is continuously deteriorating. The systematisation of the villages poses a threat to its future and uniqueness. The Hungarians are disgusted by Ceaușescu and regard him as the last obstacle in East Europe blocking the introduction of economic and social reforms and as the one leading his country to isolation, like that of Albania. The trouble with Romania is the lack of opposition to Ceaușescu's policy among its leadership — 'he is a nationalistic leader responsible for a policy repressing the Hungarian minority', as the ambassador defined it. He summed up his remarks by saying that he expected a significant future worsening in the relations between the two countries, as long as Ceaușescu was Romania's leader.

*On 28 August 1988*, the Romanian press reported a meeting that was to be held the same day 'at the request of the President and the RCP General-Secretary, Nicolae Ceaușescu with his colleague the General-Secretary of the HCP and Prime Minister Karoly Grosz', in the city of Arad, Transylvania.

What prompted Ceaușescu to request an immediate meeting with Grosz, and thereby relinquish his principle of not discussing the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania with the Hungarian leadership, which he argued was ‘an attempt to interfere in Romania’s internal affairs’?

As possible replies, I noted the following points:

1. The growing criticism, in the world, of Ceaușescu's policy towards the Hungarian minority, including harsh statements condemning his policy made by central figures in Hungary's leadership and the repeated calls in the FRG *Bundestag* to impose general sanctions on Romania.
2. The conclusion that because of the Hungarian lobby in the USA, Romania had lost her MFN status, and the fear of a similar collapse in Romanian—West German trade relations.
3. Soviet pressure for reconciliation and Ceaușescu's desire to pay his desired visit to the Soviet Union with a clean record.
4. The immobility of the CSCE session in Vienna regarding the ratification of the final document on human rights, in face of the western member states and Hungary, with the quiet acquiescence of the Soviet Union, lining up against Romania as the sole obstacle to signing the document.
5. Ceaucescu's consent to include this subject in his talks with Grosz (11 years had elapsed since the last meeting between the general secretaries of the two parties) constituted a definite concession on his part. Grosz's immediate positive response to the meeting probably resulted from consideration of the pressure of the Hungarian population to act at the Romanian leadership level for the state of the Hungarian minority.
6. Thus, a suitable atmosphere was created within the mechanism of mutual relations to clarify the divergence of opinions that both sides admitted to and which socialism, as Grosz put it, had not succeeded in solving, on the basis Romania's readiness to act in this direction.

At the end of this almost historic meeting, a joint statement was released as well as separate declarations by Ceaușescu and Grosz. One could conclude that the basic differences had not been overcome, despite the good will each side displayed toward the other, and that the clarification of the problems would continue.

My colleague the Hungarian ambassador gave me confirmation of my presumptions on Ceaușescu's motives for the urgent initiation of the meeting, telling me that in the course of their talk Ceaușescu rejected Grosz's proposals to declare the establishment of a joint committee to examine the situation of the Hungarian minority; to establish a joint committee to deal with Romanian refugees in Hungary; to reconsider whether the implementation of the systematisation of the villages idea is worthwhile; and to reopen the Hungarian consulate in Cluj and the Hungarian cultural centre in Bucharest and sign a cultural agreement with Hungary.

In addition, the ambassador revealed that Ceaușescu criticized Grosz on the economic reforms in Hungary, which in his opinion were leading to inflation and lack of stability in Hungary. He also came out against the manifestations of *glasnost* as a most dangerous process, doing away with the Communist Party's central control over means (in this regard he complained about the hostile anti-Romanian position exhibited by the Hungarian media). With all that, some points of agreement were reached in the area of bilateral relations and it was agreed that talks would

continue the following month with the HCP Central Committee member Szürös.

*23 September 1988, Mátjás Szürös's visit to Bucharest.* Reporting on the visit of Mátjás Szürös — said to be a member of the Hungarian Communist Party Central Committee — to Bucharest, I assessed, among other things, that the statement published in the Romanian press on 24 September 1988, at the end of his stay, consisted of general sentences hinting at a difference of opinion between the two sides more than to any understanding reached between them. It seemed to me that Romania's aim at that time was to cultivate a dialogue with the Hungarian leadership without making her policy flexible on fundamental issues regarding the Hungarian minority.

The Hungarian ambassador told me that the main points of the talk showed how Ceaușescu was detached from reality in his own country, and in its surroundings, and how much he missed adequate opportunities to reduce tension between the two states, in spite of international constraints that prompted him to open a dialogue with the Hungarians. The salient issues in the talk were as follows, according to the Hungarian ambassador: first Ceaușescu lectured Mátjás Szürös about Hungary's capitalist path and its economic deviations from the principles of socialism. Then Ceaușescu argued that the systematisation of the villages was implemented in the regions of Moldova, Muntenia, and Dobrogea, but not in Transylvania 'where the villages are built in a compact form'. (The ambassador interpreted this to mean that no decision had been taken as yet to include the Transylvanian villages, to a large extent populated by Germans and Hungarians, in the process of systematisation. I myself interpreted this as a retreat from the plan, perhaps under western pressure, in relation to the Transylvanian villages.)

In drawing up a balance sheet on the status of various religions in Romania Ceaușescu noted, *inter alia*, that 'the Jewish religion is dying out in Romania'. (The ambassador thought it ridiculous to say so. I felt that Ceaușescu meant to say that the Jewish minority in Romania was constantly diminishing owing to demographic reasons.)

Then Ceaușescu sharply criticized the Hungarian leadership, accusing it of inflaming anti-Romanian sentiments in the Hungarian population. (Ceaușescu was probably referring to the anti-Romanian articles in the Hungarian press condemning his policies.) According to the ambassador no change had occurred in the relations between the two countries on the rights of the Hungarian minority in Romania, since Grosz's 'historic' visit to Arad.

On my question as to what the main position of the Soviet Union was on this dispute, the ambassador replied that the Soviet Union was involved in a very delicate situation in face of the serious national ferment in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Baltic republics. Moreover, in view of Romania's sensitivity concerning the Romanian minority (actually a majority) in Bessarabia, the Soviet Union preferred not to intervene in the Romanian—Hungarian dispute. This was also reflected, he said, in the Ceaușescu—Gorbachev talks in Moscow. In short, the meeting had failed.

*1 October 1988*, the Romanian daily *Scînteia* published the resolution taken by the representatives of a special and joint session of the Cluj regional council and municipal council, stating, among other things, that the councils express their full solidarity with the decision taken by the Romanian government and the RCP to close the general consulate of Hungary in Cluj, being certain that this was a justified act. Also, the assertion that the Hungarian consulate in Cluj violated the norms of its permitted tasks and diplomatic relations, engaging itself in problems alien to its mission. They claimed that these violations of legal and international norms not only did not contribute to the development of friendship and cooperation between the two states but

even acted contrary to them. Therefore, they did not see any justification in Hungary's request to reopen its Cluj consulate.

This declaration, however, did not put an end to Romania's retaliatory acts. On 20 November 1988, the economic counsellor of the Hungarian embassy in Bucharest was declared *persona non grata*, because he distributed 'anti-Romanian and anti-Hungarian material'. Once again, this was an unprecedented occurrence in the relations of countries belonging to the same bloc. This was, presumably, intended to deter the staff of the Hungarian embassy in Bucharest from maintaining contacts with Romanian citizens belonging to the Hungarian minority. Hungary retaliated by expelling the Romanian embassy counsellor in Budapest — exactly as had happened in the era of the Cold War between the two — Eastern and Western blocs.

*End October 1988*, the Romanian ambassador, Valentin Lippati, senior counsellor of the Romanian MFA, invited himself to have a talk with me at our residence. Our acquaintanceship had begun in Belgrade in 1977, when I together with a colleague of mine, Ambassador Yehezkiel Barnea, were sent by the Israeli MFA to participate in the CSCE session. Ambassador Lippati was of great help to us in receiving information and evaluations concerning the conference to which we were invited as guests for only two of the debates: the Middle East and human rights. Lippati was for many years Romania's ambassador to UNESCO. During my mission in Romania he was engaged in issues, such as disarmament, CSCE, and international organizations. A very interesting interlocutor, he is also the author of a research work entitled, *Balcanii ieri și azi (The Balkan States Yesterday and Today)* (Editura Politica, 1988). His wife was a distinguished actress. We met occasionally at social engagements. After having exchanged views on political subjects, he raised his grievances against Hungary. I had no doubt that this was the main object behind his request that we receive him.

First he made the point that the Hungarian autonomous region in Romania (under the leadership of Gheorghe Georghiu Dej) had been abolished, since the Romanian authorities had come to the conclusion that the autonomy was developing a dynamic of its own that might lead to the region sundering itself from Romanian territory. He said that Hungary was denigrating Romania, since it was plotting to exert its influence over Transylvania, even if not in possession of it. Furthermore, he pointed out that the systematisation of the villages is a vital step necessary for the development of the Romanian village. The process will take at least 20 years. In the meantime, no villages in Transylvania had been destroyed. He felt that there was great exaggeration in the presentation of this plan abroad. Perhaps the Romanian authorities had erred (i.e., perhaps, Ceaușescu) in announcing it publicly. Had they acted quietly, no storm would have developed.

Lippati (as part of Romania's Ministry for Foreign Affairs) appreciated that, in this regard, the anti-Romanian campaign had not been copied from the outside to Israel. Unfortunately, Romania did not have sufficient budgetary means for propaganda services abroad to confront the problem. Other states, such as the Soviet Union and Hungary, pay a great deal of money to newspapermen in exchange for positive articles. Romania prefers to use its money for constructing new houses, schools, and hospitals for its population. He went on to say that, to Romania's regret, the Soviet Union is not able today, owing to its national problems in Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Baltic states, and of late, Bessarabia, to offer help. Against this background, one should understand the lack of Soviet intervention in the Romanian-Hungarian dispute. In addition, each East European state is facing its own crisis. The result is that Romania is isolated, in this respect, within the Soviet bloc.



Although he did not say it explicitly, I understood from his words that he would expect our help in explaining Romania's case abroad, since Israeli—Romanian relations are excellent — as he defined them — and moreover, as the Romanians always believe that Israel rules the world press.

I refrained from reacting. I only remarked that perhaps the Romanian MFA, ‘which does not need my advice’, would do better to send out emissaries, such as himself, to explain Romania's cases in precisely those places where it was needed.

Even if he did not pressure us to agree to be the information spokesmen for the Romanian government in its conflict with Hungary, it may well be that he had been thinking to ask us to move on from a position of support for Romania (obtaining the MFN status from the USA) to that of one who would explain Romania's stance, particularly in the USA. I presumed that he understood my reaction. In any case, he never came back to me on this topic.

Now, from the other side, the Hungarian ambassador introduced me to an activist of the RCP, who belonged to the Hungarian minority in Transylvania and who had served until 1980 as deputy prime minister in Romania's government. In his youth, he said, he saved Jews under the Hungarian occupation in North Transylvania and during his term as deputy prime minister had helped Jews emigrate from Romania to Israel. (I checked this out and, indeed, found it to be true.) These Jews had left the country because of anti-Semitism more than for ideological reasons. Turning to the Hungarian ambassador he asked him to explain to me how difficult the position was for the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, adding that ‘if this situation continues a rebellion could break out. The Hungarians are not like Romanians, if villages are destroyed blood will flow in the streets’. (How much truth was there in this? The flame of the revolution ignited in Timișoara.)

Again, I did not react. I was impressed once more that as in the Romanian case, Hungary in her dispute with Romania was looking for Israeli help. Both of them for the same reason — ‘our domination over the world press’. I was glad that the Israeli press did not treat this issue very much. I proposed to the MFA in Jerusalem that in the future, we too, should steer clear, at an equal distance, from both parties, and to whatever extent possible, avoid being ensnared by one party or the other.

*January 1989, The CSCE Session on Human Rights, Vienna.* Owing to Hungary's activism as well as to the (declared) support of the western countries, the final document on human rights was unanimously accepted at the CSCE session, after Romania's long delay in giving her consent to paragraphs included in the document under Hungary's influence and which were mainly concerned with the defence of human freedom, the insuring of national rights of minorities for freedom of movement and emigration. Although Romania joined the consensus, albeit unwillingly, she clarified her reservation to the paragraphs which were not to her liking; the explanation appeared in the daily paper *Scînteia* on 16 January 1989:

Under the pretext of so-called concern for human rights and freedom of religion, there were included in the (final) document paragraphs which do not correspond with the principles and spirit of the Helsinki Final Act and with the reality in which we are living, and which contradict international norms and regulations to which [CSCE member] states joined in. Such paragraphs might open the way to interference in the internal affairs of other countries, to violate independence and national sovereignty, to encourage and spur activities and dark manifestations ... Paragraphs are also mentioned that actually might encourage

emigration and a brain drain and harm people's interests in economic and social development, foremost those of less developed countries.

Romania presented, in the course of the session debates, its remarks and reservations, emphasizing in concrete form the problems that were not adequately reflected in the document (such as the right to work, education, health and housing), remarks and reservations it still believes in. Taking all this into consideration, Romania's delegation [to the CSCE] declares that Romania is not taking up any commitment to implement those paragraphs in the final document which it considers inadequate and to which it submitted amendments that were not accepted.

*On 27 January 1989*, in my talk with the Hungarian ambassador on 27 January 1989, he summed up his evaluation of the situation of Romanian-Hungarian relations. He said there was a complete rupture in the talks between the two states on the party and political level. The Hungarians wished to include the subject of minority rights in the discussions, whereas the Romanians refused to do so. During the deliberations at the CSCE session in Vienna, the Hungarians believed that the Romanians had been convinced of the correctness of the majority's approach to human rights. Obviously, its declared reservations concerning the paragraphs relevant to Hungary in the document, even though Romania had signed it, had put the Hungarians and the Romanians back to where they were on this issue prior to the signing of the document.

He told me that the cultural relations between the two countries are cut off. Romania refused to cooperate with Hungary in this domain for fear that such relations might encourage Hungarian nationalism among those who were part of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. Meanwhile, Romanian refugees in Hungary — who numbered some 30,000 at the end of 1988 — continue to constitute a difficult burden on Hungary, since they need to be supplied with housing and social services. Therefore, Hungary appealed to the UN for help. Day after day dozens of Romanians cross the border. Partly in exchange for a great deal of money paid as a bribe to the Romanian border guards, and partly through escaping in the dark at high risk to their lives. Romania refused to cooperate with Hungary, claiming that this was a Hungarian problem.

Last but not least, a funny thing: the Romanian minister of foreign affairs started to address him as 'Mr Ambassador' instead of 'Comrade Ambassador', whereas Ceaușescu addresses Arafat as 'comrade'. My Hungarian colleague probably wanted to show me the extent to which Ceaușescu had distanced himself from Hungary, while he had moved himself closer to Arafat. (The truth is that Arafat had already been addressed by Ceaușescu as 'comrade' for many years.) In the ideological lexicon of the communist bloc, this proved that Romania had ceased to regard Hungary as a socialist state and was therefore adopting the title to reality.

Since the historic meeting between the leaders of Romania and Hungary bore no fruit, from Hungary's point of view, and since the CSCE forum was not helpful in convincing the Romanians to improve the situation of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, Hungarian diplomacy began to exploit international forums and western public opinion for the sake of exerting political and psychological pressure on Romania in what appeared to Hungary to be the desired direction. The conditions were ripe: the economic distress in Romania, the destruction of Romanian churches to make way for new urban planning, the destruction of villages in the framework of their systematisation, a personality cult that knew no limits, the negation of human and minority rights that united all strata of the population — Romanian, Hungarian, and German — against Ceaușescu's rule, causing a group of prestigious and influential dissidents to take

shape from within, and a spirit of mass rebellion. All this had a strong echo in both east and west. The pro-Hungarian atmosphere, expressed in the display of political assistance to the fighters for human rights in Romania, enabled Hungary to play a major role in this struggle.

In February–March 1989 a very critical report on the situation of human rights in Romania was submitted to the International Labour Organization, on behalf of the Free Trade Unions. The same issue was also debated in the European Parliament in Brussels and, at the same time, a resolution was initiated by Sweden — with Hungary's patronage — at the Human Rights Committee in Geneva, condemning Romania and calling upon it to respect the freedom of the individual, to put an end to the arrests (of dissidents) and to the destruction of houses (in the framework of the systematisation of the villages). This was the first time that the UN adopted such a resolution, with the USSR's blessing.

Whereas in the not-too-distant past Romania had served as mediator at the CSCE between east and west, together with neutral countries (Austria, Sweden, Finland), this time it was placed on the bench of the accused. Ceaușescu probably knew that Hungary was playing a major role in this activity. Instead of acting to prevent it by exhibiting flexibility in his internal policy and by leading compromise talks with his Hungarian colleagues — as he used to do between conflicting states (the USSR *vis-à-vis* China, Israel *vis-à-vis* the Arab states) — he preferred to behave rigidly, assuming a preacher's position, and react through Romania's media with an acerbic anti-Hungarian campaign that was close to hysteria in its volume and language.

The intensification of the falsified 'anti-Romanism' campaign, that the Romanian media presented as the dominant element in Hungary's policy toward Romania was, first of all, due to his fear that the Hungarian authorities were leading toward a territorial and ideological revision accompanied by economic, political and social reforms that would be a direct threat to Ceaușescu's regime. The anti-Hungarian campaign presumably aimed at deterring the population in Transylvania from cultivating pro-Hungarian illusions and from watching Hungarian television that broadcast informative, realistic, and amusing programmes free of ideological propaganda (in total contrast to Romanian television programmes).

In Ceaușescu's calls (in his propaganda campaigns) to adhere to the Warsaw Pact, there was some justification of the 'Brezhnev Doctrine', which Romania itself had firmly renounced. Romania's standing as the defender of socialism and communism — instead of the USSR doing it — by presenting Hungary as a fascist and chauvinistic state attested to Ceaușescu's intention to lead the conservative camp in East Europe with no ideological compromises.

The low state of Romanian—Hungarian relations that symbolised the height of tension between them, a type unknown in the history of relations among the East European bloc, simultaneously symbolised the lowest status Romania reached in the late Ceaușescu era. No other communist leader in East Europe had travelled such a long road as Ceaușescu in his march from the pinnacle to the lowest of the low.

## NOTES

1. Their total number was gradually reduced. At that time, according to the statistics of the Federation of Jewish Communities (FJCR) they numbered 20,000 individuals, half of them over 60 years of age.
2. Under the same auspices we opened an Israeli photo exhibition on Israel's Independence Day.
3. The last paragraph was taken from Romania's political lexicon, testifying that Gorbachev had adopted some of the political principles of Romania's foreign policy, some of which were not acceptable to his predecessors.

4. The approximate number of the people belonging to the Hungarian minority was estimated at about two million, the majority of which lived in Transylvania and Banat, in the western part of Romania.
5. Raphael Vago, *The Grandchildren of Trianon: Hungary and the Hungarian Minority in the Communist States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). Chapter 8 deals with Romanian-Hungarian relations 1969–77, between crisis and detente. Chapter 9 deals with relations between them in the period 1977–78, a decade before the crisis.
6. Nikolaus Horthy, National Governor of Hungary 1920–44, stood for the abolishment of the ‘Trianon Peace’ that handed Transylvania over to the Romania. In cooperation with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, Horthy succeeded, in 1940, in annexing North Transylvania to Hungary, an area returned to Romania after the Second World War.

## 4 Israeli—Romanian Dialogue (1985–89) on Middle East Problems

### **VISIT OF PRIME MINISTER SHIMON PERES TO ROMANIA**

*On 21 February 1985, six months before I assumed my mission in Romania, Prime Minister Shimon Peres paid a working visit to Bucharest with Minister Without Portfolio Ezer Weizman, counsellors to the Prime Minister, and myself, as director of the East European Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem. In preparation for the visit, I met with the prime minister to discuss political and bilateral subjects then on our agenda with Romania. We also provided him with written material that we and our ambassador in Bucharest, Zvi Brosh, had prepared.*

During the visit Prime Minister Peres and President Ceaușescu met for a working session in which bilateral matters were discussed as well as the USA—USSR initial talks on disarmament, the Middle Eastern issue, and the way to settle the Israeli—Arab conflict. Peres, who had met Ceaușescu during his previous visit to Romania as head of the opposition in Israel, presented the main political lines of Israel's national unity government that he headed, praised Israel—Romania relations as being 'of specific importance', and mentioned Israel's interest in the advancement of the disarmament talks taking place between the two superpowers such 'that if an agreement were reached, it would have implications the world over, including the Middle East'. Speaking about Israel's situation in the Middle East regarding Syria—Lebanon—Egypt—Jordan and the PLO, Peres expressed Israel's readiness to negotiate with Jordan, 'whose delegation could be joined by Palestinians but not by members of the PLO'. He also expressed Israel's opposition to an international conference to settle the Israeli—Arab conflict under the auspices of the Security Council and with the PLO's participation — as proposed by Ceaușescu — since 'with one superpower (USSR) we do not maintain diplomatic relations, another superpower (China) has not recognized us; and the PLO carries out acts of terror against us'. Instead, Peres proposed to initiate direct negotiations between Israel and a Jordanian—Palestinian delegation, without preliminary conditions, on the basis of UN Security Council's Resolution 242. Ceaușescu, in his reply, presented his view concerning the settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict, in a way that was not agreeable to Israel's government. His view was reflected in Romania's position in the twilight of his rule. It contained certain innovations regarding indications of moderation in the PLO's stand that Ceaușescu had discerned in his talks with Arafat. Precisely these indications he wanted to transmit to the knowledge of Israel's government.

He introduced the fact that the Arabs, including the PLO, understand there are no military solutions to the Israeli—Arab conflict. They realise fairly well by now that a solution could be reached only through negotiations and not by military means. Peace between Israel and Egypt has shown that it is possible to reach a reasonable solution to the problem.

He repeated his view regarding the Palestinians' right to self-determination, including their right to establish their own state. This could be implemented in stages, but it should be the final goal. Federation or confederation (with Jordan) is possible. The basic fact within any framework agreed upon is that ultimately the Palestinians should have a state of their own. It is a good sign that the majority now agree to such an approach, so this area should be exploited to achieve lasting peace. Basically, the PLO now accepts a political solution, and this is the heart of the matter. Arafat wants a settlement through negotiations. This situation should be exploited to the hilt. He now enjoys support for this from the majority of Palestinians.

An international conference, he argued, for the settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict is one of the ways leading to direct negotiations, but at this moment it is not possible to begin with them. The conference will facilitate the overcoming of the reservations of both sides. It will enable Syria (who supports the idea of the conference) to join in the process, since without it peace will not prevail in the Middle East. The conference will also provide an opportunity to the (conflicting) sides to sit at the negotiating table together with two superpowers, the USA and USSR, and the other permanent members of the Security Council. It will end the USSR's alienation and will involve her in the peace-making process.

A possible political solution in the Middle East can only occur, he suggested, with the acceptance of two superpowers, the USA and USSR. It is no longer possible to ignore the USSR and it is impossible to repeat the Camp David situation (namely, only American mediation). It is possible to activate the Security Council or the UN Secretary-General as mediators on behalf of the UN. The UN Secretary-General may also be authorised to organize contacts between the sides and advance, step after step, towards a substantial negotiation. Ceaușescu discussed this matter with Arafat, who thought that such a way is possible and that it would be acceptable to the PLO. If Israel would accept this idea, it would be necessary to find out how the UN, the USA and the USSR could contribute to its implementation. Finding such a way to reach negotiations between the sides is vital. At the same time, it should be remembered that an international conference for settling the conflict would accord guarantees to all the agreements reached through it.

Israel's existence can only be insured under peace. It is impossible to use nuclear arms in the Middle East; the short distances may even lead to self-destruction. Israel's being depends upon its good relations with her neighbours. Peres, as prime minister, had an opportunity to carry out an important task in seeking peace. At this point Ceaușescu applied to Minister Weizman saying that he had sympathy for generals who have abandoned war and are acting for peace instead. He was aware of the good relations Weizman had maintained with Sadat that contributed to the solving of problems, and as a general, Weizman probably well understands the general goal of peace.

Referring to the USSR, China, and other socialist states, Ceaușescu said that the peace negotiations would enable Israel to normalise her relations with them: 'We have spoken about this with the Chinese and with the Soviets'. The problem is to find a way to settle the conflict. It is important that the USSR and China should agree to it. Without renouncing America's role, the

USSR should not be alienated from the process. Ceaușescu once again repeated that the USSR must be involved, and that the present situation facilitates taking steps towards initiating the negotiations in the manner he has just suggested.

This dialogue, like the previous ones and those which would follow, proved to me the extent of Ceaușescu's orientation in Middle East matters, more than any other East European leader. His was determined to be involved in the peace-making process between Israel and her neighbours, though he never functioned as an official mediator in this domain. But, contrary to other East European leaders, he was in a better position to act in this role, since he maintained official relations with both sides to the conflict. The amount of time he used to devote to the Israeli—Arab conflict always seemed to me to be out of proportion in comparison with Romania's burning internal problems that begged urgent solutions. I was particularly impressed by his vision of peace — that in his mind was so close — and by the quiet and businesslike tone in which he conducted his talks with us, attempting to influence and convince us of the correctness of his views. He worked in a most simple manner without the help of notes or background papers. And the most surprising thing was that he somehow created an atmosphere of intimacy and simplicity in his talks with us, in complete contrast to his image as a tyrant reflected from the outside.

Eighteen years before the Israeli—Palestinian Agreement on Principles was signed (September 1993), Israel's ambassador in Bucharest, Yohanan Cohen, described Ceaușescu's position on the Israeli—Arab conflict in a letter of 9 May 1975 addressed to Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, writing:

Ceaușescu's support for the PLO is complete and most consistent. Ceaușescu is convinced that this is a state nucleus of the Palestinian people who has the right, like any other people (including the people of Israel) to its own state. The PLO's extremism will disappear once a Palestinian state is established. Ceaușescu's assumption is that such a state that will be established in Judea, Samaria and Gaza will live in peaceful coexistence with Israel. Maybe in the future a federation will be established. He assumes that this is also Arafat's view. No importance should be attributed to the Palestinian Covenant and to speeches. There is no basis to fear that the Palestinian state will serve as a Soviet base. Here too, Israel should make the first step, to recognize the PLO and negotiate with it. There won't be any peace, as long as the Palestinian problem is not solved.

Despite the difference of opinions between Ceaușescu and Israel, our talks with him were held in a friendly atmosphere, one of mutual respect. We had an appropriate opportunity to make our views clear to him, to justify our position, while he listened to us very carefully I assumed that the importance of political dialogue that we conducted with him and with his representatives was not only in the mere fact that it took place. We also hoped that our political argument, which we could not voice to our enemies in the Middle East nor to our adversaries in Eastern Europe, would find its way to them through our dialogue with Romania.

What prompted President Ceaușescu to be so active and so involved in advancing a settlement to the Israeli—Arab conflict? In those days, the mid-1980s, I presented the following assumptions to Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir:

President Ceaușescu considered himself the father of the idea to convene an international conference for the settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict. His activity to move this notion forward through Romania's relations with foreign states and in the international arena

became not only a matter of personal prestige, but also an integral part of a political campaign to settle conflicts by peaceful means only through negotiations. The idea to convene a conference corresponded with his vigorous activity to liquidate places of confrontation in various areas and in the system of inter-superpower relations. It was intended to: (a) place Romania on the map of struggle for peace; (b) impart to his country an image of manoeuvrability in mediating between conflicting sides based on its (sacred) principle of maintaining relations with all nations in the world and supporting the struggle for the right of people to self-determination; (c) be involved as much as possible in international problems, so as to make it difficult for the superpowers (mainly the USSR) to act alone in the international arena and thus determine the destiny of states (as had happened on the eve of the Second World War and afterwards), thus limiting the political possibilities their military power gave them. From this followed the aspiration to participate at the proposed conference alongside the superpowers and together with them as well as Romania's readiness to host the conference in Bucharest under the auspices of the UN. The stronger the UN status, the weaker the superpowers' force would become in determining the destiny of the small nations; (d) the importance of the conference is in its taking place. This is the only forum which might advance, in Ceaușescu's view, the solution of the Israeli—Arab conflict, promising first of all mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO and the renewal of Israeli—Soviet relations. The participation of the USSR and the PLO is absolutely vital to insure the success of the conference; whereas leaving them outside [the peace-making process] may be of greater harm than benefit. The direct negotiations between the conflicting sides — no matter how long it will take — is the only way to set in motion the topics over which the sides differ into the right direction of a settlement. Hence, in the first stage it is not the substance of the conference that is important to Ceaușescu, but primarily to gather the conflicting sides around the negotiating table. This would be considered, by him, an achievement.

Retrospectively, one could add that Ceaușescu held to this theory until the end of his days.

## **ROMANIA'S REACTION TO THE BOMBARDMENT OF THE PLO HEADQUARTERS IN TUNIS BY ISRAEL'S AIRFORCE**

*On 2 October 1985, Romania's News Agency, Agerpress, published the following statement:*

Public opinion in Romania received with profound concern, unrest and resentment the news of the Israeli Air Force attack on PLO central headquarters in Tunis, causing heavy losses of human life and property.

The Government of Romania condemns most vigorously Israel's new aggressive act directed against the territory of an independent and sovereign state, without taking into consideration the norms and principles that should prevail among states. Nobody and nothing could justify such aggressive acts by Israel and the virtual use of force against the territory of Tunisia, an independent and sovereign state, with whom Romania maintains close relations of friendship and cooperation. The Israeli Air Force attack over Tunisian territory complicates even more an already tense situation in the Middle East, eliminates chances for attaining peace in this sensitive part of the world, and strikes a heavy blow to the diplomatic and political efforts directed at solving the Israeli—Arab conflict by peaceful means. Israel's aggressive act contradicts the latest public and official declarations by her



government, expressing the intention to contribute to a political settlement of this regional conflict. Considering that Israel bears full responsibility for this aggressive act, constituting an open demonstration of state terror, public opinion in Romania firmly demands putting an end to all acts of this kind and expresses once again its full support for the just cause of the Palestinian people, for the solution of the complicated problems in the Middle East by political means.

The Romanian statement of condemnation seemed to me then quite exceptional in its severity. I assumed that Romania found support in the reactions of the European community, Arab states, and others, and even that of the Israel United Workers Party. Following this statement I initiated an explanatory talk, on 6 October 1985, with Marcel Dinu, in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I raised three arguments concerning the Romanian reaction:

I questioned its form: using fierce expressions such as ‘state terror’ which to the best of my knowledge was used here for the first time regarding Israel, with no reference to the acts of terror perpetrated by the PLO recently against Israeli citizens. There was also no mention of its murderous acts in the past. Namely, there was a complete disregard for the reasons prompting the reaction.

I also referred to its content and complete one-sidedness. Israel does not have any conflict with Tunisia. Actually, we did not interfere with the PLO's people leaving Beirut for Tunisia, under the assumption that they would not establish a base of aggression and belligerency against Israel. It was not the case on our part to bombard Tunisia, but only the military base that acted against us. How is it possible to accuse us of damaging the peace process, when the acts of terror that are the main cause for the absence of peace are not condemned? The reaction to terrorist acts is not the reason for the absence of peace, but the acts of terror themselves. I raised two examples: first, I have never seen reports in the Romanian press about Arab terrorist acts against our citizens, including the murder of three Israeli citizens in Larnaca and other attempts by ‘Force 17’ to reach our shores. Second, from all the reactions published in the Romanian press quoted from world capitals condemning Israel for the IDF action in Tunisia, no reference whatsoever was mentioned in their content as to what Israel had to say about it. So how could Romanian ‘public opinion’ — quoted in the condemnation statement — be aware of the motives for the action, if such a possibility for information was withheld.

I then discussed the implications: the fierce Romanian reaction might also be reflected in Israel's media. If so, then an atmosphere of resentment might be created against Romania, and under such circumstances it would also be difficult for me to put forward proposals for the amplification of Israeli—Romanian relations, because there would be people who would refer me to the Romanian statement of condemnation.

This was the general frame of my argument. Dinu, on his part argued very toughly that Israel's action was a violation of a foreign territory and what would we have said ‘if Romania had bombarded Israel because of the anti-Romanian views heard there’. He asked me to inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem that the original text of the statement (whose author he probably was) was much tougher in comparison than what was published. He further argued that the rightist forces in Israel wanted to impede the peace process with Jordan, because the violation of the Tunisian territory was quite impudent. One can't go on being silent, as it would serve as a precedent in international life. Israel is entitled to act, but within its own territory and not in other states' territory. The action is a difficult blow for the moderate forces of the PLO, headed by

Arafat, who sincerely aspires to make peace with Israel. Even EastEuropean states will be deterred from renewing their relations with Israel following this action.

I responded at length arguing against his points that ignored the basic facts of the Israeli—Arab conflict. I told him that the comparison he made between Israel attacking the aggressive bases of her enemies with Romania bombarding Israel was out of place. I think I did not leave any doubt in his mind that in such an atmosphere of slinging heavy accusations in our direction, without offering our point of view on such an event, it would be very difficult to act for the intensification of mutual relations (in which the Romanian leadership was most interested).

The following day I brought up the issue with Deputy Foreign Minister Traian Pop, who was also in charge of Israel, along with other functions. Answering my arguments, he lectured me on the importance of our relations, ‘since Romania was the only country in the Communist world to maintain diplomatic relations with Israel’, though the level of economic relations, as he put it, did not correspond to the political one (meaning that the contacts in the political domain were much more intense than in the economic one). All this came with warm greetings that he bestowed upon me (three weeks after the presentation of my credentials to President Ceaușescu).

I mentioned that I had come to Romania with a cartload of good will toward intensifying our relations in the political, economic and cultural domains. But to do so, I needed to act in an adequate atmosphere, that I was shocked to see the lack of understanding on the part of Romania for the basic issues concerning the Israeli—Arab conflict, as for example when a reaction to terrorist acts is considered an obstacle to peace, but the terrorist acts themselves are not seen as a stumbling block. Maybe we should give the political dialogue between ourselves greater depth. As for the bilateral relations, I added, there were still many unexploited possibilities for reinforcing our economic relations, but for that we had to seek new channels. Also, in the cultural field, we could do more than what has been done.

Deputy Foreign Minister Pop attempted to be conciliatory. He tried to explain to me that Romania is sometimes compelled to act in accordance with geo-political interests (Romania's interests in the Arab world) and that it would be better if we would not pay attention to things of a passing nature but concentrate on the intensification of our relations and on economic and scientific cooperation (namely, walking a border line between Romania's political interests on the world arena). The tone of his talk was completely different from Dinu's. It was obvious that Pop made a great effort to sound soothing, moving toward what was then on the agenda.

Pop had been in the past a professor of education at Bucharest University. I first met him when I accompanied Prime Minister Peres on his visit to Bucharest. On that occasion, we had a long talk about ways to intensify our relations. He was very forthcoming. During the growing tension in the relationship between the two countries in the late Ceaușescu era, he was appointed ambassador to Hungary.

The political weekly *Lumea* (*The World*) in its issue of 10 October 1985 (four days after my talk with Dinu) mentioned the two examples which I had brought up during my talk with Dinu about the Romanian press's disregarding the Arab terrorist acts perpetrated against Israeli citizens, in an article titled ‘IDF's Action Against PLO Headquarters in Tunisia’ (no longer ‘IDF Action against Tunisia’). All indications showed that the article must have been written or inspired by Dinu. The lesson that could be learned from my explanatory talk, the first with senior officials in the Romanian foreign ministry, was that despite the hard line that we considered at times one-sided in Romania's attitude toward Israel regarding the Israeli—Arab conflict, there

was still a certain readiness to take in our arguments, even if they did not totally concur with them, as the *Lumea* article proved. In this respect, our Romanian interlocutors differed, to their credit, from all the rest in the Soviet bloc.

## **US RETALIATION AGAINST LIBYA FOR INVOLVEMENT IN TERRORIST ACTS**

On 28 December 1985, Arab terrorists belonging to the Abu Nidal terrorist organization, attacked El Al's counters at the airports of Rome and Vienna. The attack was perpetrated simultaneously at the two airports, killing 18 persons and wounding 122. The West German weekly *Bild am Sonntag* revealed at the time that Muammar Qaddafi, Libya's president, had signed an agreement with Abu Nidal, according to which Qaddafi paid Nidal \$32 million a year in exchange for carrying out attacks on Israeli and American targets.<sup>1</sup>

According to the testimony given by one of the perpetrators caught in Rome, Libya was their base. Consequently the American administration announced that it did not exclude the possibility of taking military action against Libya. The State Department spokesman focused on the main accusations<sup>2</sup> against Abu Nidal's organization and against Libya, which had provided a considerable amount of financing and assistance to the murderer's organization, in money, hiding places, and weapons. 'Libya', as he said, 'was responsible for the terrorist attacks to the same extent as Abu Nidal's organization'. The spokesman also quoted from a text of Italy's Prime Minister Bettino Craxi's statement that 'states who give shelter to brutal terror should bear responsibility'. As for the possibility of an Israeli reaction (expected in the USA to occur soon) the spokesman said that 'Israel's government spoke and will speak for itself, but we are against a reaction which would broaden the circle of violence in the region. On the other hand, terror can't go unanswered. We always said that one has to react to each terrorist act adequately in a measured and concentrated manner. The right is reserved to each state to do it'.<sup>3</sup>

Romania's media extensively reported the attack. They also quoted reactions from various capitals including Prime Minister Peres's reaction that: 'Israel will fight with all her means against terrorists and against those who are supporting and financing them'. The Romanian media also quoted from the PLO's reaction in Tunis saying: 'The PLO condemns the anti-Israel terrorist acts in Rome and in Vienna' calling them 'criminal terrorist attacks'. It also reported the PLO's appeal to the Italian and Austrian authorities 'to reveal the name of the country, whose secret services planned these acts'.<sup>4</sup>

Separately, the following statement was published on behalf of Agerpress:

Public opinion in Romania received with anger the news about the terrorist attacks at the Rome and Vienna airports, they were summed up by the loss of human life and many wounded persons of the civil population. The Romanian people seriously condemns these criminal acts which do not correspond with the legal international norms and with fraternity between nations. Such actions could poison the international atmosphere and complicate the possibility of solving by peaceful and political means conflicts in various regions and places in the world. In the spirit of Romania's position of principle, public opinion in our country believes that the means of terrorist actions are unacceptable, since they are incapable, in any way whatsoever, of settling problems and conflicts between nations. Acts of this kind cannot insure international stability, peace and nations security<sup>5</sup>

This was the first time that Romania officially condemned terrorist acts against us and published extensive reactions of condemnation from other countries. Though in the Romanian text of condemnation, it was not stated that it was published on behalf of the Government of Romania, it was governmental in the full sense.

On 8 January 1986 US President Ronald Reagan announced his decision to impose economic sanctions on Libya by invoking the economic emergency law prohibiting the maintenance or the conducting of business of any kind with Libya, state or private export to Libya, and the import from Libya of any kind, the prohibition of American companies from trade with Libya, either directly or indirectly, as well as the freezing of Libyan assets in American banks. A few days earlier the media in various countries had reported that the USA was concentrating sea and air forces in the Mediterranean basin close to Libya. Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir welcomed these 'courageous steps' taken by the US administration.<sup>6</sup>

## **EVOLUTION OF EVENTS IN ROMANIAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS**

*On 8 January 1986, I was summoned to Romania's Foreign Minister Văduvă, who requested that I convey an urgent message to Israel's Government concerning, the 'considerations of the Romanian Government'. In view of the deteriorating situation in the Middle East and in the Mediterranean and following the threats pronounced 'by a number of countries which may lead to the intensification of tension, the Romanian Government is hereby appealing to the Government of Israel to abstain from undertaking steps which might deteriorate the situation in the region intolerably. The Government of Romania expresses its hope in the spirit of the good relations between both countries that the Israeli Government would act quietly and logically in finding a solution to the problems that have arisen'.*

In promising to transmit the message to its destination, I mentioned our restraint in face of Syria's threats against us<sup>7</sup> and the danger of Arab terrorism to world peace and the urgent need to put an end to it. I also noted that it was important that the considerations of the Romanian Government would be heard among those who created this situation. Marcel Dinu, director of the Asian and Middle Eastern Countries Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was present at this talk.

Before this message was handed over to me an article was published on the same day in the daily *Scînteia*, under the title 'To do all that is possible for the prevention of the use of force and the threat of force in the system of international relations'. The article mentions, *inter alia*, the statement of condemnation by Romania's Government following the terrorist attacks in Rome and Vienna calling for the avoidance of reprisals and punishment. On the following day (9 January 1986) a new statement was published on behalf of Agerpress as follows:

Public opinion in our country is extremely worried by the grave situation in the Mediterranean basin and by the threats concerning military intervention and the imposition of an economic boycott against Libya. Romania believes that any use of force and the threats of force entirely contradict international norms and the principle of respect for the independence and sovereignty of states and therefore should be firmly rejected. Undertaking steps of this kind could only intensify tension in the region, opening the way for new military conflicts, whose results will be grave to the peace and security of the entire world.

At the same time Romania confirms, in the spirit of her policy toward peace and

cooperation, her consistent position on the need to intensify the political-diplomatic efforts for solving the problems in the Middle East by political means, and for that purpose the convening of an international conference under the UN auspices, in which all interested parties would participate, including the PLO, the USSR, the USA and other states that could contribute positively to the settlement of problems in this region.

Romania believes that in face of the specifically grave international situation, it is necessary more than ever to do everything in order to abstain from undertaking steps by force and by threats of force in relations between states, to solve all problems only by political means, by negotiations which, no matter how difficult they might be and how long they may last, are always preferable to military solutions and actions based on the use of force which may cause immense damage and suffering to the nations and may poison the international atmosphere and endanger peace in the whole world.

Following the *Scînteia*; article and the Agerpress statement, I argued in my talk with Dinu that whereas Romania's condemnation of the terrorist attack in Rome and Vienna was this time more pronounced than ever (whereupon I congratulated him), their publications were ignoring the facts that there are countries backing terrorism, in finances and military training, with supply of weapons, and by providing bases for terrorist actions. For this they bear heavy responsibility, even if they themselves do not perpetrate the acts. Also, that countries who are victims of Arab terror have the right to defend their citizens against Arab terrorist acts, and that contemporary terrorism is a result of a practice followed by the PLO from the early days of its establishment. I said that the call to abstain from retaliatory actions might encourage terrorism, even if the call is accompanied by a condemnation, and that beyond the call to abstain from using force, immediate means should be taken to ban terrorism.

In his reply Dinu argued that Arab terrorism is a result of Israel's occupation of Arab territories, occupation that leads to frustration. I argued that Arab terrorism preceded occupation, bringing up examples of terrorist acts known in the Arab world, without any connection to occupation.

On 15 April 1986 I was urgently summoned to Deputy Foreign Minister Pop, who asked me to convey to our government, on behalf of President Ceaușescu and the government of Romania, a message which he read out from a written text stating that:

Romania is worried by the bombardment of locations in Libya by the US Air Force, causing its people many casualties and material damage. Romania believes that by this action international norms were violated, and regards it as an act of aggression against an independent country. The military attack has created a dangerous situation in the Mediterranean, in Europe, and in the entire world. Hence Romania is appealing to Israel with the request to undertake appropriate steps, that actions of this kind cease and that all the problems should find a solution through negotiations and peace talks for the benefit of international peace.<sup>8</sup>

To that Pop added that in the course of that day US Ambassador Roger Kirk was summoned by President Ceaușescu, asking him to express Romania's concerns to President Reagan. Pop also noted that on the same day other ambassadors were summoned to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the same purpose: the ambassadors of NATO as well as those of the neutral, the non-aligned, Middle Eastern, Arab and African countries. The media as well, he said, would broadcast during the day, and the day after, Romania's deep concern in the face of the situation

created by this act which caused damage to the Romanian Embassy in Tripoli, wounding four persons on the embassy staff. One day earlier it became known that the US bombarded five targets in Libya, *inter alia*, military camps and airports, common positions, headquarters and Qaddafi's residence.<sup>9</sup> It was the first time that the US undertook a military long-range measure against a country providing support and shelter for terrorist acts from its own territory.

In promising Deputy Foreign Minister Pop to convey the message of the Romanian Government to our government, I remarked that I understood from President Reagan's announcement that he took action to do away with Libyan terrorism, after having failed to reach this goal by diplomatic means, and that if countries of the world had joined in banning, forcefully, international terrorism, most probably such acts would not have taken place.

Pop replied that Romania condemns terrorism everywhere and that she believes that a solution should be found to its motivations and that if another country, including Israel, had been attacked, as Libya was, by a military action (God forbid!) Romania would have reacted in the same way I expressed my hope that we would not reach such a situation.

On 16 April, the Romanian press published the text of Ceaușescu's message to Reagan conveyed a day earlier through the US ambassador in Bucharest. Here are its main points:

Romania expressed her deep concern and her belief that the attack constituted 'a gross violation of international law and norms, relations between countries and the basic principles of the UN'. Romania reserves the right to claim compensation for the damage caused to the embassy and to staff members in Tripoli. In continuation, Ceaușescu appealed to Reagan 'to take all measures to halt the bombardments and military actions against Libya', expressing the hope that the American administration and President Reagan himself would understand the deep concern of all nations of the world to solve problems by way of negotiations for the sake of peace in the Mediterranean, in Europe and the entire world and that 'Romania is ready to make a full contribution in solving any problem, by negotiations, in the spirit of understanding cooperation and peace'.

In reply to the ambassador's arguments in justifying the American action (his arguments were not published, as usual), it was said that the President answered:

It would be difficult to reply on the right to self-defence in order to attack an independent and sovereign state. No justification of such bombardments could be accepted under the pretext of stopping terrorism. Romania has expressed itself and continues to do so firmly against state terrorism. Terrorism is not stopped by new terrorist acts. Romania is ready to discuss problems of terrorism in peaceful ways that should be most useful, including under the UN auspices, to put an end to similar actions.

Ceaușescu's message to Reagan seemed to me then to have been phrased in a relatively moderate tone, admitting the perpetration of Libyan terrorist acts without identifying them by name, that resentment for them actually derived from the means (military) undertaken to stop them, and that Ceaușescu proposed his mediation, under UN auspices (but not necessarily), to stop general terrorism.

What prompted Romania to engage in a wide range of diplomatic activity, without ignoring Israel, aimed at preventing the deterioration of American—Libyan conflict by standing up to Libya while sharply criticizing US policy?

In those days I evaluated the Romanian reaction as being composed of two acts; first, a balanced, unsigned comment without condemning any side of the conflict, by expressing fear for its deterioration and by calling to take preventive measures. Then, second, by taking up a sharper tone, accompanied by condemning and accusing the USA, as phrased in the Agerpress media campaign and by Ceaușescu's address at the plenary of the National Council of the Democratic Front and the Socialist Union. The passage from the first to the second was very drastic and apparently uncertain. But, actually there was something to learn about the manner of Romania's reaction, as I thought, guided by five considerations. These were: Romania's relations with the countries involved in the conflict; the extent to which the conflict could reflect on Romania's geo-political situation; the attitude of the USSR and the countries of the Soviet bloc toward the conflict, also having regard for the western position; and the possibility that the subject would be brought up to the UN.

When the American—Libyan conflict broke out, Romania was not interested, at that stage in criticizing either of the two conflicting sides. With the USA it had a political and economic interest (to continue receiving MFN status) and with Libya it had an economic interest (to continue purchasing oil). Yet, fairly soon, Romania was compelled to side with those who were condemning the American action.

At the beginning of the crisis the Soviet reaction was somehow balanced, publishing both versions, the American and the Libyan, side by side. But when, soon afterwards, the USSR sharply attacked the USA, and when European reaction became known, particularly the Italian, which was very critical, and when it was decided to bring up the matter with the UN Security Council, Romania probably did not have any alternative but to be dragged after them thus strengthening, as she probably intended, the status of the UN, since in the long run she would be in need of UN support in face of a Soviet threat to her territory. In addition, the Romanians were most sensitive concerning the 'violation of the principle of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity' of a foreign state, fearing lest the precedent would become normal behavior and be exploited as such by the USSR. For this reason I believed that Romania hastened to stand at the side of those who condemned America, particularly when she had the argument that European nations were also doing it. And the result:

- Towards the USSR, Romania could argue that she followed in her footsteps.
- Towards Libya, Romania could argue that she had stood at her side in her conflict with the USA.
- Toward the USA she could argue that she was compelled to join the choir of its critics, since some of the European states had done so before Romania.
- Toward Israel she acted, actually in the same way as she did toward the NATO countries, intending to deter Israel from taking military action in retaliation for the murderous attacks upon the El Al counters in Rome and Vienna airports. It should be noted that Romania consistently opposed the imposition of economic sanctions against countries, and this principle in its policy was implied whenever such a proposal was raised in the UN regarding Israel.
- As for Romania itself, one may presume its fear that US economic sanctions on Libya and, later, the American bombardments of Libyan military targets would lead to a deterioration in the international relations system. It may also be that Romania was afraid of a precedent

in the event that sanctions would be imposed on her too, either by the USSR (owing to manifestations of independence in Romania's foreign policy that did not always follow the Soviet bloc) or from the USA (owing to Romania's internal policy on human rights).

## **ROMANIA'S REACTION TO ISRAEL'S INTERCEPTION OF A LIBYAN PASSENGER PLANE**

On 4 February 1986, four Israeli aircraft intercepted a Libyan passenger flight on its route from Tripoli to Damascus, forcing it to land in Israel. The interception was intended to capture certain leaders of Arab terrorist organizations such as George Habash, Gibril, and Abu Musa of the Rejection Front, who had participated at the Conference of Revolutionary Organizations held in Tripoli, and who according to Israel's information were on the aeroplane. Checking the passengers after the forced landing showed that none of the three were present. The reason for the unsuccessful campaign was attributed, *post factum*, to incorrect information, or to the assumption that the three terrorist leaders decided at the last moment not to fly on this aeroplane. The interception stirred up great anger in the Arab world (as well as in some European states) and even among some Israeli cabinet ministers there were conflicting opinions regarding the worthwhileness of the campaign, both from international and from practical aspects. Syria demanded an immediate meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss Israel's air piracy and the means to curb it and to condemn it in the international community. At a vote taken in the Security Council, on 7 February 1986, on a proposal to sharply condemn Israel, the USA vetoed its acceptance. Britain, France, Australia and Denmark abstained. Ten countries voted in favour. (Due to the US veto the proposal was not accepted).

On 6 February, Agerpress published the following announcement:

The interception of a Libyan passenger aeroplane by Israeli aircraft on its way from Tripoli to Damascus, forcing it to land in Israel, constitutes a grave violation of international norms and conventions in relations between states, which must not be tolerated. Public opinion in our country decisively condemns such acts of piracy that endanger the security of air traffic and the lives of passengers, creating tense situations with very serious implications for world peace and security.

International organizations and world public opinion should undertake decisive steps against such dangerous acts that counter the basic rules of International Law and should act in the direction of adopting decisive means to put an end to such acts that must not be accepted for any reason whatsoever in international life. It is vital for traffic rules and for the rules that guide the relations between nations that everything possible be done to ensure the full security of the pilot, respect for air traffic rules and for the rules that guide the relation between nations.

The day after this announcement I asked for a talk with Dinu. Our conversation took place a few days later due to his absence from Bucharest.

I remarked that although the event already belongs to the past, particularly after the Security Council debate, whose results we received with certain satisfaction, I found it necessary to express my amazement at this announcement which, as in the previous case, was characterized by its sharp tone of one-sidedness, defining the interception as 'an act of piracy and violation of International Law', and the one-sided report of the Romanian media regarding the Security



Council debate proposing to condemn Israel as well as the misleading report concerning its results under the title 'Unanimous condemnation in the international arena', whereas out of ten countries whose condemnation the Romanian press quoted, eight did not have diplomatic relations with Israel and all of which, except for the USSR, are Arab countries that support in practice terrorist acts against Israel, whilst the five member countries of the Security Council were split: the USA imposed a veto and four abstained. I presented him an 'explanatory paper' which we received from the MFA in Jerusalem, emphasizing that we were compelled to pursue the planners of terror against us as a right for self-defence; Arab terror against us should not enjoy the patronage of international law while its victim is exposed to condemnations; that the total balance would probably show that the military and political support for the PLO, not only had not made it modify its aims, but had encouraged it to harden them, to continue with terror, which constitutes a danger for all nations in the world, including those who side with the PLO in the international arena.

Dinu as usual did not let this pass. Against my arguments he claimed that it was our act that forced the Romanians, unfortunately, to publish a condemnation statement. If we had found the person whom we were looking for on board the plane and if we had captured him, wouldn't that be called 'piracy', compelling a passenger aeroplane to land at an Israeli airport, while it was flying in international air space? There is no need to intercept aeroplanes, he went on, one could be assisted by Interpol. (I asked him if Romania would cooperate, as it is a member. He didn't reply.) He next made the point that since an American aircraft had intercepted an Egyptian plane while flying in international air space, it was only natural that the US would oppose the condemnation of Israel at the Security Council. If he himself had to edit the condemnations in the press, he would have written: 'Unanimous condemnation except the USA'. (The four that abstained disapproved of the forced landing but the condemnation presented by Syria was too extreme so they held back on approving it. Dinu ignored the way of their voting purposely.) He added finally: Those who are engaged in terrorism are private people! (I wondered how such a clever man like Dinu could say such nonsense.)

I argued with him about the truth of the facts and the conclusions he had reached. Finally, he asked me in a personal and joking way: 'between you and me, how come you failed?' (His question reminded me of Abu Jihad, Arafat's deputy, boasting when he said that the campaign of the Libyan aeroplane interception was a shameful failure and a blow to the Israeli Mossad.) I answered him quoting from Abba Eban's words: 'It was not a failure, it was just bad luck'.

Though this dialogue, as the previous ones, demonstrated to me how attached the representatives of the communist regime in Romania were to moral rules they set for foreign consumption, when it fitted their interests, while tending to entirely ignore the background of circumstances that caused the events to come about, yet I always found it necessary to carry it on. This was not just an intellectual exercise. Somewhere I had the impression that our arguments were somehow absorbed. Yet I would confess that in the margins of the exchange of views I strove to demolish the double bookkeeping of the political morality that Soviet bloc countries, including Romania, adopted for themselves: one intended for self-consumption, the second to be implemented in countries outside the bloc in accordance with their own interests.

## **PALESTINE DAY AND THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE PLO**

29 November 1985. The Romanian media devoted much space to Palestine Day, called in the political weekly, *Lumea*, 'The Day of active solidarity with the Palestine People'. Romanian propaganda stressed that the events to mark 'Palestine Day' in Romania are taking place in accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution of 1977 as the PLO enjoys recognition of the UN and the majority of states in the world, as the sole legal representative of the Palestinians. Although the problem of Palestine ceaselessly appears on the international agenda, until now no progress has been made in reaching a global solution to the Israeli—Arab conflict. Lately, some activity towards the problem by peaceful means has been noted. In that connection it was mentioned that Romania was one of the first countries to recognize the PLO, establishing relations with it and enabling it to open a representation in Bucharest, and that Ceaușescu was the first to call for the convention of an international conference to settle the Israeli—Arab conflict.

In those days I summed up these propaganda lines, as follows:

1. If the first sentence was aimed at Israel and the US stressing the fact that Romania was not the only country in the world to mark Palestine Day, the last sentence was aimed at the Arab world by mentioning Romania's role in the PLCs gaining political support in the world (to balance Romania's relations with Israel).
2. A discernable line was drawn between Romania's support for the PLO and a global solution of the Palestinian problem by peaceful means, and the avoidance of referring to Israel except to call for its withdrawal from territories conquered in 1967 and the call for securing the existence of all states of the region (by implication also Israel).

These sort of lines were repeated each following year until the revolution in Romania in 1989.

*Toward the end of December 1985*, articles were published on the occasion of the Palestinian National Holiday as Romania's media defined it. These articles, as in the case of Palestine Day, reflected precisely the position of Romania's government toward the PLO, after having been confirmed by the RCP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I shall quote here some of the passages from an article in *Lumea* of 26 December 1985.

The Palestinian people in the occupied territories, and those living in the Diaspora, are celebrating beginning this year the day of national revolution, marking the staunch struggle for the achievement of the legitimate rights, self-determination, the return to their homes, and the establishment of an independent sovereign state.

The flame of the struggle, lit 21 years ago, warmed the soul of a people lacking a state and has developed the consciousness of its national existence, presenting at the same time to the world the Palestinian tragedy in its entirety...In spite of the suffering due to plots intended to crumble and separate the people to ignore its national identity, the Palestinian people is firmly rallied around PLO in its determination to continue its struggle until its just rights will triumph.

At this stage, what the PLO has actually achieved is the fact that it is no longer an isolated people and that it enjoys broader understanding on the international plane and in active international solidarity Socialist Romania consistently supported in principle the just rights of the Palestinian people, providing it with wide support — diplomatic, political and material. The Palestinians have always valued this constructive support from our country in face of the Middle East situation...The Romanian people expresses once again, on the

occasion of the day of the Palestinian revolution its warm sentiments and friendship toward the Palestinian people and its determination to continue supporting it until the victory and the achievement of its just goal, toward the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

The same version, more or less, was repeated in the years to come until the Romanian revolution of December 1989.

## **VISIT OF YASSER ARAFAT TO ROMANIA**

*8–10 February 1986*, Yasser Arafat visited Romania. Working relations and close friendship developed between Arafat and Ceaușescu. Arafat was invited to Bucharest at least once a year. As I already mentioned, Romania was among the first countries to officially recognize the PLO and the first, in 1974, among the Warsaw Pact members that enabled the PLO to open in its capital an ‘Official Representation’. The maintenance of this representation was financed, according to rumours spread among the Diplomatic Corps in Bucharest, by the RCP to whom it was officially accredited, until its status rose to the grade of embassy in January 1989, following Romania's recognition of the PLO Declaration on the establishment of an independent State of Palestine made in Algiers on 15 November 1988.

In those days the PLO representative was included in the List of Diplomatic Corps in the section of Representatives of National Liberation Movements, and at official ceremonies he was placed as first among these representatives, after the *chargé d'affaires* of foreign embassies.

Romania provided the PLO valuable political and material aid. Whenever Arafat visited Romania, Ceaușescu treated him officially as if he were a leader of a state; he would update himself with what was going on within the PLO and its relations with the Arab states, trying to reach a common denominator between the PLO and Israel toward their participation of an international peace conference. The invitations extended to him to visit Bucharest were aimed at strengthening his status outside, inside the PLO, and within the Arab states.

Often, Ceaușescu would mediate between the PLO positions and those of Israel, even if he was not an intercessor between them. He had preferential status in comparison to the rest leaders of the Soviet bloc countries since he was the only one among them who maintained diplomatic relations with both conflicting sides. It could be assumed that in his talks with Arafat, Ceaușescu was trying to influence him to moderate his extreme positions toward Israel, in order to achieve a peaceful solution through negotiations leading toward mutual recognition and negating the policy of terror to which Arafat adhered as a means of ‘conquering the legitimate rights of the Palestinian People’.

This assumption is based on Ceaușescu's repeated declarations on a settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict by peaceful means, firmly condemning terror ‘that does not represent and could not represent a political struggle of national liberation’. At that time he also condemned ‘military actions of state terrorism against innocent people, countries and nations’. He invested much effort in order to bring closer the positions between Israel and those of the PLO, to get them to the negotiating table within the framework of an international conference trusting that it would lead to peace between them. He did not abandon this hope until the end of his life.

Arafat's visit to Bucharest, February 1986, took place against the background of rivalry within the PLO leadership, Arab terrorist attacks on the El Al counters at the airports of Rome and

Vienna, the American—Libyan conflict, the interception of a Libyan passenger plane by Israel's aircraft, the tension between the PLO and Syria, and the failure of his talks with King Hussein. In the course of this visit to Bucharest Arafat had two meetings with Ceaușescu. The official press reports could testify about differences of attitudes between them regarding settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict and on the Romanian attempt to bridge between them. In the press report of 9 February following the first meeting between them it was said *inter alia*: 'Arafat expressed his appreciation for Romania's consistent and principled position in her support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to conquer its unalienable rights', whereas Ceaușescu once again confirmed the RCP and Romania peoples' resolution to actively support in the future the just cause of the Palestinian people

The second press report of 11 February presented the positions of the two sides. Arafat is quoted in generalities and Ceaușescu in detail. Following is the full quotations of both:

...Referring to the last events in the Middle East, Comrade Yasser Arafat presented the PLO's position about them emphasizing that the PLO initiated and revealed a series of actions in finding a solution to the settling of the complicated political problems in this region and the intensification of the peacemaking process in the Middle East. Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu remarked that the Middle East problems should be regarded within the general context of the international situation, which continues to be grave. He emphasized the need to unite the efforts of nations and the peace-loving forces in the entire world in order to stop the dangerous course of the occurrences leading to tension and war; to cease the armament race and start a course of disarmament, first of all nuclear weapons; abolishing the use of force and the threats to use it in relations between nations settling all conflicts and problems in different regions of the world, by peaceful ways, by negotiations, to insure an atmosphere of peace and security in the entire world.

In this connection comrade Ceaușescu emphasized the need to undertake means for the intensification of political and diplomatic action to initiate new initiatives and actions intended to global solution by negotiation, in the Middle East, for the establishment of peace in this region. He reconfirmed also at this opportunity, Romania's consistent position regarding a political solution, by negotiations, of the Middle East problems on the basis : the retreat of Israel from the Arab occupied territories following the 1967 war, the settlement of the Palestinian people problem, by recognizing its right to self-determination including its right to establish an independent state of its own to secure the existence, integrity and sovereignty of all states in the region. Ceaușescu also clarified the importance of organizing an international conference to be convened under the UN auspices, which should propose an adequate framework to direct negotiations with the participation of all interested sides, including the PLO, USSR, USA and the rest — members of the UN Security Council and other states that could contribute in a positive way to a political settlement of the problems, in the peace-making process in the Middle East. The way to organize such a conference in the present circumstances, is the only one which could lead to a political settlement of the problems in the region. Noting that a situation has been created which enables to organize such conferences by intensifying the efforts for peace in the Middle East

Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu expressed the RCP and Socialist Romania's decision to act also in the future in helping the just cause of the Palestinian people, for a just and permanent political settlement of the problems in this region by political means. In the course of the

talks it was stressed the importance of strengthening the unity and the organizational forces of the PLO for the sake of developing cooperation among the Arab states, as an elementary condition to settling the situation in the Middle East.

This was Ceaușescu's Credo, in which he pointed out the need to abandon Arab terrorism (by implication) by giving preference to the political course as the only way that could lead to the settlement of the Palestinian problem and the establishment of peace in the Middle East, based on Israel's retreat from territories she occupied in the Six—Day War (1967), recognition of Israel's independent and sovereign existence while ensuring her territorial integrity, as that of all states in the region, on one side and on the other, respect for the right of the Palestinians for self-determination including their right for a state of their own.

A Western Ambassador told me that in the course of his visit Arafat invited the ambassadors of Austria, Switzerland, Brazil, Mexico and India (each of them separately) and the ambassadors of the Arab states together (the Egyptian and Syrian, the Libyan did not come). According to this source Arafat told the Western ambassadors the following: that he was prepared to accept Security Council Resolution 242 under the condition that the PLO be a partner to the Israeli—Jordanian talks in a Jordanian—Palestinian delegation at an International Conference. In response to the Austrian ambassador's question Arafat replied that the participation of Palestinian representatives who were not members of the PLO would be interpreted as if he were politically liquidated. However, he was willing to accept the idea of a confederation with Jordan, as a concession to the USA.

Ceaușescu had told Arafat that he would indeed continue supporting the PLO, but his 'possibilities are limited'. The ambassadors discerned a tone of disappointment from his talks with Ceaușescu. One of the ambassadors had heard from a Romanian source that Ceaușescu had pressed Arafat to restrain terror and declare his recognition of Israel's existence. Arafat did not tend to accept Ceaușescu's advice, hence the Romanians were not happy about the visit.

In this context, I heard from Marcel Dinu the version the Romanians (namely Ceaușescu) had told Arafat, which was that had the PLO accepted the Security Council Resolution 242, it would have achieved two things: first, confused the Israeli ruling parties, since one of their main arguments against the PLO was that it refuses to accept this resolution implying the recognition of Israel, while in the Palestinian Covenant it stands out for the negation of Israel's existence. Second, it would have given an important momentum to the idea of convening an International Conference. The PLO does not have a good legal argument, Dinu continued, when it comes to opposing Security Council Resolution 242 by saying that there is no mention in it about 'the establishment of a Palestinian State'. After all, when this resolution was accepted, the Palestinians did not demand the establishment of a Palestinian State. And since the demand for a state came rather late (only in the 1970s), the PLO should thus declare that it accepts it.

This was said to Arafat against the background of King Hussein's speech of 14 February 1986, in which he announced having failed to convince Arafat to accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and to renounce the policy of terror as a condition for the convening of an international conference.<sup>10</sup>

## **THE UN COMMITTEE FOR PALESTINE**

The Committee was set up on the basis of the 1975 UN General Assembly Resolution 3376, with

the purpose of discussing and recommending a programme 'to restore the inalienable rights of the Palestinian People'. It comprised 20 members (in 1976 three more were added) from Asian and African states and five European countries. Out of 23 countries that were members of the committee, Israel maintained diplomatic relations with only two: Turkey and Romania. This committee served as a political tool in the hands of the PLO. From year to year it accepted vicious resolutions against Israel. This committee is still active (even after the signing of the Israel—PLO agreement on mutual recognition)

Beginning of April 1986, Marcel Dinu asked me incidentally, during one of the talks we used to have at the MFA in Bucharest, about Israel's position on the international conference for the settling of the Israeli—Arab conflict and on the idea of an international forum proposed by Prime Minister Shimon Peres. I clarified the difference between the two by saying that we regarded a conference under the patronage of the superpowers and with their active participation as an instrument to dictate solutions to. Moreover, with one superpower (China) we had never established diplomatic relations (they were officially established in 1992); and the second one (the USSR), broke relations with us (in 1967 and re-established them in 1991) and aligned itself with our enemies who aspire to destroy us, although she herself does not take this stand, and bears heavy responsibility for the outbreak of the Six-Day War, and is extending massive political and military aid in the struggle against us. On the other hand, the PLO, encouraged by the backing it receives, refuses to recognize our right to exist, and refuses to accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, choosing a policy of terror against us. I added that a forum or international accompaniment is designated to give patronage to the opening, only, if direct negotiations between Israel and its neighbours along the Israel—Egyptian pattern occur, without dictating the results beforehand.

At a later stage I heard from Dinu that this talk of ours greatly assisted him in his presentation at a seminar of the Committee for Palestine that the UN organized in April 1986 in Istanbul. Moreover, he said that he had discerned at this seminar that the committee is gradually undergoing a change from concentrating on its debates on 'the inalienable rights of the Palestinian People' to discussions on solving the problems in the framework of an international conference, with the participation of all those concerned. Dinu took credit to Romania (indirectly to himself) for this tendency.

I told him that the discussions at the seminar were of practically no interest to the Israeli public, since with the decisive majority of the committee members we had no diplomatic relations, and to judge from the committee's recommendations thus far, Israel had no right to exist. If those recommendations were implemented in spirit and to the letter, Israel would simply have to disappear from the world map, since they are unrealistic and the composition of the committee is decidedly hostile to Israel. We have no interest in even following its discussion. On that Dinu remarked that I should not think that the Romanians 'are so naive' that they are unrealistic in their attitude toward the committee. But he found it necessary to tell me about it, to clarify it to me, and so that we should know that Romania served there as a moderating factor, since he well remembered our reservations at Romania's joining the committee.

I concluded from his words that the Romanians had no illusions as to the strength of the committee, but as long as it existed they would take advantage of using it as an arena for their political activity.

## **FIRST VISIT TO ISRAEL OF ION STOIAN, DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE RCP, ON BEHALF OF PRESIDENT CEAUȘESCU**

*On 8 April 1986*, Ion Stoian accepted the Israel Labor Party's invitation to participate at the opening of its congress. The department which he headed was responsible for outlining Romania's foreign policy and for supervising its implementation via the MFA. Stoian was known as a zealous communist and pragmatist who worked in close cooperation with Ceaușescu; he was a great supporter of the PLO and the National Liberation Movements in Asia and Africa. He stood out for the development of relations with all socialist parties in the world, including the Israel Labor Party. Shortly before the outbreak of the revolution in Romania, he was appointed its Foreign Minister.

In spite of his tough views on Israel's position toward the Israeli—Arab conflict, as reflected in our talks in Bucharest, I found him an interesting interlocutor. His acceptance of the Labor party's invitation gave us much satisfaction. The RCP was the only communist party in the world that maintained official relations with Israel's Labor party and which even cultivated them in a friendly manner. However, I have no doubt that the RCP regarded these relations as a means to influence its leadership, while at the same time also to influence Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Yitzhak Shamir the need to reveal 'openness and flexibility' in the peace-making process for the Israeli—Arab conflict in general, and the Palestinian problem in particular. This could perhaps be achieved by conducting an ongoing dialogue with the conflicting sides and an exchange of information towards bringing about a change in one party to the conflict, Israel, to moderate its position in searching for a solution acceptable to both side in the conflict. Against this background, we held a dialogue with Stoian. I met him before he left for Israel, after his return to Bucharest, and on few other occasions.

In the course of his visit to Israel he met, at my recommendation, with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shamir. After having paid tribute to the friendly relations between Romania and Israel (this was always the Romanian custom for opening a dialogue) Stoian repeated the main principles of Romania's stand toward the Israeli—Arab conflict, with particular emphasis on the way to settle it by negotiations through peaceful means in the framework of an international conference without pre-conditions. To that he added that he found encouraging elements in the speech of Prime Minister Peres at the Labor Party's congress, particularly in connection with the Palestinians. Hence, he came to the conclusion that there is room for negotiations;<sup>11</sup> that Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 should be accepted with amendments enabling the participation of the legitimate representatives of the Palestinians — the PLO — 'and, of course, the two superpowers and other countries that could contribute to the negotiations should also participate at the (International) Conference' (his message deviated from the idea of the Security Council members participating at the conference under their patronage); that an adequate atmosphere should be created to allow the conduct of negotiations with the PLO, by presenting conditions to each other. The Romanians consider Arafat a moderate and cautious leader. The moment to start negotiating with him is ripe. Romania is ready to contribute to this process without any pretensions; that no progress will be made in the peace-making progress with only one superpower involved in the peace-making process'.

Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shamir answered:

Israel is proud of her friendly relationships with Romania. It remembers well President

Ceaușescu's contribution to Sadat's visit in Jerusalem. We don't agree with Romania's evaluation of the PLO, which we regard as a terrorist organization aspiring to destroy Israel and establish a Palestinian state instead and not alongside it. And if the PLO does not accept UN Resolutions 242 [and] 338, and King Hussein can't come to an agreement with it, how could Israel come to terms with it? As long as the PLO does not cease its terrorist acts, continuing even nowadays against Israeli citizens, it is impossible to come to terms with it.

Referring to Romania's statement of condemnation regarding terrorism and violence, following the terrorist acts at the El Al counters in Rome and Vienna airports in December 1985, Shamir noted that the PLO 'is one of the greatest contributors to international terrorism'.

We are well aware of President Ceaușescu's support of the idea of convening an international conference for the settlement of the Israeli—Arab dispute, but such a conference cannot be a substitute for direct negotiations. We could foresee the conference as a second stage, which should give its acceptance to the achievements of the direct negotiations, or a pro forma conference giving its patronage only to direct negotiations.

He concluded by saying that the USA has an advantage in the peacemaking process by having good relations with Israel and with the Arab States. In contrast to the USSR which, unlike Romania, maintains relations in the region only with the Arab countries. Its policy is clearly anti-Israel. We propose to Jordan direct peace negotiations, without any pre-conditions. It is only the PLO that constitutes a serious hindrance to the achievement of peace.

In addition to his talk with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shamir, Stoian met with the leaders of the Labor Party and Mapam. He returned to Bucharest encouraged by his talks. He told me about their main substance, noting that he had received the impression from his interlocutors 'that there is room to talk business' and that he intended to submit a positive report of his visit to Ceaușescu. I interpreted it as a sign of Romania's further intensive involvement in the efforts to bridge the gap between the positions of Israel and the PLO, in order to implement Ceaușescu's idea for convening an international conference for the settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict, including the Palestinian problem.

## **VISIT OF UZI BARAM, SECRETARY OF ISRAEL'S LABOR PARTY, TO ROMANIA**

*3–8 July 1986*, Uzi Baram, the secretary of the Israel Labor Party, came to Romania at the invitation of the RCP with the purpose of continuing the dialogue opened by Stoian with the leaders of the Labor Party in Israel. The Romanians found interest in the continuation of the talks with Israel politicians and leaders, particularly after having discerned a new emphasis toward the Palestinians as reflected in Shimon Peres' address to the Labor Party's congress in April 1986.

In the course of his visit to Romania Baram met with the Chairman of Romania's parliament, Nicolae Giosan, Foreign Minister Văduvă, and with Stoian. He was also received by Ceaușescu, to whom he transmitted a letter from Shimon Peres evaluating the present state of affairs between Israel and her neighbours.

Before Baram opened his series of talks in Romania, I had a long working session with him on Israeli—Romanian mutual relations and on further possibilities for expanding them. I also updated him on Romanian policy toward the Israeli—Arab conflict. Since his talks with his Romanian hosts were held on party level, I participated only in the meeting with Foreign



Minister Văduvă and with Stoian. As for this talk with Ceaușescu, I learned about it from Baram himself and from what he revealed to the Israeli media, upon his return to Israel. I did not find any new elements in the presentation of Romania's position, not in the domain of our mutual relations nor that of the Israeli—Arab conflict. However, it is worth noting a paragraph from the exchange of views. After having presented Israel's attitude toward the Israeli—Arab dispute, Baram explained our opposition to an international conference and to negotiations with the PLO.<sup>12</sup> Ceaușescu claimed that time plays against us and that we should agree to an international conference which would also improve our relations with the USSR and China. No Arab country would be able to bring peace to the Middle East without the PLO. It was the PLO that could bring peace. Every Arab country will join a peace which the PLO would agree to. Whereupon Baram replied: 'We are ready for peace with compromises. We shall compromise on territories, but not on security. We shall negotiate with a Jordanian—Palestinian delegation. We are interested in coming to terms with personalities agreeable to the Palestinian people, but we regard the PLO as a terrorist organization'. Baram added, that he proposed to demand from the PLO that it 'stops its terrorist actions for one year'.<sup>13</sup>

From what I heard from Baram immediately after his talk, Ceaușescu had said to him:

Israel's policy toward the PLO is a burden to the moderates in its camp and makes it easier for the extremists. The PLO is well aware of Romania's stand toward Israel and the Israeli—Arab conflict. Arafat supports peace. Those who are looking for a change in the PLO's present leadership ( a hint to the 'Jordanian option' outlined by Shimon Peres in those days) would not lead to any moderation. The PLO is ready for compromises, such as the acceptance of Security Council's Resolution 242 and an international conference. Further changes in the Middle East will potentially strengthen Arab power. Hence, Israel should have an interest in achieving peace. There is no prospect for military force to triumph, while use of nuclear armaments would drag the whole region to a nuclear disaster...There is no other dominant leader in the whole Arab world like Sadat to take the risk in making peace with Israel.

The Romanian media, as was the local custom, reported on the Baram—Ceaușescu talk stressing the following: receiving a message from Prime Minister Peres (without mentioning any details about it); the aspiration of Romania and of Israel to intensify their bilateral relations on the party and state levels; and giving details about Romania's position toward the Israeli—Arab conflict.<sup>14</sup>

Presumably, the purpose of the publication was to point out the unique role of Romania (the only one in the Communist bloc) capable of mediating and bridging between the positions of the conflicting sides in the Israeli—Palestinian dispute. Both Baram and Stoian told me that the talks were 'very good ones'. Both expressed to me their hope to continue them. But Romania's role, to bridge between extreme positions, was felt not only in the Israeli—Palestinian domain. At a certain stage it seemed that Romania was exercising an additional role toward us: to convince us of the importance of involving the USSR in the peace-making process in our region. As I mentioned, Ceaușescu had already spoken of this. This time Stoian repeated it bluntly in the course of a dinner, to which Baram and I and our wives were invited, saying, 'Israel is making a mistake when trying to ignore the USSR's status in the Middle East. Without it peace will not be achieved in the Middle East. Israel is trying to alienate her. As it is a superpower, one cannot make preconditions for the purpose of involving it in an international conference for the settlement of the Israeli—Arabi conflict' (in reference to the USSR's renewal of diplomatic

relations with Israel, which it disrupted at the end of the Six-Day War). The USSR, he said, had made already some tentative steps toward Israel, as for instance the release of Natan Sharansky from jail. Instead of being grateful to her, we sent him to the USA to turn public opinion there against the USSR.<sup>15</sup>

‘A new approach is needed on Israel's part toward the USSR, particularly from the point of view of her status as a superpower’. I reacted to this theory by pointing out that Romania, too, does not give in to superpowers, and knows very well that it was the USSR's policy that led to the evolutions of present events in the Middle East.

There was nothing new in his arguments, except the tone in which they were presented. I wondered if he expressed his own views, in this talk, or was a ‘missionary’ of Ceaușescu, or a ‘missionary’ of the USSR.

## SECOND VISIT TO ISRAEL OF ION STOIAN ON PRESIDENT CEAUȘESCU'S MISSION

*At the beginning of August 1986*, I was summoned to Foreign Minister Văduvă to be informed that President Ceaușescu wished to send his emissary to Israel for talks with Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir. Văduvă avoided mentioning the name of the emissary nor did he note the subject of the requested talk. I presumed that it was the wish of the president to be updated by Peres and Shamir if there were any change in their position toward the PLO and the international conference, following Peres's meeting with Hassan, king of Morocco, at the end of July 1986. The Romanian press emphasized this news event. At the end of the meeting, the weekly *Lumea* published their joint statement as well as the main points of the king's speech favouring the ‘Fez Program’, the ten-point proposal that Prime Minister Peres presented to the king and the statement that he made upon his return to Israel. The journal also published the polarised reactions in the Arab world, after the meeting, but all this was covered in *Lumea* without any comment, to show that the Romanians welcomed the meeting without stating it publicly. *Lumea's* report also referred to Shamir's interview in *Monitin* in which he said that he was prepared to establish an autonomy in the Administered Territories even ‘at the risk of a Palestinian state’ and the calls by Haim Ramon and Ora Namir ‘for the Palestinians’ right for self-determination’.

Even before the Romanian press published all this, Israel had transmitted to the MFA in Bucharest the full text of the joint statement and the prime minister's announcement. I explained to Dinu, in our talk on 29 July 1986, our evaluations following the meeting. In expressing his gratitude for the information and assessments, he said that President Ceaușescu ‘being involved in Middle East subjects would have been greatly interested to receive from Prime Minister Peres his evaluation of the visit’. It is against this background that one should see Ceaușescu's initiative to send his emissary to Israel.

Stoian was received by Prime Minister Peres and separately by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shamir on 8 August 1986. The talks centred on Peres's visit to Morocco, the PLO, and Ceaușescu's repeated proposal to convene an international conference. Also mentioned, satisfactorily, was the development of Israeli—Romanian relations and, unsatisfactorily, the delay in the USA—USSR agreement on the reduction of nuclear and conventional weapons and the limitation of the arms race. On these topics as well as that of the PLO and the international conference, Stoian reiterated the Romanian positions we already

knew. The responses to his remarks, however, bear review.

### **Peres—Hassan Meeting**

- Stoian remarked that the Romanians followed with interest what was said in Morocco and Israel and that they regarded the meeting as important.
- Peres reacted by saying that the importance of the meeting was in the high rank his host holds in the Arab world, and that Arab reactions had been restrained, except for Syria's.
- Shamir reacted by saying that although the meeting in Morocco could not yet be considered negotiations, it constituted, however, an important contribution to the creation of an atmosphere of preparedness to conduct talks. Without talks we will get nowhere. He added that in all our talks with Arab representatives, we had not found any new idea for making peace with Israel, not even a sign of moderation. Even the position of Morocco's king was extreme.

### **The PLO and the International Conference**

- Stoian said that the Romanians paid attention to the statements made in Israel, according to which Israel would be ready to talk 'with authentic Palestinian representatives'. From their talks with Palestinians and the PLO the Romanians had deduced that the PLO under its present leadership was the only authentic partner and that Egypt and Morocco held the same opinion. Ceaușescu, he said, highly regarded Peres's statement about the international forum (rather than the term 'conference'). But if Israel would accept the idea of an international conference, 'it would be a tremendous achievement of the National Unity Government on the way to peace'.
- Peres reacted by saying that the PLO itself was creating its own problems and that it comprises factions against Israel. Although it represents the Palestinians, it does not stand for policy. This is like believing in Mohammed but not in Allah. The PLO is constantly occupied with preventing its own dissolution.

An international conference, he noted, could assist only in accompanying but not determining a course. We will not accept any dictates. The USA, UK, and France maintain relations with the two conflicting sides. This is not so for China and the USSR. He added that patronage by the UN, that passed the resolution equating Zionism with racism, would not be helpful. Thought should be given to the peace process in two stages: to create conditions for negotiations and to maintain negotiations without pre-conditions.

- Shamir reacted by saying that Ceaușescu is aware of the enhanced importance that Israel attributes to direct talks, as had been the case with Egypt. After that, there would be room for a conference that would confirm the results of the bilateral talks, but Israel would not be ready to regard it as a 'tribunal'. Our fear is that if an international conference be convened under present conditions (Syria's being equipped with Soviet arms, the non-compromising attitude of the PLO, and so on), it would be no more than an anti-Israel propaganda platform, without serving the cause of peace.

The ground should, therefore, be prepared and the conference held when the sides have reached a state of peace and are ready for a solution agreeable to both parties to the

negotiations. Israel is interested in holding discussions with Palestinian representatives but will not agree to conduct talks with the PLO nor to its participation in talks with a Jordanian —Palestinian delegation. ‘You see, we know that the PLO opposes making peace with us, so there is no justification for having it participate in an effort to achieve peace’.

- To Stoian's remark that in the Romanians' talks with the PLO leaders they say that they are for peace, Shamir replied that there is a big difference between what the PLO says and what it does.

Both Prime Minister Peres and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shamir, during their talks with Stoian, praised President Ceaușescu's involvement in the peace-making process in the region. Peres said that he greatly appreciated Ceaușescu's efforts towards reaching peace both in the Middle East and in the world at large as one of the outstanding leaders of our times and wished him continuation of his dynamic leadership in Romania. Shamir sufficed with expressing his deep appreciation to Ceaușescu for his unique contribution to peace in the Middle East.

Upon his return to Bucharest, on 9 August 1986, Stoian told me about the highlights of his talks in Israel which he defined as ‘most useful’. He said he came back ‘an optimist’ and that he was due to report to Ceaușescu that same day about his mission to Israel. He asked me to thank Prime Minister Peres and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shamir in his name for the friendly attitude they displayed towards him. The Romanian press published, in a sympathetic tone, the mere fact that the talks took place, noting their main topics without providing any details.

## **ARAFAT AT THE CELEBRATIONS OF THE ANTI-FASCIST REVOLUTION OF ROMANIA**

*August 23, the Day of the Anti-Fascist Revolution of Romania*, was solemnly marked as Romania's National Day (until the 1989 revolution), in which the great emphasis was given to praising the Romanian people's heroism in standing up against the Fascist regime that ruled Romania and against Nazi Germany, with which Romania's ruler Ion Antonescu attacked the USSR on 22 June 1941. From then on Romania's army fought together with the army of Nazi Germany until 23 August 1944, when King Mihai of Romania, together with representatives of the democratic parties still left in Romania, succeeded in capturing Antonescu and declared Romania's decision to join the Allied Forces in their war against Nazi Germany. Among historians the view was heard that the joining of Romania's Army with Allied Forces during the Second World War had shortened the period of the anti-Nazi War.

At the festive rally to mark 42 years of the revolution, held on 23 August 1986 at Bucharest's sport stadium, Arafat was placed in the centre of the honorary stage close to President Ceaușescu, with Prime Minister Dascalescu between them. No foreign VIP representative was present on the stage, not even the representatives of the Allied Forces that fought Nazi Germany. I was then present in the Diplomatic Corps section near the central stage. With me was Yitzhak Artzi and our wives. As the custom was in those days, representatives of the Romanian Foreign Ministry were seated among the Diplomatic Corps, so Marcel Dinu was next to me. Seeing Arafat placed in the centre of the stage, I expressed to Dinu my astonishment. I argued that placing him there is like desecrating the memory of the Jewish victims who had perished under the fascist authorities of Romania, and paying tribute to a man who is identified with the terrorist leadership against Israel and the Jewish world. This could be interpreted that Romania ignores

the memory of the Nazi victims and even legitimises terrorist acts condemned by her government as an inappropriate means for solving international conflicts.

Dinu argued that Arafat 'had imposed his visit on them at this time, and presumably, Ceaușescu did not have any alternative but to take him to this rally'. Dinu seemed to be very perplexed by this situation, although he had probably known beforehand of the intention to place Arafat on the stage. I told him that this incident would not pass unnoticed. In my heart, I hoped that public opinion in Israel would express its dismay. So it was. Several Israeli newspapers that reported this event, including the *Jerusalem Post*, sharply condemned it. This was a certain consolation as the Romanians were quite sensitive to what was published about them in the press.

At the State and RCP reception that President Ceaușescu and his wife Elena offered in honour of the day at the president's (formerly king's) palace, Arafat was again present next to Ceaușescu. When the head of protocol came to invite me to raise a toast with the president and his wife, I told him in the presence of foreign ambassadors, that I wouldn't be able to do so, due to the presence of the honorary guest next to them. I asked him to forward my greeting to the president and his wife, on the occasion of the National Day and to tell them my reason for not doing it personally. Several Western ambassadors joined me in refusing to toast the president including the Syrian ambassador (as I later learned) who expressed his anger at placing Arafat in the centre of the honorary stage. I wonder whether the head of protocol really transmitted my message to Ceaușescu. Still, I was content that some ambassadors joined me in my refusal.

When Yitzhak Artzi, deputy chairman of the Israel—Romanian League of Friendship, expressed his sorrow and astonishment at Arafat's presence, 'the man who had not and has not anything to do with this day' in the centre of the honorary stage at the Festive Rally to the under-secretary of state of the Romania Foreign Minister, Aurel Duma, to whom we both paid a visit a few days after the event, he explained the fact of Arafat's presence as 'due to the political dialogue that Ceaușescu stood for, attempting to broaden it between states and conflicting sides'.

I presumed that our sharp reaction would teach Ceaușescu a good lesson for the future. But this did not put an end to the exchange of views between us and the Romanians on this subject. About three weeks later I had a talk with Dinu at the Romanian Foreign Ministry. Shmuel Meïrom, our embassy counsellor, was present. I told him that I had come today to say goodbye to him on the occasion of my departure to Israel for a working visit, and I raised a few bilateral problems then on our agenda and wanted to hear his impressions from the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations held in Harare, where he had participated next to Foreign Minister Totu, in the capacity of guest country.

Dinu opened our talk by remarking that the reaction in Israel to Arafat's visit to Romania was sharp. He presumed that the reason was probably my reports from Bucharest. He tried to explain that Arafat had stayed on 21–22 August (in our previous conversation he argued that Arafat had imposed himself on Romania). It was, he said, only natural to his status to invite him to be present at the centre of the stage for VIPs. It was just a matter of courtesy and there was nothing new about it. Moreover, as a result of his visit to Bucharest a special Romanian emissary was sent to Prime Minister Shimon Peres (as I will relate in the continuation).

I explained to Dinu our sensitivity to Arafat, who in Israeli eyes embodies terror aiming to destroy us. As such it is natural that he is regarded in our minds somewhat like Hitler, and he does not achieve his aim only because of Israeli strength. Arafat had already visited Romania,

there was nothing new about it, but his placement in the centre of a stage for honoured guests, close to President Ceaușescu on a national day intended to mark the liberation from the Nazi yoke was astonishing and shocking against the background of the Jewish past and present, not only to myself and Artzi, who was present with us at this event, but also for other ambassadors present at the rally. Each nation has its sensitivity. The Romanians too are quite sensitive to national subjects of their own. Hence, I suggested and recommended him to take into account our sensitivity, exactly as the Romanians expect us to take theirs into account.

Dinu brought up the example of Egypt. We signed a peace agreement with Egypt after many years of hostility and the conclusion is that a day will come when we shall make peace with the PLO chaired by Arafat, who in Romania's view is interested in peace with Israel, whereas Israel does not assist him to achieve it and does not encourage the moderate current within the PLO, whom Arafat represents, to overcome its extreme wing.

Dinu pointed out Arafat's statement at the Non-Aligned Nations Conference in Harare, calling for an international conference to settle the Israeli—Arab conflict with the participation of Security Council members and interested parties, on the basis of UN resolutions, including 243 and 338. Dinu emphasized that it was the first time that Arafat referred publicly to Security Council Resolution 242 (without saying so he inferred that this came about because of Ceaușescu's influence).

I clarified the difference between Sadat and Arafat, since Arafat refuses to recognize our existence. True, Arafat referred to resolution 242, but he did not declare that he recognized it. I added that in the same statement that Dinu referred to, he called for the implementation of the 'right of return', which if implemented would lead to the abolishment of Israel's Jewish character and in the best of cases, to a bi-national state, if not to the destruction of the state. Dinu reacted by saying (as he had already said in the past) that the PLO's greatest mistake was that it did not declare its recognition of resolution 242, since if it had done so it would have confused and even split Israel. But, in any event, if we keep on holding one and a half million Arabs under our domination, we will gradually create a bi-national state.

I repeated what I had already told him once: the tragedy of the Palestinians is that they have always been dominated by an extreme leadership and that the bad service the countries of the world do for them, 'without intending to including Romania', is that they accorded the PLO political recognition before it committed itself to abolishing the Palestinian Covenant calling for Israel's disappearance. Thus, the PLO believes that it can achieve this goal. They have given a lot to the PLO without getting anything in return. No, there is no wonder that this organization does not move from its declared position and that the ideal circumstances have not yet been created on the basis of which Israel would start peace negotiations with the PLO. Had those countries conditioned their recognition of the PLO by its recognition of Israel's right to exist, it may well be that they would have better served the Palestinian cause. But the damage has been done, and the losers are the Palestinians.

I was wondering, in my mind, for what purpose did Ceaușescu provoke us and world Jewry, by placing Arafat close to him on the stage for distinguished persons? From Arafat's point of view his intention to be placed there was quite clear, to enjoy additional legitimization of his status and the organization which he heads. But Ceaușescu?

It seemed to me then that Ceaușescu might have had reasons, in order to accord Arafat status as a *persona grata* in the international arena, encouraging him to behave as an enlightened leader

and not as one of a terrorist organization; also to show Arafat that he too could reach a state status if he would only recognize Israel's right to exist, and choose the path of political negotiation for peace; and to hint to Israel that he would not have done it if he were not convinced that Arafat was aspiring to peace; this would encourage the moderate current within the PLO, led by Arafat who stood out for a peaceful settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict.

If it were not for these considerations that Ceaușescu presumably took into account, it is most probable that Ceaușescu would not have accepted the visit of Arafat on that date, even if Arafat had imposed himself upon him then, according to Dinu's first version.

## **FIRST VISIT OF CONSTANTIN MITEA TO ISRAEL ON PRESIDENT CEAUȘESCU'S MISSION**

*On 24 August 1986*, a short while after my return to our residence in Bucharest, after the president's reception on the occasion of the Romanian National Day, 23 August, held at the Presidential Palace, I was urgently summoned to Foreign Minister Văduvă that same night (23 August). It was nearly midnight, so this was quite a dramatic, exceptional occurrence. The minister's driver came to pick me up. The immediate thought that sprang to mind was my harsh reaction to Dinu at the festive rally at the 23 August Stadium in Bucharest, upon seeing Arafat on the central dignitaries' stage and my polite refusal to the invitation of the Chief of Protocol to raise a toast with Ceaușescu with Arafat standing next to him at the gala reception held that evening at the Presidential Palace. I expected to be called to order, as was the local custom, because I had deviated from my diplomatic function by criticizing the status bestowed upon Arafat on the Day of the Anti-Fascist Revolution.

With mixed feelings I rode to the MFA and prepared myself to have an appropriate speech should I be attacked. At the entrance to the MFA the chief of protocol welcomed me in a friendly manner and led me directly to the foreign minister who appeared to me tired and tense. To my question about the good news he wanted to share with me at this late hour on their National Day, he opened with an apology and answered that he had invited me on behalf of President Ceaușescu, who wished to send his special emissary for an urgent talk with Prime Minister Peres.

Văduvă had assumed his function as foreign minister two months earlier. In contrast to his predecessor, Ștefan Andrei, he lacked experience in foreign policy affairs. He had been brought in to this function from his academic activities in economics. Văduvă was polite and refined, but lacked self-confidence. I had the impression that he was frightened of Ceaușescu. Perhaps for this reason, he did not volunteer to supply information beyond the necessary limits in his talks with foreign ambassadors. He read out his sentences from a written text, probably for fear that he might not quote things in their precise order.

In presenting his request he avoided mentioning the name of the emissary as well as the topic of the requested talk. When I inquired if I might know what the subject was, since I would probably be asked, 'What does the emissary wish to talk about with the prime minister?' The unwilling reply was 'on Middle East matters'. Contrary to previous cases, this time Văduvă asked me to keep this mission secret, hinting that even the Romanian ambassador in Israel was not in the picture.

The matter seemed mysterious to me. Moreover, I realised that there was no connection

between my being urgently summoned to him and my criticism of Romanian behaviour that day. Hence I presumed that there must have been an issue for conveying a pressing message connected with Ceaușescu's talks with Arafat over the previous two days. The joint statement published the following day, 24 August, again reiterated the known positions of the two sides in the Israeli—Arab conflict. One could discern no new elements in it.

The emissary, who turned out to be Constantin Mitea, the president's adviser, left for Israel the next day and was received the same day by Prime Minister Peres. This time it did turn out that there were some new elements in Ceaușescu's campaign to convince Israel of Arafat's moderation and his willingness to open peace negotiations with Israel. It also became clear that the urgency for transmitting Ceaușescu's message to Peres derived from Arafat's forthcoming address at the Non-Aligned Nations Conference scheduled for the beginning of September 1986 in Harare.

It seemed Arafat said that he intended to publish soon an open declaration on the PLO's last resolution to hasten the peace-making process in the Middle East and the settlement of the Palestinian problem. In this connection Arafat requested to pass on to Israel's government the contents of the proposed declaration, whose main points were:

1. The PLO declares that it is publicly committed to the convening of an international conference to settle the problems of the Middle East and the Palestinian problem.
2. Participating in this conference will be the PLO, as the only representative of the Palestinian people, all interested Arab countries, and Israel.
3. The conference will take place under the patronage of the UN, the five permanent members of the Security Council, and other non-Arab interested countries.
4. For the sake of better preparation for the international conference, the PLO proposes setting up an advance dialogue committee with the participation of the interested Arab states and, on the other side, Israel.
5. The PLO proposes that this preparatory committee discusses: the composition of the participants at the international conference; the determination of the agenda; and establishing the modalities of the conference.

In order to prepare the conference, Arafat and the PLO suggested that within the framework of the preparatory committee, direct talks would be held between the PLO and the government of Israel. According to Ceaușescu, this was a new element he regarded positively, stressing that before the preparations for the committee and towards the international conference, a dialogue and direct talks take place between Israel and the PLO. Another new element was that the PLO is about to declare that Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 could be the basis for settling the Middle East problem as well as the Palestinian one.

The proposed declaration outlined additional points for the designated process. First, the PLO has decided to include in the preparatory committee, and in the international conference Palestinian personalities from the territories administered by Israel. Also, the resolutions and solutions accepted by the international conference will enjoy UN guarantees. Finally, the PLO will include in the said declaration the presumption that adequate conditions exist for finding a comprehensive settlement for the Middle East and a just solution to the Palestinian problem.

So far the text of the proposed declaration. Mitea then added that in President Ceaușescu's



view, publication of the declaration will be a step forward opening new possibilities for settling the Israeli—Arab conflict. Therefore the president hopes that the prime minister will consider the new proposals in a positive spirit and that Israel's favourable response would constitute a beginning for peace in the Middle East. The president does not think that it is a simple, easy matter to settle. But attention should be paid to some of the points in the planned declaration and considered seriously, since the matter could lead to direct talks.

Answering the prime minister's questions towards further clarification, the emissary said that Arafat did not promise to put an end to terror, he only suggested conducting direct talks. But the president believed that during the negotiations acts of terror would cease, and that resolutions 242 and 338 would be the basis for negotiations. Jordan was not being ignored (in the declaration). Certainly it would participate within the frame of Arab states. The Palestinians wished to participate in the negotiations within a joint Jordanian—Palestinian delegation, but if cooperation with Jordan would not be achieved, then the PLO could be ready to enter negotiations without it.

In expressing his appreciation to President Ceaușescu for his profound commitment to the cause of peace in the Middle East, Peres promised the emissary that he would consider the matter well and would give his answer to President Ceaușescu after having consulted the members of the government. But he repeatedly emphasized his reservations about an international conference and Israel's refusal to negotiate with the PLO as long as it did not abandon terrorism.

Present at this talk were a translator who accompanied the emissary, Yossi Beilin, secretary of the government, and the deputy director of the East European Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Zvi Ravner.

Two weeks later, several days after the closure of the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Harare, Prime Minister Peres sent his answer, through me, to President Ceaușescu. In it he emphasized that:

Our efforts must be focused on the need to fulfill the conditions that will allow direct negotiations, with no pre-conditions. Here, unequivocal adherence to two principles seems mandatory if participants are to share a common denominator without which negotiations cannot be launched: first, the unconditional acceptance of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, with no linkage to any other UN resolution or qualified in any other way. This principle has been adhered to by Israel as well as by its immediate neighbouring states. Second, the equally unqualified and unconditional renouncing of violence and terrorism.

These two principles were also accepted by President Ceaușescu. Adherence to Security Council Resolution 242 included recognition of Israel's existence 'within secure and recognized boundaries', whereas the rejection of terrorism was interpreted as choosing the way of peaceful negotiations. Hence, as long as these principles were not adopted by Arafat, there was no sense in discussing modalities within a preparatory committee.

## **THE PLO AND THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, AS ANALYSED BY ROMANIAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER POP**

*On 5 November 1986, Yehuda Horam, the director of the East European Department of the MFA in Jerusalem and I met with Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Pop in Bucharest. Our talk focused in part on Israel—Romania relations which seemed to be developing then in various*

directions and partly on Middle East subjects. Here are some of his answers to our assessments:



[1. Dr Yosef Govrin presents his credentials as Israel's Ambassador to Romania to President Nicolae Ceaușescu in Bucharest on 11 September 1955.](#)



[2. \(Left to right\) President Ceaușescu, Ambassador Govrin, Prime Minister Shamir and Minister Roni Milo; taken during Mr Shamir's state visit to Romania, 19 August 1987.](#)



[3. 'Simhat Tora' in the Coral Synagogue in Bucharest, October 1985. \(Left to right\) Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen, Ambassador Govrin, Emil Schechter, General Secretary of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, and Ing. Theodor Blumenfeld, President of the Jewish Community of Bucharest.](#)



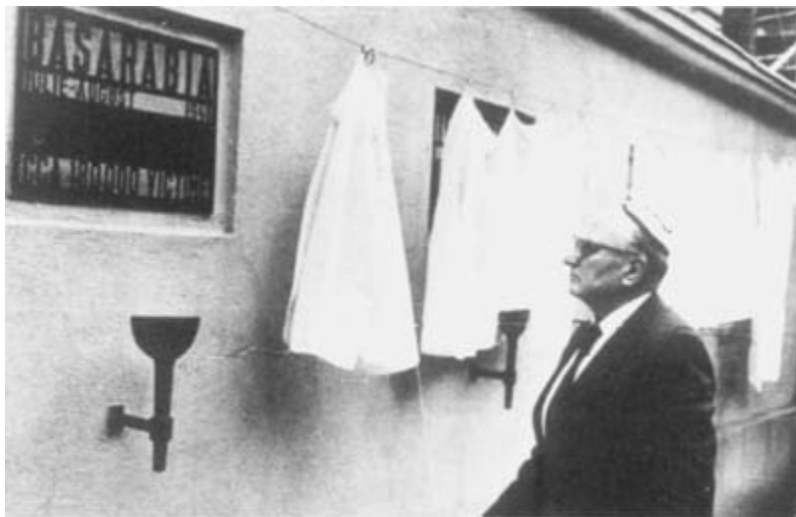
[4. The Sephardic Synagogue in Bucharest before being demolished in August 1986.](#)



[5. The monument of remembrance for the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina, Transylvania, Bucharest, Iasi and Dorohoi who perished in the Holocaust. It was erected in front of the Coral Synagogue in Bucharest in early July 1991.](#)



6. [A close-up of the monument of remembrance in front of the Coral Synagogue, Bucharest, showing the dedication — in Hebrew — to those Jews who perished in the Holocaust in Romania and Transylvania.](#)



7. [Ambassador Govrin as the Deputy Director General of Israel's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, unveils the memorial shield in the Coral Synagogue, Bucharest, in July 1991, which is dedicated to the Jews of Bessarabia who perished during the Holocaust during 1941–44.](#)



[8. Ambassador Govrin welcomes President Ceaușescu to the Israeli Pavilion at the International Fair held in Bucharest in October 1987.](#)





9. Ambassador Govrin opening the Israeli exhibition entitled 'Flora and Fauna' at the Romanian Institute for Relations with Foreign Countries in Bucharest on 3 May 1987. To Govrin's right is Dr Hanna Govrin, wife to the Ambassador, Shmuel Meïrom, the Embassy's Counsellor, and Shlomo Barkai, the Embassy's First Secretary. To Govrin's left is Ion Botar, Chairman of the Institute, and Ion Mielcioiu, Director of the Asian and Middle Eastern Department of Romania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## **45 YEARS SINCE THE DEPORTATION TO TRANSNISTRIA**

On October 16, a divine service was held at the Choral Temple in Bucharest to commemorate 45 years since the deportation of Jews from Bukovina and Bessarabia to Transnistria.

The service was conducted by the Chief Rabbi of Mosaic Law, Dr Moses Rosen. Prayers were recited by cantors. A. Jukovschi and W. Harnik accompanied by the Temple's choir under conductor I. Ledeanu.

The Shira Vezimra choir of Talmud Torah students, conducted by I. Gott, performed the impressive songs “s brent” (“Our Town's on Fire”) by Mordecai Gebirtig, “Gesher tzar meod” (“This world is a narrow bridge and the thing is to have no fear”) — the song of Rabbi Nachman of Breslau, “The Song of Jewish Partisans”, and, at the end, “Ani maamin” (“I am confident that the Messiah will come”).

The Chief Rabbi delivered a moving commemorative sermon on the immense tragedy of the 150,000 Jews who were shot dead or perished from cold, disease or famine in Transnistria.

Attending the ceremony were the Israeli Ambassador, Dr Yosef Govrin, the US Ambassador, Mr Roger Kirk, and the Director of the Department of Religious Affairs, Mr Leon Toader.

May the memory of our dear martyrs be blessed for ever !

### [10. Clipping from the Journal of the Romanian Jews, \*Revista Cultului Mozaic\*, 1 November 1986.](#)

It would have been absurd if someone had thought that a country could disappear from the world map, despite what is written in the Palestinian Covenant or somewhere else. Romania will support Israel's right for an independent existence as a sovereign national country. Romania, too, wishes that its independent and national existence be respected. Exactly as Israel is isolated in the Middle East, so does Romania constitute a Latin island in the Slavic sea. The president understands well that Israel must defend its independence under conditions different from those of Romania. However, he felt he must note that the Palestinians have a right to the existence of a state of their own, so the conclusion is that as long as the Palestinian problem is unresolved a permanent peace in the Middle East would not be achieved.

The PLO is a Palestinian creation. True, it is split and divided internally reflecting the situation in the Arab world and the pressure put upon it from various parts of the world. In the PLO's approach and thought, certain political processes can be discerned in the direction of moderation. PLO leader Arafat agrees to conduct a dialogue with Israel, within the frame of an international conference, and adheres to the idea of settling the conflict by peaceful means. For that reason, Romania supported the PLO-Jordanian agreement.<sup>16</sup>

The PLO is recognized by the majority of states and the UN, where it is represented, and

Israel is seated together with it there. There is no other Arafat. If the PLO had another leader, we would talk to him. Arafat's removal could introduce extreme forces into the PLO leadership which would strive to take up means other than peaceful ones.

In President Ceaușescu's talks with Arafat, Kaddoumi, and the chairman of the Palestinian National Council, he pressured them to accept Security Council Resolution 242. The Romanians understand that within the PLO there are factions for and against this resolution; perhaps Arafat has not yet acquired sufficient power to take a step forward [to accept this resolution]. For this reason, he should be encouraged [in this direction]. In the meantime, time is lost. (Referring to this remark, I noted that the moment the Palestinians try to raise a moderate leader from within, one who would be ready to negotiate directly with Israel while accepting its right to exist, he would be killed. The great irony is that the Arab world continues to discuss whether or not to accept Security Council Resolution 242—19 years after it had been passed.)

The arms race in the Middle East goes on. Any flare-up in this region could lead to a war of catastrophic dimensions. It is not to Israel's advantage that others (i.e., superpowers) should resolve its problems. For that reason, President Ceaușescu proposed in 1978 to call an international conference — he was the father of this idea — under UN patronage, where the conflicting sides would be able to sit together and negotiate between themselves, even if they had not recognized each other's existence before then.

It is important that the USSR take part in the international conference. Each superpower separately would not be able to settle the conflict. It is known that Israel claims it would be isolated among the Security Council members, under whose patronage the conference would take place, in the absence of relations between Israel and the USSR and China. But 'how could Israel be isolated, if it maintains close relations with the USA, Britain, and France, which are also permanent members of the Security Council?' Perhaps there are other ways to settle the conflict, but even then there would be no alternative but to have the USSR and Syria participate in them.

To Horam's question as to the essence of Romania's activity in the Arab capitals (the visit of the RCP Central Committee delegation to Syria, Jordan, and Egypt at the beginning of September 1986), Pop answered:

The subjects which Stoian dealt with in Israel are also being treated by the delegation in Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. Of course, with each of them from their own special characteristic angle. In Syria, the possibility was discussed of participating in resolving the problem in Lebanon; in Jordan, the refusal to cooperate with the PLO; regarding Egypt, it was found that the situation was the best towards Israel. The details of the talks are not yet known. (When they become known, he will be glad to share them with me.)

This conversation was held, as usual, in a friendly atmosphere. From the Romanian point of view, it reflected Romania's substantial position on the peace-making process in the Middle East. It also attested to the extent of Romania's involvement in this process. Ion Mielcioiu, acting director of the Department for Asia and the Middle East, was also present. A short time afterwards, he was nominated to be director of the department, succeeding Marcel Dinu, who was appointed Romania's ambassador to Bonn.

## **MEETING BETWEEN DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER SHAMIR AND ROMANIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER, IOAN TOTU**

Văduvă acted as Romanian foreign minister for only a short period. At the end of August 1986 he was nominated minister for foreign trade. As foreign minister he was replaced by Ioan Totu, an economist and member of the Politburo, who had been serving as deputy prime minister and head of Romania's Mission to CEMA (the East European Common Market, with its seat in Warsaw). Although known as a tough man lacking experience in Romania's foreign policy, good working relations developed between us. The door to his office was always open to me.

Meetings between foreign ministers of Romania with their Israeli colleagues while attending the opening of the UN General Assembly had already become a long-standing tradition, particularly after the Six-Day War, when our diplomatic relations with the other East European states were cut off. For us it was quite important to cultivate our relations at this level with the single country of the communist bloc that had maintained continuous relations with Israel. For the Romanians, too, it was important to keep on having such meetings with us, since they demonstrated Romania's activity in the international arena and its political capability to maintain talks with representatives of conflicting states in an effort to bridge their contradicting positions.

*On 29 September 1986*, the Shamir-Totu meeting, at the UN in New York, was the first held between them (a year earlier Shamir had met with Totu's predecessor, Stefan Andrei) and, as usual, corresponded to the interests of both partners. For Israel it was always a good opportunity to raise questions related to our mutual relations, including the issue of *aliyah* (immigration to Israel), the securing of the well being of Romania's Jewish community, and clarification of our positions on the Israeli—Arab conflict, in which Romania revealed a great deal of activity.

After Totu noted, at the beginning of his talk with Shamir, his satisfaction with the development of Israel—Romania relations, the conversation between the two focused on the Middle East issue. Totu recalled that when he attended the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Harare, he had listened to the speeches, including Arafat's. He noticed that Arafat sided with Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, 'but his interpretation is surely different from yours. This is why we wish to hear from Shamir what Israel's position is'.

Shamir replied, 'Our position totally negates the PLO and the person leading it. Their aim is to destroy the State of Israel physically, politically, and economically. Therefore, we shall fight them to the end. We are aware of the good relations between Romania and the PLO and its leader's visit to Bucharest. Recently Abu Ayad stated that the military cooperation between Romania and the PLO is growing and becoming stronger. What does military cooperation mean? Is it Romania's intention to support terror against Israel and against the Jews?'

Totu completely denied the news item about such cooperation between Romania and the PLO, 'This is a defamation by our enemies, we do not support terror'.

Shamir said that he was happy to hear there was no military cooperation between the two and that he intended to publicise this. Bringing this topic to a close, Shamir noted, 'We are ready to negotiate with our neighbours but not with the PLO. We know them better than you do, and we will not make them a partner to a peace settlement.'<sup>17</sup>

Totu thanked him for the explanation, and both expressed their hope to meet again soon.

Participating in this talk, on our side, were the ambassador to the USA, Dr M. Rosenne; the ambassador to the UN, Benjamin Netanyahu; head of the prime minister's office, Yossi Ben-Aharon; and the press counsellor to Shamir, Avi Pazner.

Although this dialogue did not contain many new elements it could still reveal two unique characteristics of our Romanian interlocutors: first and substantial, the Romanian intention was to locate differences of emphasis and manners in the statements made by Israeli representatives when they were referring to the same issue. (Arafat's declaration at the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Harare was made after my talk with Dinu on this subject and after the answer Peres gave to President Ceaușescu's emissary to Israel.) Second, a tactical element, Romania's aim was to avoid polemical discussions with Israel, to listen to what we had to say and be regarded by us as mediators rather than holders of a position that appeared to contradict Israel's or run parallel to those of our enemies. For this reason, these dialogues at the ministerial level, more than those at the diplomatic level at the MFA in Bucharest, may have seemed to be naive.

No doubt these talks, including ours in Bucharest, were reported literally to Ceaușescu, who most probably looked for differences in emphasis, searching for a break in continuity of the dialogue between Israel and the Romanians, between them and our adversaries.

### **MEETING OF A MAPAM—RAKAH DELEGATION WITH A PLO DELEGATION IN ROMANIA**

*At the end of October 1986*, it became known that a joint Israeli delegation of Mapam (United Workers Party) and Rakah (Communist Party) members intended to visit Romania to meet a PLO delegation at the Romanian resort town of Mamaia, near Constanța. The Romanian authorities secretly organized these contacts between Israelis and the PLO people, prohibited by Israeli law. The Israeli press reported that Ceaușescu himself gave his patronage to the meeting at the request of both sides.<sup>18</sup> Although the MFA officials in Bucharest told me that no representatives of the Romanian authorities were present at the talks, it was clear that they provided the place the talks were held, hosted them and even organized a press conference for them. The trip aroused the amazement of the Israeli public, the cabinet ministers, and particularly Prime Minister Shamir<sup>19</sup> who regarded it as Romanian interference in a public discussion waged in Israel about the law prohibiting contacts between Israeli citizens and PLO representatives. The matter was raised for discussion in the Knesset and the majority of its members, including those from the Zionist left, expressed their resentment at the delegation's trip to Romania.<sup>20</sup>

I discussed the matter first with the new director of the Department for Asian and Middle East Affairs at the Romanian MFA, Mielcioiu, and afterwards with Deputy Foreign Minister Pop, in the presence of the department's director. I addressed the illegality of this meeting from Israel's point of view, and I quoted the expression of a critic in Israel, saying that the Mapam—Rakah delegation had no authority to conduct talks with PLO representatives. I also cited the statement made by the government's legal adviser, Yosef Harish, that upon its return to Israel, he would call for the opening of a police investigation against the delegation's members, which was interpreted as a warning that they would stand trial should they be found in violation of Israel's law.<sup>21</sup> In addition, I noted the presumption that Romania's involvement in this issue might be taken in Israel as an unfriendly act toward us, challenging the validity of our laws.

Pop, probably aware of the noise this caused in Israel, replied that the Romanian MFA did not

know of the meeting, before it was made public. (I presumed it was Stoian who had organized the meeting.) The meeting was not held under the patronage of Romania's government. It also did not pay for the flight tickets of the Israeli participants as had been (incorrectly) reported in the Israeli press (meaning, the RCP, perhaps?). He said that Romania gives its consent to such a meeting on its territory, on the condition that it would not endanger its security. (I asked him, what if such a meeting is detrimental to the interests of a country with which Romania maintains friendly relations?) Israel's law prohibiting contacts with the PLO is an internal Israeli matter, he replied. Romania rejects the argument that she was involved or encouraging Israelis to act contrary to Israeli laws. The event was not organized by the Romanian authorities, so there is no room for grievance on our part.

Pop made the point that from the moment that Israel permitted the delegation's members to leave for Romania, there was no hindrance on the part of Romania to permit their entrance to Romania 'to meet whomever they want'. The meeting was not against Israel and had no anti-Israeli character. In Romania's view, Israel should have welcomed it as one of the means for deepening understanding between Israel and the Palestinians. The government of Israel has shown that it favours conducting a dialogue with Palestinians, therefore they (Ceașescu?) regard it as a continuation of the Peres—Hassan dialogue. It should not come as a surprise to anyone that the meeting took place on Romanian territory, since Romania has come out in favour of Israeli—Palestinian cooperation aimed at preventing war and the settlement of the conflict between them through talks. This is why, it finds no harm in having this meeting held in a quiet atmosphere 'between people of science, culture, writers, and journalists'.

I expressed my astonishment at the lack of sensitivity towards Israel demonstrated by the Romanian authorities on subjects connected to the PLO and to its negative image among the Israeli public created as a result of it. Upon my leaving his office, Pop asked me to exert my influence in reducing dramatisation of the event. I said that it has already happened in consequence of the organization of the meeting and that no one in Israel would believe that such a gathering could take place without being arranged for by the Romanian authorities, including the press conference that took place in its honour.

The weekly *Lumea*, considered to be the organ of Romania's foreign policy, surveyed the meeting in its 13 November 1986 issue, in an article signed by Craciun Ionescu, noting *inter alia* that in the 'Palestinian Declaration' distributed to representatives of the Romanian press that attended the meeting, it said:

According to the resolutions of the National Palestinian Council accepted by innumerable conventions, regarding the positive dialogue with Jewish democratic forces that recognize the PLO as the only legal representative of the Palestinian people as well as its inalienable national rights and that believe in the struggle for a just and lasting peace based on the right of the Palestinian people for self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, a meeting was held in Romania with the participation of active personalities from Israel, for the cause of peace, with some Palestinian leaders and officials...

The meeting was an undeniable success and an outstanding confirmation of the policy of talks in search for solutions by conducting dialogues, by direct contacts out of mutual respect. In this respect many of the participants sided in the course of their talks at the meeting, with the idea of organizing an international conference on Middle East issues with

the participation of all interested parties, including the PLO and Israel.

The author of this article mentioned the participants' speeches praising Romania's Middle East policy, concluding that the meeting proved that the possibility existed for a dialogue between the sides in conflict in their search for solutions to disputed issues through political talks between them.

Reality was less rosy than described by Craciun Ionescu. Advocate Amnon Zichrony who accompanied the delegation from Israel took care not to violate Israeli law and as a result no mutual debate was held with the two delegations as attested by some members of the delegation upon their return to Israel.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the two groups did not publish a joint statement — the Israeli representatives in fear that it would serve as material evidence against them for having violated the Israeli law and the Palestinians presumably fearing the extremists in their organization who had sharply opposed their participation in the meeting from the outset.<sup>23</sup> It is against this background that one should see the Romanian report on the meeting, choosing to underscore the common ideas instead of the divisive ones. The reporting, of course, leaned in one direction, presenting the meeting as an achievement, whereas in reality it was considered a failure. I summed up my assessment of the meeting in a message I sent to the MFA in Jerusalem in three main points:

1. No doubt that the meetings backdrop was Romania's effort to play an active role in the international arena in general and in the Middle East in particular, trying to bridge the gap between the stubborn positions of both sides. To this should be added Romania's growing tendency in the last few months to strengthen the PLO status in general, and more specifically that of Arafat. This meeting, however, would not have taken place were it not for the consent of the conflicting parties.
2. It should not be discounted that, in this context, the Romanians wanted to help the representatives of both sides violate the Israeli law prohibiting contacts with the PLO, presenting it as an absurd law running contrary to the needs of reality and as an obstacle on the way to direct talks.
3. The main trend in Romania's propaganda would be to prove that a dialogue between the conflicting sides is possible and desirable, as the only alternative on the road to peace between them.

If we are to judge by the reports of some members of the delegation to our press<sup>24</sup> upon their return from Romania, nothing practical was achieved. The PLO leaders who promised to come to the meeting did not turn up, while those who did come were frightened of what would be said about them when they returned from Romania. On the pivotal issue the PLO continued, as it had in the past, to avoid recognizing Israel's right to exist. Yet, the meeting did succeed in inserting a wedge into the camp of Israel's left, even within Mapam itself, in reference to the matter of whether they should side with the existing law banning contacts with the PLO or would it be possible to violate it in the name of the supreme interest of making peace between us and our neighbours by political means. But the meeting produced a sharp confrontation between the members of the Leftist delegation and the legal authorities of the state. Upon their return to Israel members of the delegation were investigated. Charge sheets were submitted against them.

Ceaușescu was very angry about it. A reliable source told me that when American Deputy Secretary of State John Whitehead visited Bucharest on 14–15 November 1986, Ceaușescu told

him, among other things: ‘The USA should push for the convening of an international conference on the settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict. The present PLO leadership is the most moderate one’. Referring to the meeting of Israel's Left parties with PLO representatives at Mamaia, Ceaușescu stressed that it was possible to conduct a dialogue with opposing sides and asked, ‘How is it possible to advance towards peace, if conflicting sides avoid speaking to each other?’ He added, ‘Instead of welcoming the return of the Israeli delegation from Romania, the government of Israel is trying to put them in jail’. Similar statements were made by Ceaușescu to Dr Theodore Klein, president of French Jewry's CRIF beginning July 1987 and to Granot and Zaban of Mapam, at the end of July 1987 when visiting Bucharest, against the background of the trial held in Israel of the leaders of the Israeli delegation to the meetings with the PLO representatives in Mamaia.

From the point of view of the Israel—Romania dialogue on the Israeli—Arab conflict, the meeting damaged Romania's credibility in Israeli eyes. The Romanians were severely criticized in Israel (even directly Ceaușescu, who according to a press report gave his patronage to the meeting), including Granot and Zaban during their visit in Bucharest.<sup>25</sup> Although the political dialogue between me and Romanian authorities in Bucharest did not come to a halt because of this meeting, at the level of Romania's president and Israel's Prime Minister Shamir, it was renewed only after half a year, at Ceaușescu's initiative when he asked me, through Foreign Minister Totu, on 8 May 1987 to pass on a message to Shamir ‘to consider his position once more’ concerning the need to prepare an international conference, ‘being the only possible way to reach a political solution to the Middle East conflict’. The message did not include any new element that we had not been aware of before. It seemed that it was important for Ceaușescu to return to the dialogue more than to include new content.

### **THE PLO, SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 242, AND THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR CONVENING THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

On 6 June 1987, at the end of Arafat's visit to Bucharest (5–6 June 1987), a joint statement was published concluding the talks he held with President Ceaușescu. Romania's leadership attributed important political significance to the joint statement. At Foreign Minister Totu's request it was distributed by the Security Council on 15 June 1987 as an official UN document. At the same time, Totu passed it on to me, through his deputy Pop, asking me to forward it to Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Peres, with an accompanying letter in which he repeated the principles of Romania's policy toward the Israeli—Arab conflict, drawing his attention to the new elements in the joint statement aimed at demonstrating the PLO's flexibility in removing obstacles on the road to settling the conflict. It contained, *inter alia*, three calls, which until then had not been included in the Ceaușescu-Arafat joint statement.

Both leaders underscored the idea that the international conference as well as any solution to the Middle East problem should be based on all UN resolutions concerning Palestine and Middle East issues, including Security Council Resolution 242 and the guaranteeing of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and to the creation of an independent state.

They called for the convening of an international conference... stressing the need to set up a preparatory committee in advance of it composed of representatives of the Arab states, the PLO, and Israel as well as the permanent members of the Security Council.



They firmly declared that a just settlement of the Middle East problem and the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the region should be based on Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, the settlement of the problem of the Palestinian people through recognition of its right to self-determination, including setting up its own independent Palestinian state and the guaranteed integrity, sovereignty, and security of all states in the region.

In handing over the letter to me, Pop remarked that President Ceaușescu invested great effort and consequently succeeded in convincing Yasser Arafat in the frame of the joint statement (published 6 June 1987) to accept a number of ideas 'which we regard as essential', toward the convening of an international conference under UN patronage and in general toward finding solutions that should lead to a political and global settlement in the region.

Arafat agreed that the UN resolutions on the Middle East should serve as a basis for finding a solution, including Security Council Resolution 242. 'This is the first time', Pop emphasized, 'that President Arafat agrees and accepts Resolution 242, though he had already referred to it, generally, at the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Harare'.

In the joint statement was a paragraph stating that the settlement to be achieved in solving the conflict should insure the integrity, sovereignty, and security of all countries in the region. 'We understand by that', he stressed, 'that Arafat has recognized, implicitly, the existence of the State of Israel, which is a great achievement in this sense, for the cause of the Middle East...and we presume that this paragraph removes the major stumbling block that until now had barred the convening of an international conference'.

Israel and the PLO are suggested alike to be members of the preparatory committee. 'This, too', he added, 'is a new element that has never appeared in a joint statement signed by Arafat. We are all pleased by the work that has been done. Important steps have accordingly been taken which will lead to a peaceful solution of the conflict.'

Finally he said, 'rest assured that President Ceaușescu has struggled and will continue to do so to find ways to lead to a just and lasting peace...Romania's interest in peace in the Middle East stems from the fact that this region is located in the vicinity of our country, and every military confrontation might escalate into a world war.' (Here he raised the example of the Persian Gulf escalation. Ceaușescu, he said, had long warned that this war might expand and involve the superpowers.)

His observations culminated with him informing me that he would also invite the ambassadors of the USA, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Morocco to present the joint statement together with the Foreign Minister's letter addressed to them, containing the same text.

I reacted in short by remarking that we have always appreciated President Ceaușescu's efforts to bridge the gap between the sides in the dispute, aiming at making peace between them. Past experience, however, has shown that there is a wide gap between Arafat's words and his deeds and that only the future would show if there were really grounds for the optimism of Romania's leadership.

Transmitting the letter (with the joint statement) to Jerusalem, I repeated my previous comments that Ceaușescu's political and information campaign was intended to demonstrate his capability to act and manoeuvre for the peace-making process in the area, thanks to his relations with the conflicting sides and his advantage, in comparison to his neighbours in the East European bloc, was in achieving what they had not been able to, considering the role that he had

played in the initiation of Israeli—Egyptian peace talks, his positive attitude towards the Camp David accords and to our relations with Romania. I recommended to Peres to answer the letter even though he was not obliged to. Indeed, a few days later, I was requested to convey his thanks for it and say that ‘it was read with great interest’.

## **VISIT OF PRIME MINISTER YITZHAK SHAMIR TO ROMANIA, 18–21 AUGUST 1987**

On 30 July 1987 I was summoned to Foreign Minister Totu where I was requested to pass on the invitation by President Ceaușescu and Prime Minister Dascalescu to Prime Minister Shamir to pay an official visit to Romania, ‘if possible before 23 August 1987’ (commemorated as the Day of the Anti-Fascist Revolution). Shamir accepted the invitation happily and during the weeks prior to the visit I held innumerable meetings with Foreign Minister Totu himself, discussing the details of the programme, showing the importance attributed to it by Romania's leadership. I presumed, and indeed my assumption turned out to be true, that from Romania's point of view, there were two main objects for the visit. The first was to give new impetus to the development of Israel—Romania relations in the fields of economy and technology, and the second aimed at influencing Shamir to abandon his resentment toward an international conference for the settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict, following the PLO's indications of moderation that Romania had broadcast to Israel.

The Shamir—Ceaușescu talks, over the course of their three meetings, were held in a very pleasant atmosphere. Towards each of them we held long preparatory talks between ourselves. Shamir, as either Prime Minister or Foreign Minister — was also receptive of my assessments for the MFA and to those of my colleagues in the ministry. I always enjoyed our close cooperation and the confidence and appreciation he displayed towards me, even though ideologically I did not belong to his camp. Our talks were always held in a congenial atmosphere. Each time I came on a short visit to Israel, he asked to see me to update himself on political and bilateral subjects then on the agenda of Israeli relations with Romania in particular and with East European countries in general. This is the way he behaved to all the other ambassadors, too, in our foreign service. It was an exceptional phenomenon very much appreciated among our colleagues in the MFA.

The discussion with Ceaușescu concentrated on the way to settle the Israeli—Arab conflict. Both presented their views frankly. Ceaușescu surprised us by his long presentation and impressed us by his efforts to convince Shamir of his justified attitude, according to which Israel has no alternative in the peace-making process but to conduct direct talks with the PLO in view of its readiness to accept a political compromise through negotiations at an international conference ‘which would not force its will upon the sides to the dispute in the course of the talks between them, but would provide them international patronage, and if they themselves would ask for it, also an international seal to insure the conclusions reached between them’.

Participating in the talks in Prime Minister Shamir's group were myself, as Israel's ambassador to Romania; Deputy Minister Ronny Milo; director general of the prime minister's office, Yossi Ben-Aharon; and the political assistant to the prime minister, Arye Mekel. (The full Israeli delegation included, in addition, Avi Pazner, communications counsellor to Shamir, and his military secretary, Brigadier General Azriel Nevo.) On Ceaușescu's side those taking part in the talks were Iulian Bituleanu, Romania's ambassador to Israel; Constantin Mitea, counsellor to the

president; and Deputy Foreign Minister Pop.

Shamir began by saying that the establishment of peace in the region is Israel's main aspiration. In this context he expressed his appreciation to Ceaușescu for his efforts in this direction. We all would have liked to see the success of his work for peace in the world and in our area. His contribution to the Israeli—Egyptian peace would be remembered. Yet, when the Camp David accords were achieved, Israel had in mind not only Egypt. They were considered a first step. We hoped that the next step would be a peace agreement with all our neighbours. In practical terms, the next candidate should have been Jordan. Among all of Israel's neighbours, it is Jordan that shares the longest border with Israel. There are problems in common, and Israel believes that there is room to maintain a permanent peace between the two of us...Should Jordan offer peace proposals, Israel would give them serious consideration, and (Israel's) National Unity Government would make the appropriate decision. Should there be a divergence of opinion, Israel would appeal to the people, asking for its decision. We are waiting for Jordan's proposals.

Ceaușescu, referring to Shamir's opening remarks, said that Romania's stand is well known. 'We have asserted a consistent, decisive stance in continuing our relations with Israel after the Six-Day War, but at the same time have acted for the settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict.' Romania's approach is that the dispute should be solved through negotiations. 'To a certain degree we contributed to the Israel—Egypt negotiations that led to peace agreements nine years ago'.

As for earmarking Jordan as the first candidate for negotiations, Ceaușescu noted that this is the kind of attitude that does not take into consideration the main problem of our times. The next in line are the Palestinians: making peace with them should be the main goal, it is impossible to achieve peace without them. Jordan cannot solve the problems concerning the Palestinians. Jordan can and should be a partner to the talks but cannot replace them. To take decisive steps toward peace, the Palestinian problem should be resolved first, based on the recognition of the Palestinian right to self-determination. Therefore, the initial problem to settle is with whom to negotiate and what means should serve to achieve this goal. The political forces in Israel, and its prime minister, surely understand that. The settlement of the Palestinian problem and the achievement of peace form the main issue. Jordan cannot substitute for the Palestinians, and to move in the right direction action should be taken that matches reality.

In the present circumstances, an international conference is the best way. At such a conference, Israel and the Palestinians would finally sit together and resolve their conflict by peaceful means around the negotiating table. To be sure, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt [no mention was made of Lebanon], as well as the Security Council members, could take part. But without Israel and without the Palestinians, an international conference could not be called. Nobody would be able to settle the conflict between them without the direct participation of those immediately involved. When we speak about the Palestinians, in any event, we should be talking about the PLO, the sole representative of the majority of the Palestinian population which could speak and decide on their behalf. If such an organization had not existed, it would have been necessary to set one up, so that it would be authorised to negotiate.

The PLO leadership, Ceaușescu stressed, has an understandably reconciliatory attitude characterized by its striving for a political solution. The PLO is ready to take part in an international conference under UN aegis, to discuss with Israel problems that demand resolution. The employment of negotiations would have constituted a most important event and would have

provided a real possibility for peace. As we know, Prime Minister Menachem Begin decided to negotiate with Egypt, proving that it was the right thing to do. Addressing himself to Shamir, he said, 'Now it is in your hands to take responsibility and do the right thing, to start with negotiations towards settling the problem, comprehensively. Now is an opportune moment that could be lost. It depends upon you and your party to enter history by acting for peace.'

Arafat is ready, in Ceaușescu's assessment, to work with Israel in preparing the conference under UN aegis. He is willing to reach agreements such as the cessation of military actions or others of this nature in exchange for the cessation of the persecution of the Palestinians and the building of new settlements during the negotiations in Gaza, Judea, and Samaria. Both sides should talk and cooperate. 'This will happen in the future. There is no other way'.

The basic problem is to start working towards the settlement of problems loaded with emotional sensitivity, in reaching peace for Israel and the entire region. If Prime Minister Shamir would take this decision upon himself he would enter history as an outstanding personality who has shown responsibility for his people. 'I would have wanted to see this instituted, to prevent wars and enjoy the fruits of peace'.

Shamir expressed his admiration for 'Ceaușescu's strong will and aspiration for peace that he had not discerned in his talks with other leaders, stemming from the friendship he displays toward our people'. He remarked, frankly, that he would have been happy 'if he only could tell him that he agreed with his ideas and on the way to implementing them'. It is simply hard to find a solution to difficult problems. It cannot always be done. But he welcomed the principle of negotiation, noting that outside parties could be of assistance, but peace should be attained by the sides to the dispute themselves.

Referring to Jordan, rather than the PLO, for direct negotiations, Shamir observed that Israel senses that peace in the region could be achieved by negotiations between the two countries. The military conflict between Israel and the Arab world began in 1948 when six Arab states invaded the State of Israel. Afterwards there were wars between Israel and Egypt as well as Israel and Syria. Now we have two borders to deal with: Jordan and Syria. Jordan is moderate and reasonable. Later, Syria's turn will come. (Interestingly, Shamir did not refer to the border with Lebanon nor to Lebanon itself.) We are not ignoring the threat of Arab terror against Israel. We had it before Israel's independence. The Palestinians regard Israel as a 'foreign weed' that should be uprooted. Terror has continued all along. When we have peace with Jordan and Syria, peace will prevail in the area. We are aware of the problem of Arabs under our rule and are ready to resolve it with the representatives of this population. The PLO — the organization for the Liberation of Palestinian — can not be its representative. It was founded in 1964, when there was no territorial question. Its goal was and remains to liberate the entire area of Palestine under Israel's rule. This is an existential problem for Israel. In substance, the PLO has not changed. It is ready for tactical changes, and it has not succeeded in achieving any of its goals since 1964. It is ready to receive territory to set up a base for continuing its struggle for liberation, as it puts it. The method of terror has failed. The PLO has a great deal of money, many people and ammunition. Waging terror did not subdue us. If we would conduct negotiations with the PLO, thus giving it recognition, we would be giving it great importance to the extent that we would not be able to negotiate with the Arab states. We shall be ready for talks with Jordan and with its Palestinian delegation, the members of which would not belong to the PLO, on the destiny of the territories under our administration, with the aim of finding a solution.

Ceaușescu said that leaders have the task not to discuss history but to create a new one. Historic aspects should be taken into consideration for the purpose of reaching the right conclusions. The changes since the 1930s and even those of the last 15 years should be taken into consideration. Shamir's stand did not appear to him as capable of leading to a political solution. In addition, Ceaușescu referred to the demographic component of the people towards the end of the century 'that cannot be ignored'. Now, he said, the PLO has a constructive attitude. It wants to achieve a settlement on the basis of Israel's existence and a Palestinian entity. Basically, he saw two problems: first, the need to resolve the Palestinian problem; second, how to accomplish this.

Jordan, he said, should have an important task. But it alone cannot resolve the problem. A joint Jordanian—Palestinian delegation? It's a possibility that could be taken into consideration. A joint Arab delegation with Palestinian participation? The problem is that the PLO does not wish to remain anonymous. How is it possible to represent the Palestinians and speak on their behalf without the PLO? That cannot be. Therefore it would be impossible to talk to a Jordanian—Palestinian delegation without any PLO members on the Palestinian delegation. This reality, it seems, cannot be changed.

In the course of negotiations, concessions are possible on the part of both sides. The PLO is ready to accept international pressure to guarantee the decisions that will be taken. An international conference is a frame that will insure the implementation of these decisions. Those who have to make the decisions should be the ones concerned with the matters. Nobody can do in it their place. This is the first time that a reasonable chance exists for attaining a just peace and this should not be rejected, stressed Ceaușescu.

In the reality of our day, he continued, it is impossible to attain peace only through the USA. The international conference offers a very good chance to move the situation forward toward direct negotiations. Addressing Shamir, he said, 'You have a historic chance to institute peace and you should not lose it'.

Shamir, referring to the special nature of Israel's relations with the USA, the American administration and people, noted that the USA cannot apply to Israel unlimited pressure. Despite the nature of the relations, there is no danger that the USA would impose a solution on us that we would not want. She is ready, therefore, to mediate; we are ready, therefore, to cooperate with the USA on a Middle East settlement. We cannot say the same for the USSR. If an international conference were held, the USSR would support all the demands of the Arab side, while the USA would not be able to compete between the two superpowers. Then Israel would have to pay the price. The majority of the participants at the proposed conference do not accept Israel's position. Hence, we shall be the losers. With that in mind, we thus prefer direct negotiations in a regional conference. In such a case, Israel will not stand against the whole world. This is risky, but we are ready to take the chance for the sake of peace.

Ceaușescu said that he understood that it was an important problem for Israel. But actually, an international conference is a regional conference under UN aegis. An international and a regional conference could easily be connected. It should only be determined what the role of the Security Council members should be within the framework of the regional conference.

Perhaps he erred, added Ceaușescu, when he proposed the idea of convening an international conference. It was in place during the lifetime of Sadat, who accepted the idea but the PLO was against it. At a later stage the PLO supported the idea, too, since it had reached the conclusion

that this was the way to negotiations. Now, this idea was adopted by all except for Israel and the USA. The USSR had agreed to it several years ago. He hoped that Israel would also accept the idea of the conference, be it international or regional, under the UN aegis. The definition was not important. This forum should not have the right to crystallise a solution to the conflict. All that is needed is a framework for conducting negotiations between the parties in conflict. Here Ceaușescu threw an idea into the air: What would Shamir think about having the conference take place under the patronage of only the USA and the USSR?

Ceaușescu summed up the situation regarding the possible negotiations of Israel with all the parties concerned by insisting that regarding Egypt there is no problem. About Syria, there is something to talk about. But the main problem is the Palestinians, no matter in what Arab framework, Jordanian—Palestinian or PLO. The negotiations should be direct, between Israel and the Palestinians. All proposals by the conflicting sides should be included in the discussions. Being aware of the proposals submitted by Israel and the Palestinians, he believed that it was possible to reach an agreed-upon settlement. The Palestinians, too, understand now that the settlement achieved will be based on a mutual compromise. He knows the Palestinians' opinion. He met the Bethlehem mayor; this is the approach of the majority of the Palestinian population, namely, that a political settlement should be reached on the basis of compromise. An international conference is not a court for decisionmaking but an auxiliary instrument for negotiations.

As for the imposition of a settlement by the superpowers: it is hard to believe that any given solution could be imposed. The USA is Israel's friend. The USSR supported the establishment of the State of Israel and has declared all along that it is in favour of Israel's existence, independent and secure. From this point of view, Ceaușescu believes that Israel can be assured of the USSR's consistent, strong support. Of course, the USSR, like the USA, has interests in the Middle East. The UK, France and China have interests there, too, but to a lesser extent. All have a united stand on Israel's existence, yet all have an interest in maintaining relations with the Arab states. Nobody would be able to impose a settlement on Israel. The advantage is that the Arabs already talk about a political solution. For peace one should pay. The question is what and how. The alternative is to achieve peace through strenuous negotiations or to leave the situation as is and ultimately reach a military collision the results of which are difficult to foresee. The instance of Chernobyl had great implications. It led to new thinking in international relations concerning peace problems and the settlement of conflicts by peaceful means.

The use of nuclear and chemical weapons should not be thought of. The spread is dangerous and does not recognize borders. Time is not working in Israel's favour. Israel now has a military advantage, but problems cannot be solved by military means. In the meantime, the Arabs are accumulating modern armaments, including from America, and will continue with their build-up in exchange for money.

Israel's existence depends upon reaching peace and good relations with her neighbours. This is a convenient moment to achieve them. The situation may change. The PLO and some Arab countries are in favour of a political settlement. This situation should be exploited to the maximum.

It should be in the interests of Israel that the UN be present at the conference, since every agreement should have guarantees from the USA and the USSR, foremost, and that of others as well.

UN patronage is an important moral-political factor. Since the majority of states are in favour of such a conference, rejection by Israel would not look good. Israel's acceptance of the conference would improve its image and would disarm those who believe that Israel is not interested in peace.

Ceaușescu added that he did not underestimate the weight of relations with the USA and the USSR. Yet, he also did not overestimate it. There is an advantage to relations between small and midsized countries who could reject pressure, if imposed on them. Everything shows that the best way is the one that leads to a conference under UN aegis.

A military solution or the use of nuclear weapons is akin to committing suicide. Until two years ago, the USSR thought that nuclear armament meant security for peace. So current USSR proposals for nuclear disarmament are serious, since it has come to the conclusion that use of such weapons might lead to self-destruction.

Concluding this part of the talks, Ceaușescu noted that he had no ideological preferences. He had talks with Golda Meir. With Menachem Begin he reached a positive conclusion on peace. He has only one preference — peace.

Shamir ended this part of the talks saying that he agreed with Ceaușescu that a military solution was out of the question, since no use should be made of nuclear armament. He also agreed with him 'that there is no alternative to a political settlement through direct negotiations' with our neighbours and that no solution should be imposed from outside. He repeated his admiration of and appreciation for Ceaușescu, for his pre-eminent activity in the cause of peace, and that he was glad to have heard from him that he had discerned signs of moderation in the Arab world. It was good to know that the Arabs had come to the conclusion that it was impossible to subdue Israel by violence. He thought that it was due to our determined stand against terrorism and that time was an important and positive factor.

Shamir noted that he was confident that autonomy is the best solution, not only because of the Camp David agreements. There is a danger that both superpowers would come to an understanding between them on account of Israel's future, as had happened in October 1977.<sup>26</sup> Any internationalization of Israel's conflict would complicate things further rather than lead to a solution. He, therefore, suggested that Ceaușescu exert his influence to convince King Hussein and the Arabs of Palestine to start negotiating on autonomy. His being the father to the idea of convening an international conference was already an advantage in the way of persuasion. The timing of the conference would be better after the establishment of autonomy and, should it be necessary to provide guarantees, they could also be discussed after it had begun. If the conference were held now, it would not satisfy the two conflicting sides. He understood the importance that Ceaușescu attributed to the UN. The involvement of the UN, however, was not advantageous for Israel. All the political parties in Israel concur that our experience with the UN has been negative and Israel has no intention of continuing in that vein.

Regarding the PLO there is a profound difference of opinion between Israel and Romania. There is a national consensus in Israel not to negotiate with the PLO. The Palestinian Arabs living with Israel could and should be our partners at the talks, but they should not be represented by the PLO.

Ceaușescu noted in this respect that the conclusion he derived was based on talks, and Romania's relations with the various forces in the Middle East. If he had any doubts or

reservations, he would not have presented them. The position taken up by Romania was not dictated by 'the configuration of the moment'. If that had been so, it would have been easier for Romania to go along with the line of the Warsaw Pact countries, and at the same time to join the declarations of the Arab countries. He did not do so then, because he thought that the solutions to the problem should be based on the guarantee of each country's existence. Romania continued to maintain relations with Israel, and this created problems with her close friends, with Arab states as well as others. But things have changed. The East European countries are now trying to normalise their relations with Israel, whereas Romania has normalised its relations with the Arab countries. In this respect, Romania made use of its standing to act toward a good settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict. Romania is interested in reaching peace in the Middle East. Foremost of all because of it being immediately tangent to Europe as well as from the fact that the problems there influence Romania and elsewhere.

In the past Romania had good relations with the Middle Eastern countries, and would like to maintain and develop them. Romania considered the establishment of Israel as a positive fact, although prior to the Second World War she thought that a Jewish state was not necessary and that Jews should remain in their countries of residence. But the persecutions, the sufferings and the tortures that they went through during the War led to a change in Romania's opinions and positions. Israel's existence is today an essential reality. It was so then, when it was established, and it is so now. Romania acts for peace as the only means to insure each country's development. Currently, peace is the only solution to all mankind, not only to one country. This is why we cannot but act to guarantee peace and each country's independence. In this context and in this spirit we stand for the Palestinians right to self-determination. We believe that peace will not prevail in the Middle East without it and without the solution of the Palestinian problem.

Israel should understand that it will not achieve peace without the Palestinians' self-determination. It will also benefit Israel. It is good that Israel has come to the conclusion that the settlement of the conflict cannot be solved by military means, but by negotiations. Here, Ceaușescu stressed, are two commonly held points of view: first, in agreeing to negotiate; second, in granting autonomy for a transitional period. Actually, this means recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination. The issue of autonomy is not new, but it could be discussed as part of the peace-making process. As far as he was aware of the Arab states' position, they prefer not to be connected to the Camp David accords. When they heard about them, 'it was as if a bull had seen red'. The Camp David agreements have exhausted themselves. The Israel—Egypt agreement has been implemented. Now, it is necessary to move on to a new reality, with no link to them. The American administration, too, can no longer hear of Camp David. In West Europe, too, there remains little enthusiasm for it.

Referring to negotiations with a Jordanian—Palestinian delegation Ceaușescu noted that a possibility exists for such negotiations. An alternative idea is for an Arab-Palestinian delegation in which Jordan would be represented. He spoke about that at length with Arafat also, during his last visit to Bucharest. From Arafat's point of view the first and second possibilities are viable. Arafat is ready for a Jordanian—Palestinian delegation, but Egypt and Syria should also be involved in it. If it depended upon Romania, she would opt for the former. The question is how to insure good results in face of Syria's resentment. The delegation's composition should not be an obstacle in organizing the conference nor in the evolution of the negotiations. There is still, however, a contradiction between the positions of Romania and the PLO as to who should compose the delegation and who should be its members. There is general agreement that it



should include Palestinians from the territories administered by Israel. But, at the same time, such a panel should be acceptable to the PLO. The Bethlehem mayor, for instance, believes that only the PLO could determine the delegation's composition within the framework of a Jordanian —Palestinian one.

In summing up this part of the talk, Ceaușescu argued that in this process, in whatever form, the Palestinians participating should be nominated by the PLO. The idea that the PLO should not take part in the delegation should be abandoned. The majority of the Arab population recognizes the organization. Had it not existed, such an organization would have had to be founded to participate in the negotiations.

Within the UN problems are not discussed in the General Assembly, which can neither take decisions nor implement them, but in the Security Council, which could be of assistance in organizing meetings between Israel and the Arab states. Israel should be interested in having the UN Secretariat help arrange such gatherings. Some positions held by Israel and the PLO are moving closer together: the PLO, too, objects to an international conference for resolving problems and to the imposition of decisions or solutions on the conflicting sides.

A Preparatory Committee could clarify how the international conference could be convened, thus avoiding from the outset an imposed solution. It could mediate in reaching an agreement to insure that the items that should be on the agenda would be included in the discussions of the conference. Had Israel accepted the setting up of the preparatory committee — and only after things had been properly clarified — it would have been important. Israel should demonstrate greater flexibility, which in turn, might beneficially influence the peace process.

Ceaușescu once again agreed to Israel's position that it should not accept an imposed solution. This should be one of the basic conditions in the organization of such a conference. In the course of the negotiations each side would present its positions, with the opposite side being obliged to listen and take into consideration the problems aired. No solution should be dictated from the outset.

The possibility exists that an autonomy as a transitional process be part of the general decisions. Ceaușescu saw no reason why such an approach could not be the start of a solution to the problem, but this must be a result of negotiations between the parties involved: Israel and the Palestinians. Jordan has a role, too, but only the Palestinians can decide. Syria has its own problems.

Ceaușescu concluded his presentation stressing that peace could not be guaranteed without cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians. Conditions have been created for the achievement of peace and the resolution of problems. He had received the impression, from his talks with Arafat, that he was taking into consideration the interests of Israel as well as those of the Palestinians. Romania would not agree to act against Israel's existence and sovereignty, but at the same time it would not agree to negate the independence of the Arab states or of the Palestinians self-determination. A just and lasting peace should guarantee Israel's right to existence and the solution of the Palestinian problem. Finally, he expressed his hope 'that Israel will act in such a manner that it will be possible to reach, as quickly as possible, an enduring peace in the Middle East'.

Shamir expressed his deep appreciation and admiration for the hospitality and the talks 'conducted in a friendly atmosphere of mutual respect' and promised Ceaușescu that he would

continue to work for peace and that 'Ceaușescu's ideas would be taken into his consideration'.

The morning following the visit's end, 21 August 1987, a meeting of the Politburo took place in Ceaușescu's presence. Reporting on its deliberations in the press on 22 August, reference was made to Prime Minister Shamir's visit. It stated, *inter alia*:

The Politburo evaluated the meetings and talks between President Ceaușescu and Prime Minister Shamir to have been exceptionally useful and constructive and will lead to the reinforcement of the strengthening of relations between Romania and Israel in various spheres and will be registered, at the same time, as a positive contribution to the efforts toward establishing peace in the Middle East and in the world.

Special emphasis was put on the fact that in the course of their talks President Ceaușescu and Prime Minister Shamir came to the conclusion that a military solution for settling the Middle East problems would be impossible, that any other similar means should be avoided, and that the solution to the situation in the region could and should be implemented only by peaceful means and through negotiations.

The Politburo expressed its profound appreciation for the way in which President Ceaușescu reconfirmed Romania's consistent position regarding a peaceful and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East to be reached by negotiations and by organizing in this spirit an international conference under UN aegis, in which all the concerned sides would participate, including the PLO, as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and Israel, as well as the permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The Politburo stressed the importance of President Ceaușescu's assessment, in his talks with Israel's Prime Minister, according to which convenient conditions now exist for the reaching of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East through negotiations and that every effort should be expended not to miss this historic opportunity, by taking advantage to the maximum of the prevailing situation. The Politburo affirmed to the fullest extent the results of the meetings between the Romanian President and the Israeli Prime Minister and took steps to implement them in the spirit of the agreed-upon understandings for the development of the relations and cooperation between the two states.

This dialogue seemed to me then, and still appears to me, as an exceptional effort on the part of Ceaușescu — effected in part in the Madrid Conference for peace in the Middle East (October 1991) and in the Document of Principles signed by Israel and the PLO (September 1993) — to advance peace in the region. From this point of view Ceaușescu's views are characterized, against the background of the Soviet bloc's hostile policy toward Israel, by the initiation of determined action and the adoption of a sober view of the goal of bridging the gap between the positions of the parties to the conflict for the purpose of establishing peace between Israel and its immediate neighbours, the Palestinians. Ceaușescu had clearly invested supreme effort in convincing Shamir of the need to abandon the 'inflexible conceptions of the Israeli governments' in reaction to terrorist acts by the PLO, and the lack of confidence in it that they adopted and were unable to relinquish, despite indications of moderation that Ceaușescu discerned among the PLO leadership and that partly proved to be real.

As for the additional aspects of the visit that I noted for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem, I noted, *inter alia*:

1. The media covered the visit daily and extensively. The coverage seemed to be more objective than expected, presenting the differences of opinion along with points of agreement.
2. The importance of the prime minister's visit, from the Israeli point of view, was in the mere fact that Romania was the only East European country where it could have taken place at that time; in the resonance it stirred among the other East European countries with whom our relations were broken, and in the demonstration of our willingness to enter into a dialogue between an Israeli and an East European leader, notwithstanding the ideological gap separating them. All of this against the background of Ceaușescu's involvement in the region in general and his role in Sadat's visit to Israel in particular.
3. To Romania and especially Ceaușescu the visit lent a certain amount of prestige in Eastern Europe, the West, and the Middle East, although it aroused expectations of a 'breakthrough' similar to the days prior to Sadat's visit to Israel following Prime Minister Begin's visit to Romania. Ceaușescu's image as one attempting to bridge the gap over conflicting positions for the sake of establishing peace in the region was fairly expressed over the course of the visit, with stress on the manoeuvrability of an East European leader (in the Soviet bloc) who maintains good relations with each of the confronting camps and who is able to act towards bringing their positions closer together. This is an important political asset for Romania, which is striving to insure its place in the international arena, thereby limiting the capability of the superpowers.

## **SECOND VISIT OF CONSTANTIN MITEA ON BEHALF OF PRESIDENT CEAUȘESCU**

*On 14 September 1987*, about three weeks after Shamir's visit to Romania, Ceaușescu dispatched his emissary, Mitea, to him carrying a message stating that Egypt's President Mubarak was ready to meet Shamir together with Ceaușescu in Bucharest, 'if in the frame of this meeting it might be possible to reach an agreement in principle on the convening of a peace conference in the Middle East [he did not call it an international conference] under the aegis of the UN, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council.'

Shamir answered that he would prefer to meet Mubarak in Israel or in Egypt, since the two countries had a peace agreement between them. Considering, however, Ceaușescu's recommendation and the advantage of his presence at this meeting, he expressed his willingness to participate in it. To that Shamir added that he would be ready to discuss any proposal Mubarak might have on the peace-making process in the region and that he would give his answers on the ideas and proposals during the course of the meeting.

No answer was received from Romania. A reliable diplomatic source in Bucharest told me that Mubarak withdrew his suggestion. Perhaps he was interested in obtaining a commitment in advance from Shamir, agreeing to a conference as a condition for the meeting. Since he did not receive it, the subject was removed from the agenda. The source added that the Likud's resistance to an international conference was, in Mubarak's view, undermining progress towards peace in the region and might increase tension in Gaza, Judea, and Samaria, including the intensification of terrorist acts. Mubarak said that the idea of a regional conference was unacceptable to him and to King Hussein. Like Ceaușescu, he believed that it was a good idea to have a Jordanian—Palestinian delegation represented at an international conference rather than a general Arab one.

According to the same source, Ceaușescu informed Mubarak (probably through his emissary to him, Ion Stoian, who had visited Mubarak immediately after Shamir's visit to Bucharest) that from his talks with Shamir he had received the impression that despite Shamir's opposition to an international conference, he did not exclude such a possibility sometime in the future, thus leaving an open door for future contacts.

### **VISIT BY IOAN TOTU, ROMANIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER, TO ISRAEL**

*Taking place on 28–29 January 1988*, this was the first visit of a Romanian foreign minister to Israel since the early 1970s. At that time this was considered a great success for Israel's diplomacy in contrast to the broken relations between the East European states and Israel. Totu assigned himself two goals for the visit: to expand trade and economic relations with Israel (dealt with in the chapter on bilateral relations); and to advance the idea of the international conference for peace in the Middle East. To those ends Totu met with Prime Minister Shamir and Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Peres. The other participants in the talks were, for Romania, the ambassador to Israel, Bituleanu; head of the Department for Asian and Middle Eastern Countries, Mielcioiu; on our side, myself as Israel's ambassador to Romania; the director-general of the prime minister's office, Yossi Ben-Aharon; director of the Foreign Ministry Bureau, Uri Savir; and the director of the East European Department of the MFA in Jerusalem, Zvi Mazel.

The foreign minister heard from Shamir that the settlement of the conflict should be achieved in stages, based on the Camp David accords with some adjustments, in line with two principles: autonomy/self-government for Arabs of Gaza, Judea and Samaria for a transitional period of five years; liquidation of the refugee camps in the Arab states, with the assistance of the international community.

As for the international conference, Shamir noted that the idea did not correspond to that of direct negotiations held by Israel, and that Israel could not agree to the participation of the superpowers 'who have their own interests, nor to UN supervision either since it does not play a balanced role in the conflict'.

Totu persisted in questioning: would the PLO also be included among the participants to the negotiations and why does Israel fear the convening of the conference?

Shamir made short shrift of that: the PLO had chosen to adopt a policy of terror. It did not ask for peace but rather 'Peace for piece', while the conference in the form proposed, runs contrary to the principle of direct negotiations and, under the influence of the superpowers, it will take decisions unfavourable to Israel.

Totu summed up Romania's position, noting that the events (the *intifada*) taking place in the Administered Territories prove that the Palestinians have a sustained national consciousness as a people, meaning that they need a country of their own. This consciousness will not disappear. The issue of a [independent] state should be resolved sooner or later. The Palestinians recognize the PLO 'and we know that a unity has been achieved within it. For this reason we are in favour of the PLO participation in the conference'. Romania considers it necessary to conduct direct negotiations, undoubtedly with the PLO. Romania does not see the conference as an authority for making decisions, and this is also Ceaușescu's message: 'the conference should serve as a means for cooperation and not as an authoritative body for taking decisions'.

Talking to Peres, Totu repeated the main points he had enumerated for Shamir, stressing the erroneousness of the presumption 'that mere waiting would bring a solution', and that in Romania's view it is necessary to recognize the Palestinian people and the PLO as its representative, to begin the conference, and maintain within its framework a direct dialogue between the parties to the conflict.

Peres replied: we are not aiming towards the domination of a foreign people. It contradicts our values and our history proves it. But, we would not accept the establishment of a Palestinian state with a Palestinian army, and Soviet experts, in the close vicinity of Israel's vital centres. The Israel Labor Party is willing to return part of the territories on condition that they be demilitarized, but we would not go back to the 1967 borders when the width of Israel was so narrow. A Jordanian—Palestinian solution seems to be reasonable, since the majority of Jordanians are Palestinians, and the Palestinians on the West Bank have Jordanian citizenship. Under such a settlement, demilitarization of the territories would be possible.

As for the international conference, its nature must be defined so that it could not impose solutions and would not replace direct negotiations between the parties involved in the conflict. The problem here is that the USSR supports an authoritative conference. The absence of diplomatic relations between Israel and the USSR is perturbing and raises fears about its behaviour at the conference.

Peres proposed that Romania clarify to both the USSR and China Israel's approach to an international conference and the need for diplomatic relations with Israel.

Taking in these different shades of nuance in Jerusalem, Totu returned to Romania. He held his post as Romania's foreign minister until autumn 1989. Ion Stoian, who until then had directed the Foreign Relations Department of the RCP, replaced him. When the revolution broke out in Romania, both of them were arrested with the other leaders of the RCP and the cabinet ministers. Some of them were sent to jail for many years, others were released from jail. At a later stage all went free. In May 1992, it was learned that Totu had committed suicide in prison.

Of all the Romanian foreign ministers I had come to know during my mission in Bucharest (Andrei, Văduvă, Totu, and Stoian), I happened to maintain the best relations with Totu. Although by reputation he had a tough personality, I found him friendly towards Israel. At times he reacted to my arguments without recourse to Ceaușescu's ideological dogmas. His official visit to Israel as foreign minister of Romania kept him closer to us and to our problems. He hid from no one the good impressions left by all that he had seen and heard in Israel. He also gave voice to his hope to make another visit to Israel, an unhurried one. At the staged public assemblies he did not applaud Ceaușescu too much (as the others did). And although he was known to have automatically supported Ceaușescu within the party institutions, I do not remember him quoting Ceaușescu in his public speeches (as his colleagues did).

Beyond my personal view, it seems to me that the harsh sentences meted out to the RCP leaders in the post-Ceaușescu era were aimed at demonstrating the disassociation of the post-communist hierarchy in Romania from its predecessor. His suicide while in prison perhaps expressed his protest against the 'mills of justice' of Romania's post-communist regime, or perhaps his refusal to accept the fate of his country after ridding itself of that regime. Yet another notion, it could be that he felt that his world had been destroyed, and all that was left for him to do, all that he could do, was to make his cry heard beyond the walls of his prison by deciding to put an end to his life.

## THIRD VISIT OF ION STOIAN TO ISRAEL ON PRESIDENT CEAUȘESCU'S MISSION

On 24 March 1988, I was summoned to Foreign Minister Totu for a talk at which I was informed that 'President Ceașescu wishes to continue his dialogue with Prime Minister Shamir and with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Peres on ways to settle the Israeli—Arab conflict', following Shamir's talks in the USA with Secretary of State Schultz concerning the publicity given to his initiative for the settlement of that conflict<sup>27</sup> as well as after the talks Ceașescu held with Arafat in Bucharest. Towards a further exchange of views and mutual updating, Totu proposed, on behalf of Ceașescu, that the government of Israel send him a special emissary, or the president would send his special envoy to Israel.

To my question about Romania's position towards the Schultz initiative, Totu answered that it contained a positive element: America's willingness to convene an international conference. Romania's government, he said, had not yet crystallized its position on the initiative, since it did not know the details. In reply to my remark that Israel's government had not yet decided to accept or reject Schultz's programme and that with the exception of Egypt, there were more and more voices in the Arab world against it, Totu noted that following Ceașescu's talk with Arafat, Romanians understood that the PLO's declaration rejecting the initiative did not correspond with their impression (from the Ceașescu—Arafat talk), and this was why it was important for them to exchange views with us in this regard.

In Jerusalem it was decided to welcome the Romanian envoy, Stoian, instead of sending an emissary from Israel to Romania. Stoian was received by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Peres. The emissary focused on ideas connected with the PLO's acceptance of an autonomy, and Ceașescu wanted to inform the government of Israel about them. Their main characteristics could be described as follows:

- A broad autonomy as an interim stage for a period of 2–3 years. During this time negotiations would take place on the final status of the Administered Territories.
- The activation of the autonomy would be implemented parallel to the withdrawal of the IDF from these territories. According to mutual agreement, a certain portion of IDF forces would be concentrated at locations to be determined.
- The rights of the Palestinians in the Administered Territories within the frame of the autonomy, and the competence of the leading authorities, would be established at the soonest opportunity.
- The replacement of IDF forces with those from UN countries mutually agreed upon by Israel and the PLO, during the interim period, and the stationing of international observers who would supervise the IDF withdrawal from the Administered Territories.

As for the international conference, Stoian added additional clarification not previously mentioned in talks with the Romanians, namely that in addition to Israel, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and perhaps Lebanon, the PLO would be independently represented at the conference or, alternately, within an Arab delegation. The PLO delegation would also include representatives of the Administered Territories. All punitive measures by Israel in the Administered Territories would end (after the *intifada* that broke out in 1987). The autonomy would be instituted as early as the first stages of the international conference. The international conference would work on final solutions, and the PLO, indeed, wants to conduct political negotiations for the settlement of

the conflict.

Stoian emphasized that in Ceaușescu's view, the PLO and Israel could constitute the basis for the convening of an international conference and that the PLO acceptance of the autonomy, as an interim arrangement, would constitute an important step forward. This position should be exploited for the advancement of a settlement and for the beginning of negotiations. Ceaușescu called upon Israel to consider these ideas and make an effort to reach an agreement. In his opinion, Israel had no alternative but to conduct talks with the PLO which represents the Palestinians. Finally, Stoian noted that Ceaușescu had urged that his proposals not be rejected and that the government of Israel should consider them. He also asked for Peres to clarify his stance on the idea of a comprehensive autonomy, its borders, and the period for its implementation.

In expressing his appreciation to Ceaușescu for the time and effort dedicated to Middle East issues, Peres distinguished between the proposals themselves and the PLO, namely: Israel agrees to maintain negotiations, to define the autonomy, to the arrangements for the interim period, to negotiations on the final status (of the Administered Territories), to the concentration of IDF at certain locations (within the Territories), and to enable the Palestinians to conduct their lives. But at the same time Israel strongly opposes negotiating with the PLO which has done everything it could to create a deadlock in the situation in the Middle East by continuing with acts of terror. Negotiations should be conducted with a Jordanian—Palestinian delegation. Peres also opposed the bringing of international military forces into the region since they are not needed and will not be able to do anything.

As for the international conference, Peres noted, that when Ceaușescu first raised the idea, he personally was not enthusiastic about it. But when he began to understand there was no other way to bring the conflicting sides in the Middle East to the negotiating table, he adopted the idea. Yet the conference cannot replace the parties concerned, namely the Arabs and the Israelis, nor should it impose on them any agreement. They are capable of deciding freely for themselves and must do so. Israel would not agree to a conference at which the USA or the USSR would do something detrimental to Israel's sovereignty. He agreed to the idea of a conference but not to allowing the Soviets the right to confirm agreements.

Peres repeated his proposal to Foreign Minister Totu during his visit to Israel, that Ceaușescu use his influence on the Chinese and the Soviets to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. Stoian did not react to this request. In return, he reiterated his remark (which I had heard more than once in my talks with Romania's MFA) that the PLO was ready to accept Security Council Resolution 242 and 338.

Peres answered him with the same message they had heard from me in Bucharest, that the PLO's acceptance of all UN resolutions meant 'that the significance of all of them together means the destruction of Israel'.

In summing up his presentation, Stoian noted that the shifts in the positions of the USA and the PLO were a source of optimism for him.<sup>28</sup> He would have been more optimistic had he felt that Israel was ready to negotiate with the PLO as a partner. With this conclusion Stoian returned to Bucharest.

### **THIRD VISIT OF CONSTANTIN MITEA TO ISRAEL ON A MISSION**

## FROM PRESIDENT CEAUȘESCU

*On 30 June 1988*, I was again summoned to Foreign Minister Totu who requested, on behalf of President Ceaușescu, that I forward to Prime Minister Shamir and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Peres his proposal to maintain direct contact with him concerning our regional problems, including the results of his deliberations with Arafat in Bucharest. To this end, he invited Shamir and Peres to come to Romania at a date convenient to one of them. Should it be the case however, that neither of them would be able to make the trip, he asked that his emissary be received in Israel. Acceptance of that request was made immediately, as usual, and Mitea was received by Peres on 8 July 1988.

Mitea opened his presentation by saying that President Ceaușescu had asked him to inform us that he greatly appreciated the current dialogue taking place with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Peres and that he was happy to note that the prevailing Romanian—Israeli relations were very good. In this spirit, Ceaușescu wished to pass on some thoughts or ideas for Peres's information after having held deliberations in the past few weeks (end June—beginning July 1988) with Hawatma, Arafat, and Habash.

The three of them, Arafat in particular, expressed the wish to settle the conflict by negotiations and were interested in reaching a settlement soon in the Middle East. All three believed that the path should lead through an international conference in which the PLO would participate with an independent status equal to that of the others or as part of a united Arab delegation. President Ceaușescu believed, however, that the Palestinian leaders have shifted positions in a positive direction, creating a better climate, which might result in the start of negotiations. The Palestinian leaders, again mainly Arafat, agreed to the idea of a settlement by stages which would include an interim period, with Israel's holding of local elections in the Administered Territories being one part of the interim agreement. Arafat said that he was in favour of an interim period as short as could be, and asked to inform us that he was ready to open negotiations immediately.

Arafat is interested in obtaining Israel's proposal for an autonomy in the Administered Territories and for the elections to an Autonomy Council, that would serve for a limited period. According to Mitea, Arafat had added that Israel's proposals would be interesting and should be considered — but he did not give any details about which suggestions Arafat was referring to. (Mitea asked Peres whether he knew which ideas Arafat was commenting on but was given a negative reply.) Mitea said that in Arafat's view the autonomy and the elections should be held under UN aegis, though other forms of autonomy were negotiable, and he wanted to know what Israel thought about this subject.

Mitea concluded this part of his presentation by noting that President Ceaușescu is convinced that changes were occurring in the minds of the Palestinian leaders and that once negotiations started on autonomy, a positive effect would be felt in the atmosphere of the region. Afterwards he remarked that the Palestinians, Arafat in particular, would have liked to start the negotiations on an interim period as a first step to a general settlement. (Thus one could have understood, though not for certain, that the intention was to begin negotiations even prior to the opening of the international conference.) Moreover, Arafat had returned encouraged from the Arab states summit conference in Algiers, at which he was once again recognized as the Palestinian representative.

Peres asked Mitea if the PLO would be ready to stop terror and violence before the



negotiations took place. Mitea responded that the Palestinians had not raised the subject but did stress that they were searching for political solutions aiming to attain peace by political means. Another question put by Peres: did Habash, too, agree to the idea of autonomy? Mitea replied that though Habash had been somewhat reserved during the discussion, he, too, agreed to the idea, and it seemed that he would not interfere with its implementation.

In reply to Ceaușescu's message, Peres once again voiced his appreciation to President Ceaușescu for his continuing interest in Middle East events, 'constituting an important contribution to the advancement of the peace process', and said that we had followed the Arab state's conference in Algiers. It may be that the PLO felt that its status has been enhanced, but the conference's resolutions were disappointing. They call for an authoritative, continuing international conference with no consideration of Israel's position on it. 'I am ready to participate in an international conference, but I am certainly not willing to receive any instructions on how to conduct it', he said. There is no chance that Israel would join a conference where her future would be dictated. The majority of people in Israel think this way, and this is also the position of the USA, Egypt, Jordan, and even some of the Soviets who asked him whether he had in mind an international conference that would be no more than a reception. To that he responded, 'I prefer a reception to a confrontation, and what is more important is that it should be clear to all that the superpowers would not impose solutions but be satisfied with encouraging the conflicting sides to move toward direct negotiations with the aim of reaching agreements out of understanding and freedom of thought'.

However, the summit conference in Algiers had closed the road to such solutions. There, it was once again decided that Israel should withdraw from the Territories as if Resolutions 242 and 338 did not exist, and as if Israel had no security problems whatsoever. The upshot was that in Algiers they had repeated their old mistake. They seemed to feel that it was possible to reach a peace agreement without taking Israel's position into consideration — and without Israelis. It should be entirely incomprehensible that the road to peace would be based on efforts by one side to liquidate the other.

Finally, Peres remarked that 'We do not ask the conflicting parties to accept our positions prior to negotiations. It is clear that none of us will take the risk to enter into negotiations, if terror and violence continue during the talks. Residents of the Administered Territories who support the PLO are capable of electing a team of leaders to conduct the negotiations with Israel on their behalf, and with such people we will be prepared to negotiate'. As for the elections, Peres concluded that they would be part of the interim period stage of the settlement and that from Israel's point of view it was possible 'to begin the negotiations immediately if terror ceases and an appropriate Palestinian representation is elected'.

I had no doubt that the emissary would bring fresh ideas, though I was not certain that the answers he received in Israel also contained new elements. As in similar cases, it seemed to me that the notions brought by the emissary left some 'food for thought' in the minds of his listeners, and Ceaușescu, through his own initiative, was serving as a 'liaison officer' between the conflicting sides. I did, however, have reservations about the quality of the message President Ceaușescu's emissaries brought to Israel's leaders. I remember that the central question that I raised then, following the frequent signals transmitted to his emissaries by Ceaușescu to make himself felt through his intervention in political problems, was to what extent did his signals reflect the views of his Arab interlocutors, and where was the dividing line between them and his personal impressions. Actually, none of us could have answered that question. Yet experience

has shown that for the purpose of bringing the positions of the parties to the conflict closer to each other, he would add his own nuances and thoughts when sending messages.

In those days the Egyptian ambassador in Bucharest told me that in the Romanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs he had been told that Arafat's approach now had two new elements: a willingness to hold elections, and to negotiate directly with Israel as a first stage toward autonomy. The ambassador said he had heard this and could scarcely believe it, since it was totally contrary to his own impressions and to the evaluations rumoured in Cairo, namely that the PLO would not consider direct negotiations with Israel prior to an international conference. Several weeks later I read that Arafat had told *al-watan al-Arabiyya*, on 22 July 1988, that he had not discussed with Ceaușescu the possibility of opening direct negotiations with Israel and that 'this is one of the Israeli lies'. The question remained, who had lied to whom?

Retrospectively, it may be presumed that President Ceaușescu would not have rushed his emissary to Israel with new ideas to report, and the Egyptian ambassador in Bucharest would not have been told about them through the Romanian foreign minister had there been no truth to them at all. Perhaps when Arafat heard Israel's reply he withdrew the proposals submitted to Ceaușescu. Or maybe these 'proposals' were simply Ceaucescu's ideas. Arafat himself would be the one who could solve this riddle.

### **VISIT OF ARIEL SHARON, ISRAEL'S MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY TO ROMANIA**

*Between 13–18 July 1988*, during his visit to Romania, Minister Sharon held a series of talks with the economic ministers, the foreign minister, and President Ceaușescu. As usual, I participated in these talks and meetings. Ceaușescu presented his known formula for the settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict (without repeating the message forwarded by his emissary Mitea to Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Peres). He expressed his belief that the Likud Party would soon reach the conclusion that the road leading to peace is the one passing through an international conference, adding 'that even if direct negotiations are the best thing, it is not practical at the moment'.

This was the last time that Ceaușescu had a talk with an Israeli minister, about a year and a half before the outbreak of the revolution in Romania that put an end to his life and regime.

Reacting to Sharon's words of appreciation for his policy towards the Jews of Romania and for his contribution to the opening of direct negotiations between Israel and Egypt, leading to a peace agreement between them, Ceaușescu offered Sharon his belief and realistic vision on the future of the peace-making process between Israel and the Palestinians.

He said that there is no alternative but to reach an understanding and political solution of the complicated problems. The Palestinian problem has to be solved through determination, including their right to establish an independent state of their own. On the way to achieving peace, there could be partial and temporary solutions, but at the end it is vital to reach a lasting peace.

The Israel—Egyptian peace agreement could be achieved due to the will and daring to overcome the obstacles, and to the partners' understanding that only political means would yield a solution to their problems. Now, too, there was a need for a political will on both sides of the conflict to overcome prejudices. The Israeli interest is to achieve this as soon as possible through

a quick solution in the direction of a just and lasting peace. Events constantly shift and change. Their general aims are directed to understanding and cooperation, despite all the difficult issues. In the Middle East everyone must act to effect peace. Weapons will not be able to determine the outcome. They can only cause suffering and destruction but no resolution. The relative balance of military power may change, not necessarily in Israel's favour. If Israel take up deadly arms, it would be like self-destruction. Therefore, a political solution is the only one to strive for. More and more people in Israel talk about it. A similar position is held in the West and in East European countries, too.

Although 2–3 months are left before the general elections in Israel, this period should be used to the fullest. The PLO's current logical position should be exploited. Holding talks through direct negotiations is certainly the best way to do so. But under the present circumstances, an international conference for peace is only one possibility enabling both sides to overcome prejudices. Even if we talk about direct contacts, one must take into consideration that the UN and the Security Council have an important task. They can speed up the transition towards direct negotiations.

In reply Minister Sharon stressed that Israel wants peace and is searching for it. He himself during his military past saw the horrors of war. Israel had heavy losses in that war. Although it is said that generals like war, he understood the importance of peace. Israel could live with the Arabs and believed in direct negotiations with them. There is a broad consensus in Israel, in the Labor Party and the Likud, that there should not be a second Palestinian state. There already is one, namely Jordan, which constitutes 75 per cent of the whole Palestinian territory. This was the case until 1922. The Palestinian problem began long before a territorial solution was reached for the Jewish people. Both the Labor Party and the Likud share a consensus that the PLO is not a partner for a dialogue. It is important that the Arabs should harbour no expectations for a second Palestinian state that Israel could not effectuate. Israel is ready to negotiate with the Palestinians, but not with the PLO, neither directly nor indirectly. Israel cannot agree to an international conference, nor to UN interference in its affairs. Israel's attitude, like Romania's, is that others should not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, particularly since Israel's problems are ones of life and death. 'We Jews have decided to live', concluded Sharon.

In his response Ceaușescu said that there were many tragedies in the Middle East, so it was imperative to strive for a peaceful situation. Without reconciliation with the Palestinians peace would not prevail in the region. Israel's government and the minister's party, the Likud, should think about it. Negotiations cannot be conducted without the PLO. No Arab country would be able to do so. 'You know that the Arabs in the territories support the PLO. The sooner you are convinced of this reality, the quicker you will achieve peace'.

Ceaușescu attested to himself as one of the most devoted steadfast supporters of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of others, adding:

But in your case the discussion is over the fact that you conquered territories in 1967. Regarding this there are UN Security Council resolutions and that is the way things stand. Therefore the principles of non-interference in internal affairs of others does not apply in this instance to Israel. Israel should relinquish the occupied territories and live peacefully with the Palestinians, and we would hope that Israel's leaders understand that. Romania supports an independent Israel that should remain forever so. We have always supported it. Among the socialist countries, we were the only ones to adopt such a position. Israel should

understand that it is in its interest to ensure peace for Jews to live in tranquility. I believe that you, too, as well as Israel's leaders will come to this conclusion. There is no other way. The Israelis and the Arabs have an important task in securing stability in the Middle East. Peace should be a legacy for the young generation.

This conversation was held in a most pleasant atmosphere. Ceaușescu demonstrated his expertise on the Middle East — perhaps even greater than that regarding the happenings in his own country — and once again outdid himself in his efforts to close the political gap between Israel and the Arab countries and Palestinians. Sharon expressed his appreciation of that to Ceaușescu as did all the other Israeli ministers who were received by him.

In those days Minister Sharon was not a sought-after guest in Europe due to his involvement in the Peace for Galilee War, especially after the role attributed to him by the media regarding the massacre carried out by Lebanese Christians against the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila.

His visit to Romania, at my initiative and at the invitation of its government, was at that time perceived to a great degree as an icebreaker. I was glad to have had a hand in it. My intention was that his visit would provide an impetus for continual intensification of mutual trade and economic relations, on the one side, while allowing Minister Sharon to gain a personal impression of Ceaușescu's efforts towards establishing peace between Israel and its neighbours, on the other hand.

The Romanian media gave extensive coverage to the significance of the visit on a bilateral level as well as to the major subjects of discussion in the Ceaușescu—Sharon talks on the Israeli—Arab conflict. Romania's efforts in the former area were notable — after all, Romania had a special interest in the economic sphere — and regarding the latter, it was an opportunity to influence Sharon to change his ideological position on the PLO.

The preparatory talks we had between us before his imminent meetings with the president and the Romanian ministers were useful. Despite the differences of opinion between Sharon and his hosts on the Israeli—Arab conflict, he left a very positive impression upon them.

## **ROMANIA AND THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL DECLARATION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PALESTINIAN STATE**

*In early September 1988, Arafat visited Romania, prior to the Palestinian National Council (PNC) convened in Algiers on 12–15 November 1988 to proclaim the establishment of the new state of Palestine. According to information I received from the Greek charge d'affaires in Bucharest, Arafat obtained Ceaușescu's promise to grant official recognition to the new state after it was declared. The director of the Asian and Middle East Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Mielcioiu, confirmed when we spoke at the beginning of October 1988, that Arafat had indeed requested Romania's support for the Proclamation of Independence, but unlike the Greek report, he said that Ceaușescu's reply was that Romania would take a stance only after the PNC decision. It is difficult to know which of the two versions is correct. A reasonable assumption is that the Greek charge d'affaires had heard his version from a PLO source in Bucharest, who might have interpreted Romania adopting a supportive position. Either way, Ceaușescu declared himself positively — two and a half months after Arafat's visit to Bucharest — in an interview given to a correspondent of the Lebanese weekly *Le Revue du Liban*, copied*

by the Romanian press on 11 November 1988, and in Ceaușescu's interview with the Kuwaiti press correspondent, which was published in the Romanian papers on 15 November 1988. In his interview in the Lebanese weekly Ceaușescu was asked, 'should the PLO and the Palestinians decide to establish a government in exile, would Romania recognize it?'

Ceaușescu replied, 'Not long ago, I met with the PLO chairman Arafat. We discussed this problem and I told him that we would fully support the decisions taken by the Palestinian leadership'.

The day after this was publicised I informed the Deputy Foreign Minister, Olimpia Solomonescu that I was shocked by Romania's promise to Arafat to back decisions even before they had been made, and that I feared our relations would be harmed owing to the stance Romania had adopted according to Ceaușescu words, which sounded like a one-sided declaration. She said she would transmit my remark to the 'leadership'.

In his interview to the Kuwaiti press, Ceaușescu said:

As to that which concerns the future decisions of the Palestinian National Council, those moving in the direction of confirmation of the right for self-determination, I informed Yasser Arafat that Romania would support any options considered by the PLO as serving the interests of the Palestinian people. Of course, these decisions should take into consideration the need to create an accommodating basis for negotiations at an international conference, since only that way will they serve the Palestinian people's interests.

By saying 'accommodating basis', Ceaușescu addressed presumably the moderate position within the PLO that could advance the implementation of his idea (adopted by Arafat) to call an international peace conference.

In my talk with Deputy Foreign Minister Duma on 14 November 1988 (the day after the PNC declaration), I said that according to the radio broadcasts I had heard I received the impression that the PNC decision contained neither an implicit acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution 242 nor recognition of Israel's existence, contrary to the first reports on this matter in the Romanian press. It was merely noted that on the basis of this resolution as well as others by the UN, an international conference should be called. I stressed that if so, it would be a non-starter for negotiations on the part of any government of Israel. I expressed my hope that the government of Romania would take this into consideration before deciding on its position. One may presume that my separate reactions given to both deputy foreign ministers, expressed most spontaneously, were immediately transmitted to Ceaușescu but bore no fruit. Ceaușescu's determination to support the PNC decision, as he presumably had committed himself to it beforehand to Arafat, was definite.

When the proclamation of the PNC session in Algiers became known, namely on the establishment of a 'Palestinian state on the territory of Palestine, whose capital is East Jerusalem', Romania responded in three stages.

First, on 16 November 1988, it published an Agerpress news item on the declaration's main points, as interpreted by Romania, along with an unsigned statement. The news report related, among other things, that:

The PNC has accepted by a majority vote, a political declaration accepting Security Council Resolution 242, in which there is a decision on a global settlement, through political means, of the Middle East conflict, including the recognition of Israel's right to exist.

In addition, the report stated that the PNC called for the convening of an international conference with the participation of all conflicting sides, including the PLO, 'on the basis of Security Council Resolutions 224 and 338 and the right of the Palestinians to self-determination'.

This news item concerning the declaration was, of course, censored according to the system then prevailing in communist countries. That meant the presentation only of those paragraphs that suited Romania's position, with any others going unmentioned. Understandably, the discussion we had with the Romanians after their recognition of the declared state focused on those sections of the declaration that Romania had not referred to. On the same day Agerpress published the following inspired statement:

Public opinion in Romania has devoted avid attention to the decisions taken by the PNC in Algiers and welcomes the aspiration expressed in the political declaration to act for a political solution to the Middle East problems in the spirit and on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

We feel that under the new circumstances it has become more vital to organize an international conference under UN aegis, with the participation of the sides involved including the PLO — the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people — as well as the State of Israel and the permanent members of the Security Council. Such a conference is the only way capable of leading to a just and lasting solution to the Middle East problem, that would put an end to the Arab territory occupied since the 1967 war, and that would insure the Palestinian people self-determination, including the right to establish an independent state.

The Romanian people expresses its confidence that as soon as possible all efforts will be made to reach a settlement to the problems by political means and through negotiations for the establishment of peace in the Middle East in the interests of the region's nations and for the reduction of tension, for cooperation and peace in the entire world.

As I assessed them in my reports to the MFA in Jerusalem, I took Romania's statement to be a 'low-keyed one', focusing on the need to convene an international conference as an apt forum for settling the conflict between us and our neighbours. The statement was not headed by the dramatic title of 'Declaration of Independence', and the statement appeared in the name of 'public opinion' in Romania, which in line with East European custom at that time, stood one stage lower than one published on behalf of the government. Moreover, I noted in my analysis to the MFA in Jerusalem that the welcome was not given to the 'Declaration of Independence', but to the aspiration to move for a political solution to the conflict 'in the spirit and on the basis of Security Council Resolution 242', interpreted by the Romanians as a shift in the PLO position, moving in the direction of recognizing Israel's existence and abandoning its ideology of the destruction of the State of Israel. All this despite the fact that the declaration did not contain implicit acceptance of Security Council Resolution 242 and completely ignored granting recognition to Israel's right to exist.

In the second stage, Agerpress published on 17 November 1988, a statement by the Romanian government congratulating the PNC decision on the declaration of an independent Palestinian state and the political declaration made on that occasion that expressed willingness to act towards a political solution to the Middle East problems in the spirit and on the basis of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and which can be understood as recognizing the existence of the State of Israel parallel to the recognition of the right for self-determination of the Palestinian people

and the establishment of its state.

The publication of the Romanian government's statement one day after the appearance of the one in the name of 'public opinion' astounded people. The government statement added congratulations to the PNC's declaration on the establishment of a Palestine state and an emendation — the PLO's recognition of Israel by implication — while in the 'public opinion' statement explicit recognition was mentioned. Egypt's ambassador in Bucharest told me that in his personal assessment the Palestinians were very disappointed by the 'public opinion' statement, since it did not include any reference to the declaration of a Palestinian state, and in particular in view of the fact that Arafat visited Romania as Ceaușescu's guest at least twice a year. Thus, it may be that Arafat had pressured Ceaușescu to issue an amended version in the name of the government.

In the third stage, Romania's MFA published a statement, on 25 November 1988, noting, among other things, that the congratulations from Romania's government for the Palestinian National Council's decision to establish a Palestinian state, 'should be understood that its significance is that it constitutes a recognition of a Palestinian state'.

All three stages may have attested to Ceaușescu's quandary over his being faithful to the PLO in demonstrating his support for the PNC decision to establish an independent Palestinian state and his recognition of Israel's right to existence, while the PLO recognition of Israel (in the PNC declaration) was only given implicitly. Another aspect that Ceaușescu might have faced was that 80 countries declared support for the Declaration of Independence by the Palestinian National Council. Ceaușescu clearly chose also to accept it but with one declared reservation, namely, that this backing was not at the expense of Israel's right to exist 'within secure and recognized borders'.

## **ISRAEL'S REACTION TO ROMANIA'S RECOGNITION OF THE NEW PALESTINIAN STATE**

After the PNC's Declaration of Independence, on 20 November 1988, I handed a written message from Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Peres to Romania's Deputy Foreign Minister, Dr Olimpia Solomonescu (in the absence of Foreign Minister Totu). In this message, identical to the one addressed to all foreign ministers of countries friendly to Israel, Peres outlined the arguments that served as guideline in Israel's information campaign the world over. It stressed:

- The PNC's declaration had complicated even more the chances for finding a solution to the Israeli—Arab conflict, as it violated a basic rule that no one-sided act could replace the need to settle the conflict by negotiations. Thus, any recognition of this decision, or granting legitimacy to it, could only reinforce the illusion that the outcome of the desired negotiations could be achieved through one-sided actions and declarations.
- From the official publication of the Declaration of Independence and the accompanying political communique, it became clear that actually neither the presumed acceptance of Security Council Resolution 242 was effected nor was the alluded-to recognition of Israel ever adopted, and there was even no announcement of abandoning terror.
- We are ready to devote any type of effort to restarting the peacemaking process in our region. In our striving for a just and lasting settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict, we long ago took into consideration the Palestinian context (as well as the Jordanian) as a high

priority stage in this endeavour.

At the end of his letter, Peres noted that he had requested that I should answer any of Foreign Minister Totu's questions on this, and should continue with clarification of the significance of the PNC declaration as well as the main principles in our position on settling the conflict through negotiation. Peres also requested the 'personal support' of his Romanian colleague, Totu, 'in preventing every step that could assist the PLO's attempt to use vague texts instead of making clear-cut decisions, and mobilizing and gaining support for unproductive declarations.'

After having heard the text of the letter, the deputy foreign minister said she would pass it on for Foreign Minister Totu's perusal immediately upon his return to Bucharest. She remarked, however, that in bestowing its blessing upon the declaration of a Palestinian state, Romania did not change her position towards the region's states, including Israel, for their right to sovereign and independent existence in peace and security and Romania continued to regard an international conference as the only way leading to settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict.

Two days later, on 22 November 1988, I forwarded to Foreign Minister Totu the statement by Israel's government made on 21 November which said:

The PNC's declaration is a new campaign to distribute deceitful information full of illusions and misleading world public opinion. The principle has not changed its Covenant, its policy, its ways of terror, nor its character. Much has already been said about it. It should, however, be brought to the attention of the states concerned about advancing peace in the Middle East that the PLO was and remains the main obstacle on the road to peace.

On 28 November 1988, I expressed Israel's profound disappointment and dismay at Romania's recognition of a Palestinian state to the director of the Asian and Middle East Department, Ion Mielciouiu. I asked him to pass this expression of our response to Foreign Minister Totu (who was then engaged in the deliberations of the RCP's plenary) on behalf of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Peres. I reiterated our arguments, noting that I did not remember any similar precedent in the history of international relations in which a friendly country, as was the case with Romania, had recognized a non-existent country, the putative leaders of which had declared in their Covenant their aspiration for the destruction of a member state of the UN.

Mielciouiu replied that Romania's recognition of the Palestinian state was political and not juridical; and that Romania's position was elucidated in President Ceaușescu's statement at the plenary session of the RCP, so that there should be no doubt that Romania's recognition (of the Palestinian state) was given on the basis of (a) the PLO's recognition of Israel's right to exist, and (b) Israel's right, the same as all other countries of the region, to security and territorial integrity. These two elements, he noted, 'were not included by any of the other states that had accorded recognition to the Palestinian state'.

On 6 December 1988, I called upon Deputy Foreign Minister Oancea together with the Director of the East European Department of Israel's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Zvi Mazel (who had come to Romania for a working visit as a guest of Romania's MFA). Deputy Foreign Minister Solomonescu, in charge of the region, was absent from Bucharest. Deputy Foreign Minister Oancea was in charge of the Soviet bloc countries and considered to be the first in command (after Totu) in the MFA's hierarchy. My relations with him were always friendly and whenever we spoke about the issues for which he was responsible, he was always open-minded and interesting. Our talk with him focused on the expansion of mutual relations, something both



our countries were interested in. Naturally, our discussion quickly diverted to Romania's decision to recognize the non-existent Palestinian state. Mazel reminded Oancea of our expressions of disappointment for Romania's granting it recognition and recalled our arguments for opposing its establishment.

Oancea responded by saying (also in the name of Romania's leadership) that he very much appreciated the political dialogue taking place between Romania and Israel on all levels, in Romania and in Israel, and that experience had shown that both sides were profiting from it. Romania has consistently adhered to the principle of self-determination for the Palestinians, including their right to establish a state of their own, so it was only natural that the recognition of a Palestinian state would derive from this policy. Yet Romania's granting of recognition was strongly connected with Israel's right to exist and ensuring its security and territorial integrity. In this context he reminded us that by not breaking its relations with Israel (after the Six-Day War), much to the regret of others (namely, the USSR and the East European bloc), and their uninterrupted continuation, Romania proved that it remained steadfast to its principles. He added that Romania had an influence on curbing the extremists in the PLO and encouraging the moderates. This influence, he said, is visible also in the PNC resolutions 'which indeed are not perfect, as we would have preferred, but they constitute an important step in the right direction, and they should be regarded as an important breakthrough towards settling the conflict, even though this is still a long way off...Romania has no illusions that this can be done in a day. The process will certainly be a long one'.

Finally he concluded in a friendly tone, saying that Romania sees the convening of an international conference as the only path leading towards the establishment of peace in the region, trusting that no pressure would be put on its decisions, that the negotiations within its frame would be conducted between ourselves and the Palestinians represented by the PLO, whether we liked that or not. As in the past, so in the future, Romania would be ready to assist in the peace-making process. Through these words of conclusion, as with his opening on the importance of the Israeli—Romanian dialogue, one could sense Oancea's apprehension lest Romania lose its special, honourable status in our political considerations and its unique weight as a mediator in the Israeli—Arab conflict, by a onesided step declaring its recognition of a Palestinian state, even though hedged with reservations. Indeed, there was a basis for his worry as Romania's status as mediator between ourselves and the Arabs gradually declined.

On 17 December 1988, I once again explained to Solomonescu our reasoning against Romania's recognition of the PLO's declaration of a state while continuing its strategy for the destruction of Israel in two stages — first, the establishment of a state on any territory evacuated by Israel, and then the imposition of a democratic, secular state on the whole territory of Palestine including Israel. I drew attention to the double talk by the PLO leaders, who on the one hand hinted that they were ready to accept Security Council Resolution 242 — if they were addressing an English-speaking audience — while on the other, repeatedly reiterating their promise for the destruction of Israel — if speaking to an Arab audience.

It seemed to me that the deputy foreign minister had not been aware of this duplicity and said that she would pass my comments on to the leadership. She did believe, however, that the PLO leader, scheduled to appear that same day before the UN General Assembly in Geneva, 'would announce his explicit recognition of Israel and would designate the borders of the Palestinian state in Gaza, Judea, and Samaria'.

(Here, I must note that on the eve of Arafat's address in Geneva, speculations were rife and expectations expressed that he would make an effort to comply with the US demand made of him as a condition for opening a dialogue between it and the PLO: that is recognizing Israel's right to exist, acceptance of Security Council Resolution 242, and declaring the renouncing of terrorism.)

Solomonescu presumed that after the PNC's Algiers decisions, the PLO would create a possibility for dialogue and be willing to hold direct negotiations with Israel as part of an international conference, whose nature and organization should be examined carefully. She noted further that she considered the starting of a dialogue important in itself: even though 'it may take a long time, it should begin. Both sides should air their demands directly within an international conference. There is no alternative to negotiations, unless people are thinking of a military solution that would lead to catastrophe in the region'. She concluded by strongly emphasizing Romania's position, namely, 'that according recognition to the PNC declaration of a Palestinian state was conditional upon recognition [by the Palestinian National Council — Y.G.] of the existence of sovereign, independent Israel living in peace and security'.

When reporting this talk to the MFA in Jerusalem, I summed up by saying that Romania would not change its position on recognition of a Palestinian state. It was ready to listen to our argument from its desire to see to what extent it might be possible to bridge the abyss separating the positions of the conflicting parties, either as part of its impetus towards its traditional activity in the international arena, or as a direct outcome of its record of acting in the name of finding a peaceful solution to the Israeli—Arab conflict.

By the day after my talk with Solomonescu the main points of Arafat's Geneva address had become known. Positive expectations had been unfounded. Arafat called for (1) implementation of the 1948 UN Resolution on the 'right of return' of the Arab refugees to their homes; (2) Israel's withdrawal from all occupied territories conquered during the Six-Day War, including East Jerusalem; (3) the demolition of all Jewish settlements in the Administered Territories; and (4) the entrance of international forces under UN aegis into those territories to defend the Arab population and oversee the IDF's withdrawal.

Arafat added that these were issues an international peace conference should have decided upon, when convened on the basis of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Arafat also condemned all forms of terrorism, including state terrorism (meaning acts of retaliation by Israel) but praised the *intifada* and its achievements, encouraging its continuation. As a first step towards the proposed international conference, he called for creating a preparatory committee, in line with the September 1988 proposals by Gorbachev and Mitterrand. He said he wanted a settlement to include all parties to the Israeli—Arab conflict, 'including the State of Palestine, Israel and other neighbours'. (Thus, Ceaușescu could argue that Arafat had recognized Israel). In actuality, however, he had refrained from explicitly recognizing Israel's right to exist, though he did recount the essence of the declaration on the establishment of a Palestinian state.<sup>29</sup>

Israel's Prime Minister Shamir reacted furiously. He called the Arafat speech 'a fraud of monumental proportions and an act of deception aimed at misleading and creating an impression of moderation...We do not have the conditions for negotiating and recognizing the PLO. From our point of view it is not a partner to any peace process. The PLO is a terrorist organization, or a group of them, whose aim is to harm Israel, undermine Israel's existence and bring about its destruction'.

But even before Arafat's speech, Israel's newspapers had reported that Shamir had stated that

he would not change his negative attitude to the PLO, whatever might be. Peres, however, had said that if the PLO would recognize Israel and accept Security Council Resolution 242 and explicitly renounce terrorism, he would then regard the PLO as ripe for negotiations.

The US reaction (as presented by the State Department's spokesman) was more moderate in style and essence. It said that Arafat's speech in Geneva was disappointing, it did not meet America's conditions for the opening of a dialogue with the PLO. 'The speech contained some interesting paragraphs and some positive developments, but it had a double meaning on key subjects which need to be well clarified before the USA might enter into an essential dialogue with the PLO'.

On 27 January 1989 I had a talk with Mielciouiu, focusing once again on statements by the PLO leadership on its strategy for the destruction of Israel in two phases and on its double talk before Western or Arab audiences. By way of illustration I pointed out to him the statement by the PNC chairman made to a Saudi Arabian newspaper, *Sharq al-Awsat*, on 13 January 1989, that declared:

Our struggle is between two cultures: an Arab-Muslim one, on the one hand, and an aggressive Zionist one, on the other. Our existence in Palestine depends upon putting an end to the other culture. The Palestinian state has not yet been established. We need territory. After having achieved the stage of a recognized state, we shall act in the direction of extending our sovereignty over the whole territory of Palestine.

This should be seen in comparison to his announcement to the members of the sub-committee for Middle East Affairs of the European Council, the following day (14 January): 'The Palestinian leadership is serious in its aspiration to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and accepts international legitimacy and the renunciation of terrorism in all forms'.

I noted that the interpretation of the concept 'international legitimacy' could be found in the statement to the Saudi Arabian paper *Al-Medina* on 2 January 1989 by Khaled al-Hassan, a member of the Fatah's central committee and a senior adviser to Arafat:

The Zionist danger is a national danger, therefore we speak about a universal confrontation with Zionism and not merely about an Israeli—Arab dispute. The exchange of the slogan 'Liberation of Palestine' with the slogan 'international legitimacy' in nothing more than the substitution of direct strategy with indirect.

As for the 'renunciation of terrorism in all forms', I pointed out to him the incitement to escalate troubles in the Administered Territories and within Israel's 'green line', on one hand, while on the other calling for UN intervention in actions taken by Israel to defend itself. I explained that we see Arafat's demand to implement the right of return as an attempt to detonate the State of Israel from within by taking in millions of Arabs into its territory. Also, I noted, that Arafat made effectuation of this right a condition for his acceptance of Security Council Resolution 242, and for Romania's support in this regard he had publicly expressed his gratitude to President Ceaușescu. (Mielciouiu: 'This is what he said'. Myself, 'This is an example of the way he tries to make political capital out of something that had not been the intention of others'.)

I also pointed out President Ceaușescu's congratulatory remarks to Arafat, making Romania's recognition of a Palestinian state conditional upon the PLO's acceptance of Security Council Resolution 242 — Israel's right to exist independently and the guarantee that all countries in the region, including Israel, should live in peace and security. In response, however, Arafat ignored

all that and expressed his gratitude to Romania for its support of the declaration of a Palestinian state, the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, and the implementation of the 'right of return' — which, if effected, would result in the destruction of the Jewish state. As Hassan el-Bassl, a Palestinian correspondent, said in the official PLO publication *Falastin al-Thawra*, on 11 December 1988: 'By declaring independence on 15 November 1988 Arafat shot a bullet into the latest front. This is the war to expel the State of Israel from Palestine. By the end of the century Israel will collapse from within'.

At the end our talk I stressed that each government of Israel is committed to act in a way that will prevent such a thing from ever happening. Even if the number of countries hastening to recognize the Declaration of Independence of a Palestinian state — non-existent in reality — it is not our national obligation, as Abba Eban put it, to commit suicide. Mielciouiu did not comment on this.

However, he pointed out that there still remain extreme forces in the PLO. Yet the one who makes the determinations is Arafat, and he, after all, represents the moderate stream in the PLO. It is better that we pay attention to his position than to the statements by extremists in his camp. Israel should open a dialogue with the PLO. There is no alternative to it. In the course of the discussion things will become clear and the two sides' positions should draw closer to one another. It would not be right to intensify suppressive acts in the territories, since this is an area occupied by Israel and the local population should be treated as such (this was in response to my argument that if we had wanted to put an end to the *intifada* by military means, we could have it at a high cost in human lives.)

On 31 January 1989, I was received by Foreign Minister Totu. I mentioned the main topics of my previous talks in his ministry (with Solomonescu and Mielciouiu) that had focused on statements by PLO leader on their strategy for destroying Israel in two stages and Arafat's demand that the 'right of return' be implemented (as a condition for his acceptance Security Council Resolution 242) — a move well connected to the planning of stages, as had been recently expressed, including his message of thanks to President Ceaușescu for his support, as it were, of this approach. I also referred to the statement by Farouk Kaddoumi (head of the PLO's Political Department) to the Romanian weekly *Lumea* of 26 January 1989, concerning the upgrading of PLO representation in Bucharest to the rank of an embassy, representing a non-existent country. I read to him a message (that I myself had initiated after what had appeared in *Lumea*) on behalf of Israel's new foreign minister, Moshe Arens, to his Romania colleague, Ion Totu, saying:

If this announcement is indeed correct, we permit ourselves, in the framework of the good and friendly relations existing between our countries, to express profound disappointment. Romania well knows our positions, and our concern that a fictitious independent Palestinian State aspires to destroy Israel in two stages, as stated by various PLO leaders after the PNC session in Algeria.

We believe that such a step, if indeed implemented, will contradict what we have always thought to be the serious and constructive tendency of Romania to be a factor assisting in bringing the two conflicting sides closer to each other.

I added to Aren's message that we do not doubt the sincerity of Romania's policy that stands for Israel's right to an independent existence in security and peace as expressed in Romania's statements, but the PLO leaders produce political capital from Romania's backing for the

Declaration of Independence of a Palestinian state and all that goes with it, in order to achieve strategic aims that do not correspond to Romania's declarations on Israel's right to exist.

Totu replied that he accepted our expression of disappointment, understanding our concerns. But he wanted to assure me that the Romanian—PLO relations were not, in any case, detrimental to Israel. Romania, he said, was carrying out a balanced policy between the sides and for about 20 years had declared itself in favour of a Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel, while ensuring Israel's peace and security.

There had been difficult times when the PLO refused to recognize Israel. Arafat's statements in Stockholm and Geneva were a serious turning point that had begun at the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Zimbabwe in 1986 and with the PLO's position regarding the Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Ceaușescu had wearing discussions with Arafat to convince him to recognize Israel; and to renounce terrorism, even if in some cases Arafat was not directly involved but his factions were. Therefore, Romania maintained a consistent policy concerning the establishment of a Palestinian state and it was only natural that its recognition of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence be accompanied by a fitting action (namely, the upgrading of the PLO's representation to the rank of an embassy).

The practical solution of issues (borders and so on) is in the hands of Israel and the PLO through direct negotiations within the framework of an international conference. The situation, however, is difficult since Israel does not agree to convening the conference,. Meanwhile the US change of attitude to the PLO is not significant, since some contacts have been made with the PLO but no negotiations. There is a difference between them. Totu repeated Romania's well-known position that the recognition of a Palestinian state was granted on the basis of the PLO's commitment to accept the Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, the PLO's recognition of Israel and renouncing of terror. Totu concluded by reiterating that there was no alternative to direct negotiations within the framework of an international conference that would not impose solutions.

I told Totu that after having read Arafat's expression of gratitude to Ceaușescu for Romania's support for the 'right of return' (and I spoke about this at length), I had reported to the MFA in Jerusalem that I had seen no evidence of this in the Romanian statements. Totu confirmed that indeed there was no sign of it and that I did well to report it to avoid any misunderstanding. Since Romania's position is that anything concerned with the issues of the conflict is subject to negotiation between the sides and there are certainly various interpretations that need clarification during direct negotiations on the basis of the rights of the two parties to independence: Israel and the Palestinians.

In my report to the MFA in Jerusalem, I noted that even if we had no illusions that Romania would change its mind after learning of our disappointment at its upgrading the PLO's representation in Bucharest to the rank of embassy, I thought that this expression was timely and in place. It showed the Romanians that we felt their status as mediator had declined.

With an eye to saving the situation, Totu invited me, just the day after our talk, to tell me that he had forwarded to President Ceaușescu our disappointment and the content of our discussion. In light of that, Ceaușescu had proposed to Prime Minister Shamir that he send his special emissary to Bucharest for consultations with him on the new aspects of the Middle East problem. In this framework Romania would present its latest relevant actions and the content of its discussions with Arafat and Kaddoumi (who had visited Bucharest after the Palestinian National

Council declaration in Algeria).

On this occasion, Totu added, the president would like to familiarise himself with the latest proposals by the Israeli leadership on the settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict. Should it be inconvenient for Shamir to send his emissary to Bucharest, then the president would send his to him.

When I asked Totu could he be more specific on the issue of the upgrading of the PLO representation in Bucharest, he answered that this was a consequence of Romania's recognition of a Palestinian state but in the meantime (he twice stressed the word 'meantime'), the technical aspects had not yet been discussed and he was awaiting the PLO's proposals.

When forwarding this message to Jerusalem, I noted that a visit by the prime minister's envoy to Bucharest would only enhance Ceaușescu's prestige after having recognized the Palestinian state and upgrading the PLO representation, whereas receiving his emissary in Israel would be less damaging. My proposal was accepted.

#### **FOURTH VISIT OF ION STOIAN TO ISRAEL ON PRESIDENT CEAUȘESCU'S MISSION**

*On 9 February 1989*, Ion Stoian arrived in Israel. During his visit he met Prime Minister Shamir, Foreign Minister Arens, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Peres; Minister of Trade and Industry Sharon; and other personalities in the Labor and Mapam parties.

As reported to me in Bucharest, he had brought a letter from President Ceaușescu addressed to Shamir outlining the main points of Romania's discernment of changes in the PLO's position towards Israel. Foremost among them was its willingness to make peace with Israel based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 'which implicitly means the recognition of the State of Israel'. Under these circumstances the background is more appropriate for convening an international conference to settle the conflict 'between Israel and the Palestinians' through negotiations.

At this opportunity Ceaușescu praised the bilateral relations, expressing his hope for their further development in all practical fields. The inclusion of the bilateral topic in the letter could have attested to two aims: either that the differences of opinion between the leaders of the two countries concerning the PLO should not overshadow the bilateral relations in whose continued development (particularly in the economic field) Ceaușescu had much interest. This aim coincided with my fear expressed in the Romanian MFA, that Romania's recognition of a non-existent Palestinian state might overshadow the further development of our bilateral relations; or Romania's fear of negative implication on its relations with the USA.

Stoian accompanied the letter with an oral message:

- New circumstances have been created in the international arena with the aim of settling regional conflicts through negotiations, at times direct. In the Middle East changes have occurred, especially with the PLCs acceptance of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, implicitly recognizing Israel.
- Against this background and following discussions Ceaușescu held recently with Arafat and some other leaders in the region, he believes that the PLO wants peace and is ready to discuss it with Israel. There is a possibility that Israel could maintain direct contacts with

the PLO even before an international conference could be convened, so that both sides could get to know the other's position better, in preparation for a negotiated peace.

- Ceaușescu still believes that an international conference is an appropriate framework for conducting negotiations between Israel and the Arabs and the PLO — the only legitimate representative of the Palestinians and the main partner in the talks. Within the framework of such a conference, direct contacts could take place between the sides.

Shamir and Arens clarified to the emissary that Israeli assessment of the PLO differs from theirs, and that Israel is convinced that the PLO plays a negative role in the region, constituting an obstacle on the way to peace with the Arab countries. Arafat's latest declarations do not attest to a change in the PLO's political thought but only to a strategic step aimed at convincing international public opinion on the justification of his position. We know that there is no change in the PLO's philosophy and that it continues to strive for Israel's disappearance and the founding of a Palestinian state in its place. There are many ways to prove this, even at present, in the statements made by his assistants, including the terrorist nature of the PLO. At the same time Shamir and Arens noted Israel's fervent desire to settle its conflict with Arab states by peaceful means, based on the Camp David accords. Both expressed their satisfaction with the bilateral relations between Israel and Romania in the areas of trade and culture. Mention was also made of Ceaucescu's positive attitude towards the Jewish community in Romania and to its emigration from there to Israel.

The Romanian media gave the talks extensive coverage, without mentioning the great differences of opinion between the two sides. Ceaușescu probably wanted to demonstrate that Romania's ability to mediate on the Israeli—Arab subject was not harmed due to Romania's recognition of a Palestinian state and the upgrading of the PLO representation in Romania to the status of an embassy. This was important for his prestige in the Middle East and in the international arena.

About two weeks after Stoian's return to Bucharest, I handed him Shamir's reply to Ceaușescu's letter. Shamir's reply firmly rejected Ceaușescu's assessment of the PLO's moderation. He indicated the statements made by members of the PLO leadership calling for Israel's destruction. He also opposed convening an international conference, presuming that the proposed meeting would become an international tribunal against Israel 'which our adversaries will exploit to the detriment of our most vital interests'.

Shamir added that he was 'in the process of developing ideas' leading to direct peace negotiations with our Arab neighbours, which would include the Arab states and Palestinian representatives 'who live here and are not connected to the PLO'.

Reading Shamir's letter, Stoian asked me, 'How do you, meanwhile, foresee the possibility of ever reaching negotiations?'

I replied that during his visit to Israel he had had an opportunity to become acquainted with a wide range of opinions, with their common denominator being the aspiration for peace, our readiness to negotiate with local Palestinians, suspicion of the PLO, and the absence of any confidence in it. I added that we might need, perhaps, a cooling-off period, elections, and autonomy arrangements for an agreed-upon period of time, which would develop a dynamic of their own.

Stoian pointed out the changes in PLO policy towards Israel as expressed, in his view, in the

PNC declarations in Algeria, in Arafat's speech at the UN General Assembly in Geneva, 'preparing the ground' for direct negotiations under international aegis between the PLO and us.

I asked him, 'Is this not just a tactical change?' After all, the Palestinian Covenant still exists. The PLO's implicit recognition of Israel is interwoven with statements by PLO leaders calling for the destruction of Israel in two stages. The demand to implement the UN resolution on the 'Right of Return', a condition expressed, among other things in Arafat's message to Ceaușescu, if implemented would cause Israel's collapse from within. PLO terrorist acts in the Administered Territories and within Israel inside the green line not only continue but even have intensified'.

Finally, I posed the question, 'Who is more authorised to interpret the PLO's positions better than its leaders?' I concluded that in the absence of a significant change in the PLO's stance, no beginning could be made towards negotiations with it. There would, however, be some chance for opening negotiations with local elected leaders, if they were not afraid of Arafat.

Stoian answered that he was not entitled to advise us on how to proceed, but from our answers he hears: No, no, no! He concluded by saying that he realised from his talk with Prime Minister Shamir that 'in politics there is nothing stable'. Hence, he had come to the conclusion that in the end Israel would accept the holding of an international conference with the PLO, because that is the only way to start negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

This was Stoian's last mission to Israel on behalf of Ceaușescu. In autumn 1989 he was nominated to the post of foreign minister, serving only a few months until the breakout of the anti-communist revolution in Romania.

This put an end to a series of talks we held with the Romanians following the PNC's declarations in Algeria and Arafat's address at the UN General Assembly in Geneva. It may be worthwhile citing here — as a concluding note on the series — from Ceaușescu's statement taken from an interview to the Egyptian paper *Al-Masa'a*, published in *Scînteia*; on 25 March 1989:

True Israel is still holding steadfast to rigid positions. Yet, I believe that Israel, too, will finally understand — like all countries of the Middle East — that it is in her interest that a just and lasting peace should prevail, that the Palestinian problem be settled on the basis of self-determination, including the right to establish an independent Palestinian state...

As for Israel's stand on the PLO's initiatives and declarations, I have already mentioned that the reservations and rejections to negotiate with the PLO are actually incomprehensible. I think, however, that they should be regarded as opening positions, tactics, and that Israel will understand that she should go to the talks at an international conference, to accept the PLO, and the new Palestinian state as an immediate partner, obviously composed of Palestinians from within as declared by the PLO and Chairman Arafat.

## SHAMIR'S PEACE PLAN

*In mid-April 1989*, Israeli Prime Minister Shamir initiated a Peace Plan whose basic points were: the beginning of negotiations between Israel and the Arab states on concluding the state of war between them, with Egypt's mediation; and holding elections for the local authority in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. The elected representatives would be authorised to negotiate with the Israeli authorities on the establishment of self-government (autonomy, with the exception of security and foreign affairs) in their territories for a transitional period of five years towards a permanent arrangement and the rehabilitation of the refugee camps in Gaza, Judea, and Samaria, with



international assistance.

The whole initiative (presented in the Knesset on 17 May 1989 by Shamir as the government's peace plan) negated negotiations with the PLO and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

On 19 April 1989, I explained to Deputy Foreign Minister Solomonescu the main points of the peace plan, which were actually already known and even rejected by the Arab league countries and Yasser Arafat. The deputy foreign minister reacted by saying that in the view of Romania's government this initiative did not contain anything new and lacked two basic elements: Israel's withdrawal from the Administered Territories, and Israel's acceptance of the convening of an international peace conference. In the absence of these foundations for mutual agreement, one cannot expect to find willingness on the part of the Arab states, including Egypt, to begin negotiations with Israel. Romania does not see any chance for a breakthrough as long as Shamir rejects negotiating with the PLO and does not accept a Palestinian state.

The United States' position of saying No to a Palestinian state and No to Israel's sovereignty over the Administered Territories is equivocal and obscure. Her impression was that the US had not yet determined its final position. She quoted Peres, defining the peace plan initiative as 'the best formula for non-settlement of the Palestinian problem'.

She did not refer to the idea of settling the refugee problem. As for myself, I stressed the importance of creating confidence-building measures, by reducing tension, and the chance for opening talks after the elections in the territories, as a process which could develop a dynamic of its own during the transitional period towards the conflict's settlement.

Solomonescu thanked me for sharing with her those ideas 'in the framework of current political contacts' between us. As usual, she promised to pass them on for the leadership's information.

On 25 May 1989, I summed up Romania's position concerning Israel's peace plan in my letter to the MFA in Jerusalem after my talks with senior officials in Romania's Ministry for Foreign Affairs:

A cautious tendency could be discerned among the Romanians in favour of accepting the idea of holding elections in the Administered Territories and self-government during a transitional period, on condition that beyond this period the Palestinians would have a state of their own, which had already been recognized by Romania after the PNC Declaration of Independence on 15 November 1988. President Ceaușescu steadfastly supports the basic right of the Palestinians to a state, similar to Israel's. This is the cornerstone of his Middle East policy. My interlocutors see Israel's rejection of establishing a Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, and its stubborn refusal to negotiate with the PLO, as the main obstacles in the peacemaking process. Thus, they consider the formula to save the situation as residing in an international conference (Ceaușescu regards himself as the father of the idea) leading to direct negotiations between the conflicting sides. They oppose, as we do, any solution imposed from the outside or any settlement of the conflict by other than political means. The acceptance of the idea of holding elections and of the setting up of the autonomy could yield a dynamic of its own. Yet, I do not think that Romania would declare support for this idea, without previous coordination with the PLO. In principle, it should be noted that Ceaușescu has always found a positive component in the autonomy idea as a provisional arrangement — but repeatedly emphasizes in his talks with us that as long as the

Palestinians do not accept this concept, it cannot be implemented in practice.

The Romanian media, which as we know serves as a spokesman for the authorities, offers the stubbornness of Israel's government as a comparison to the PLO's moderation and its readiness to accept Israel's existence and to make peace with it. The Israeli Government's peace plan — as defined a short while ago by Craciun Ionescu, political commentator on Middle East affairs in the weekly *Lumea* — 'is none other than a delaying tactic on the way to settling the Israeli—Arab conflict, and it does not contain any real response to the PLO initiatives'. In the meantime Romanian-PLO activity intensifies in frustration of Israel's peace initiative by granting full Romanian support to the Palestinian Declaration of Independence.

On 21 May 1989, the Romanian daily *Scînteia*; published the full text of Arafat's letter in reply to Ceaucescu's congratulations upon being elected President of the Palestinian State. Here is the basic text of the letter:

On behalf of the government, the Palestinian people, the PLO, and in my own name, I wish to convey to you, the Party, the Government, and the friendly Romanian people our profound gratitude for the message of congratulations that you sent us on the occasion of my being elected President of the Palestinian State. I have taken upon myself a heavy responsibility in this historic and decisive period of our people's struggle against colonization and occupation, a struggle which needs the support and assistance of friends. I am fully confident that you will stand by our side, as always, and that you will support the just struggle of our people under the leadership of the PLO, its legitimate representative

At this opportunity, I wish to reconfirm the decision of the Palestinian Arab people to continue its just struggle of the glorious *intifada* to put an end to Israeli occupation and to establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. I thank you, Comrade President, you, and the friendly Romanian people, for your firm and consistent stand in face of the just struggle of our people for the restoration and implementation of the inalienable rights, including the right of return, self-determination, and the establishment of an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital...

The publication of the letter's full text may attest to the acceptance of its contents by its recipient — and on that I expressed shock and deep disappointment to Mielciouiu, director of the Asian and Middle East Department of Romania's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, along the following lines:

1. A head of an organization was elected president of a fictitious state, which claims in its Covenant a determination to liberate the entire territory of Palestine under the British Mandate, and whose aim is, as noted in his letter addressed to President Ceaușescu, to fight against colonialism and Israeli occupation that includes, in his view, the whole territory of Mandatory Palestine, and establish Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, as its capital.
2. Arafat's' call for the cessation of terror in all forms and the promise he gave to Ceaușescu in this regard does not include the *intifada*, which continues daily. Not only does he glorify it, but he also promises Ceaușescu to carry it on.
3. Last but not least: his repeated expression of gratitude to Ceaușescu in his struggle for the right of return. These elements, I told Mielciouiu, presented under Romania's patronage justify our arguments. The sceptics among us should thank *Scînteia*; for having published

the full text of Arafat's letter. Only, these elements put Romania in a different light from the one in which we were used to seeing it. And that I truly regret.

On 6 July 1989, the Romanian media published the following highlights of a statement after Arafat's visit to Bucharest:

According to the initiative of President Ceaușescu, Arafat paid a working visit to Romania. Ceaușescu greeted Arafat as President of the State of Palestine, noting that his visit would contribute to the undertaking of new steps in the development of bilateral relations and the intensification of friendly relations and close cooperation between the Romanian people and the Palestinian.

Arafat expressed to Ceaușescu his deep appreciation for Romania's constant support in the cause of the Palestinian people and for its consistent stance on the settlement of the Middle East problems by political means. He also praised Romania's achievements...

Arafat informed Ceaușescu of the latest development on the Palestinian problem, of the new PLO activities to settle the Middle East problem and the establishment of a just peace in the region.

Ceaușescu emphasized also at this opportunity the importance of the Declaration of the State of Palestine and the political communique accompanying it, too, assessing that under the present circumstances, which have improved, new actions should be taken for convening, as soon as possible, an international conference under UN auspices with the participation of the State of Palestine and Israel as well as the permanent members of the Security Council. He promised that Romania would also, in the future, support the struggle and untiring efforts of the Palestinian people to reach a political, global, just, and lasting solution of the Middle East problem, and the implementation of its legitimate aspirations to live in peace in a free and independent homeland.

#### **FOURTH VISIT OF CONSTANTIN MITEA TO ISRAEL ON BEHALF OF PRESIDENT CEAUȘESCU**

*On 12 July 1989*, I was called on behalf of President Ceaușescu to Foreign Minister Totu, who read out (from a written text) this following message:

In face of the developments in the Middle East [Ceaușescu] would appreciate having a talk with Prime Minister Shamir with the aim of exchanging opinions on the peace-making efforts in our region — Shamir's initiative and others. For this purpose Ceaușescu would welcome with great pleasure Shamir's acceptance of his invitation to visit Bucharest at an early date and for as long as he would determine. In the case, however, that the prime minister's engagements would prevent him from accepting this invitation, he would ask the prime minister to send him his special emissary. Should this possibility also be unworkable, then Ceaușescu would be ready to send his own personal emissary to Shamir, at a date convenient to him.

Shamir decided to postpone the invitation to a later date and to receive, instead, as in the past, Ceaușescu's emissary for a talk in Jerusalem. To a certain extent, this was an imposed visit upon Israel. Despite our disappointment in Ceaușescu's recognition of a Palestinian state and the upgrading of the PLO representation to the status of an embassy, Ceaușescu still enjoyed a

certain prestige, both in Israel's coalition and opposition, for his contribution to Sadat's historic visit to Israel, for not having broken relations with Israel, and foremost for his positive attitude to the Jewish community in Romania, and for enabling Romanian Jews to emigrate to Israel. For all those reasons, it was impossible to reject the visit of Ceaucescu's emissary to Israel.

Constantin Mitea was received by Foreign Minister Moshe Arens on 26 July 1989 (about two weeks after the arrival of Ceaucescu's request). As I was told, Mitea had come to inform Israel about Arafat's clarifications to Ceaușescu, namely, about Arafat's interest and readiness for the maintenance of contacts and a direct dialogue with Israel...This certainly would not be all at once, but rather to begin with different levels and persons, in order to reach a stage of direct talks, preferable to having contacts and talks through a third party.... Basically Ceaușescu believes that there is a momentum that should be taken into consideration. Arafat should not be regarded just as a person but as one who knows what to do...

Arens rejected the proposal on the spot, saying that 'our policy is not to have any contacts with the PLO...which is a terrorist organization that has carried out the most despicable terrorist acts since the Second World War and is still engaged in them, not only against Israel but also against the Arab population in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, and all contacts with this organization do not contribute to peace'. Instead, Arens suggested that Ceaușescu lend his support to the Israeli government peace plan initiative and exert his influence on Arab states to express their support for it. This, he said, would be 'his great contribution to peace'. After all, 'to make peace with the Arab states, there is no need to talk to the PLO and to regulate the status of the Arabs in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza talks should be held with the resident representatives and not with the PLO'.

Mitea promised to pass on Arens' comments to Ceaușescu, adding at the end what he defined as 'his personal view without being the PLO's advocate', that sooner or later Israel would have to recognize the PLO, since to achieve peace in the region without the PLO is a most difficult task.

This was the last dialogue in a series of talks we conducted with Ceaușescu's emissaries, attesting more than any previous one during my mission to Romania to the wide gap between Israel's positions and those of the Palestinians during Ceaușescu's mediation, and showing that the time was not ripe to activate the peace process on the basis of the PLO's full and explicit recognition of Israel's existence and on the PLO's commitment to abandon terrorism along the way to reaching political destinations in exchange for accepting autonomy in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza for a transitional period of five years toward a final settlement. Ceaușescu had entered a trap, perhaps he had no other choice, when he recognized a fictitious Palestinian state without properly assessing Israel's sensitivity to the PLO. It was only natural that Ceaușescu's act would create a lack of confidence in him on Israel's part, even if his positive deeds of the past were not forgotten. Time, however, has proved that Ceaușescu's general orientation in the direction of peace between Israel and the Palestinians was correct, and there is no doubt that he had a certain influence on the PLO's leader in moderating his positions regarding recognizing Israel's right to exist in the region and the making of peace with it.

Two additional reasons for the fading out of the Israel—Romania dialogue, towards the second half of 1989, may be discerned: first by the active role Egypt, and mainly the USSR too, in their attempts at reducing the gap between Israel's positions and those of the PLO, following publication of Israel's peace plan and towards the convening of an international conference as an opening to negotiations for the settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict. There was also the political and social shifts in the Soviet bloc, gradually leading to its dissolution, whereas

Ceaușescu was struggling against radical changes, a factor that caused a sharp decline in his prestige, in both West and East.

## **MY FAREWELL TALK WITH CEAUȘESCU**

*On 30 July 1989*, on the occasion of the conclusion of my mission in Romania, I paid a farewell visit to Ceaușescu, at his summer resort in Snagov. Dressed informally and as friendly as usual, he made an impression as if it were a meeting of two neighbours.

I summed up my mission by praising the constant development of Israel—Romania relations, expressed my gratitude for the friendly cooperation that I had enjoyed in my contacts with the Romanian authorities, during my four-year mission in Bucharest. I noted that beyond our bilateral relations, which would probably flourish in the future as well, the period of my mission was mainly characterized by the politically intensified dialogue that took place between him and Israel's leaders, and between myself and senior official of the MFA on the Israeli—Arab conflict, to which he had devoted a great deal of time, good will, and energy. It seemed, I said, that during the course of this dialogue we had agreed between us not to agree on the subject of PLO policy towards us. And, perhaps, many people outside the region would find it difficult to understand how a persecuted people such as we were, one most eager for peace, did not respond positively to the declarations made by our enemies that contained, so to speak, explicit recognition of our right to an independent and sovereign existence. Yet, these statements were subject to daily re-interpretation by PLO leaders with their open tendencies to liberate Palestine — the entire Mandatory Territory — implementation of which would result in Israel's disappearance in line with the two-stage plan, while at the same time the PLO's terrorist acts against Israel continued non-stop.

I permitted myself to evaluate — and it was noted that Ceaușescu did not like it — that if the countries of the world had conditioned their recognition of the PLO on the abolition of the Palestinian Covenant, then it is most probable that the PLO would have been compelled long ago to recognize Israel's existence and abandon terrorism against us to reach political goals. If that had happened, Israel would long ago have moved ahead a significant distance on the road to the yearned-for peace. I added that the massive political support that Arafat received from those countries that recognized the PLO had so far delayed the opening of peace negotiations. It seems that Arafat did not see himself as committed to making a compromise with Israel as long as he received full political and material assistance that fortified his status in the world, without making this support contingent upon his acceptance of the commitment to recognize Israel.

Ceaușescu was not happy with my assessment. I could see a sober expression on his face. An official of the Protocol Department assisting at this meeting and taking notes of my words, was somewhat amazed. I wondered if any other foreign ambassador had permitted himself to speak out in a frank manner at a farewell talk with Ceaușescu, the way I did on this occasion. He did, however, try to maintain a cool composure, pointing to the beautiful garden next to the livingroom in which we were seated where, as he said, he had conducted long talks with Prime Minister Begin on ways to reach peace between Israel and Egypt. As if he wanted to say, 'I was right then and I am right now'. He expressed his bewilderment, in a sorrowful tone, over Shamir's government not becoming convinced, until then, of the PLO's moderation and its real attitudes towards settling the conflict for the first time in history. Remembering that he had a share in this moderation after his many talks with Arafat, he noted that in light of the PLO's new

and moderate policy, more convenient conditions had been created, in his opinion, than had ever existed before for peace negotiations. This is an opportune moment, he said, one should act quickly to take advantage of it. There is no guarantee that this moderation will last, if there is not adequate response from Israel's government. Of course, there is a difference of opinion and of attitudes, but these could be discussed through an international conference for the settling of the Israeli—Arab conflict. He expressed his hope that Prime Minister Shamir would soon be convinced of the correctness of this way 'leading to the desired peace'.

In spite of this exchange of evaluations, that deviated in their frankness from what was obliged under the circumstances of this meeting, our talk ended on a moving tone. Ceaușescu thanked me for my contribution to the intensification of mutual relations, wishing me success in my future service at Israel's Ministry for Foreign Affairs and in my private life, and invited me to revisit Romania whenever I felt like it. Its gates, he said, would always be open for me. Saying good-bye to him on the threshold of his summer resort, as he had accompanied me on my way out, I expressed my good wishes to him, his people, and his country as well as my hope for welcoming him in Israel in the not too distant future. He shook his head with a long, hesitant glance, saying 'When peace will come'.

The Declaration of Principles signed by the leaders of Israel and the PLO at a historical scene televised throughout the world to millions of viewers, in September 1993, on the White House lawn in Washington, DC, became possible as we know, after the end of the Cold War between the Western and Eastern bloc, after the Gulf War, and following the collapse of the communist regimes in East Europe. The PLO found itself isolated within the Arab camp, lacking military, political, and economic assistance that it was accustomed to receiving from the Eastern bloc during the Cold War period and from the rich Arab countries, whereas it was now pressured by a new generation of Palestinians aspiring for true peace in the region on the basis of the acceptance of Israel's existence.

Ceaușescu foresaw the beginning of the peace process; he acted with all his might to advance it, but he did not live to see it happen. However, there is absolutely no doubt about his influence on the birth of the process, both on Israel's side and on that of the PLO.

## NOTES

1. *Ha'aretz*, 29, 30 December 1985.
2. *Ibid.*, 21 December 1985.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Romanian Press (*Scînteia; Romani Libera*) of 30 December 1985.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ha'aretz*, 9 January 1986.
7. On 24 December 1985 the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* reported that the Syrians had once again put up mobile missiles in Lebanon, and Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin's statement that Israel faces an immediate military threat from Syria.
8. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres praised the US military action against Libya, saying that it was a justified campaign at the right time (*Ha'aretz*, 2 April 1986). Hence, it could be assumed that Romania decided to convey a warning message also to Israel.
9. Details about the location bombed, *Ha'aretz*, 16 April 1986.
10. For Hussein's address, *Ha'aretz*, 20 February 1986.
11. In his major speech at the congress Peres stated, *inter alia*, that the State of Israel recognizes the Palestinians as a people, that we have no intention of harming them or degrading them and that we don't intend to deal with the conflict between us

by force or compulsion...you could not suppress us by terror and we don't intend to suppress you by war. The way [to a breakthrough] is by coming to terms with your representatives who would reflect your interests in a settlement...or with a joint delegation [composed] of you and Jordan. He also added that the State of Israel supports the settlement of the Palestinian problem in the frame of Jordan. He negated the founding of a Palestinian state noting that we are ready [to conclude] an interim agreement in a functional manner, by various stages of self-government until [we reach] a final settlement (*Ha'aretz*, 9, 10 April 1986). It was the first time that an Israeli prime minister expressed such views on the Palestinian people. If we like, we could find here the main nucleus of the Oslo Agreements signed between Israel and the PLO, eight years later in 1993.

12. See his article on his impressions of his visit to Romania, *Devar Hashavua*, 1 August 1986.
13. Ibid.
14. Romania's dailies, 8 July 1986.
15. On my remark that the USSR made him a national hero; had it enabled him to emigrate to Israel 11 years ago nobody would have heard of his torments, Stoian answered: 'The USSR could have kept him another 20 years in jail'.
16. Hussein and Arafat reached an agreement on coordinating their positions on a future confederation between Jordan and the Palestinian State. Thus Hussein deviated from his programme to set up a Federation and recognized the right of the Palestinians to a state of their own and not only to autonomy on the West Bank. In exchange, Arafat agreed to set up a joint Jordanian—Palestinian delegation to an international conference for peace negotiations with Israel.

In the Peres—Ceaușescu talks in Bucharest on 21 February 1985, Peres pointed out the negative aspects of this agreement: Arafat's refusal of Hussein's demand to accept Security Council Resolution 242; his refusal to abandon terror as a means of resolving the conflict; his running away from direct negotiations and the non-bridging of the gap between Arafat's and Hussein's conceptions concerning the confederation. Ceaușescu, on his part, pointed out the positive aspects in the agreement — thus explaining Romania's support for it — namely, accepting the principle of direct negotiations, willingness for a joint delegation, consent to a federation with Jordan, and the acceptance of UN resolutions. As for the last point, Ceaușescu admitted there was no mention of Security Council Resolution 242, noting that he had discussed it with Arafat. It was common knowledge that Arafat did not accept 242 because it mentioned the Palestinians only as refugees (and not as a people). But basically, the PLO did concur with Ceaușescu's view of a political solution and that was the main idea.

In my talk with Marcel Dinu, on 19 September 1985, he told me that at first Romania had supported the agreement, presuming that it would lead to the continuation of the peace process in the region. Lately, however, Romania had refrained from backing it due to the split threatening the PLO between the moderates (including Arafat) and the extremists over the interpretation of the agreement, while at the same time the conflict between Arafat and Hussein continued to grow. (A clash that put an end to the Coordination Agreement between them in February 1989.)

17. On the question of negotiations with the PLO, Shamir differed from Peres. While Shamir was categorically opposed to any negotiations with the PLO and its leader, Arafat, Peres was inclined to a more positive attitude toward the organization, on the condition that it change its stand on Israel. At the Labor Party congress, 9–10 April 1986, Peres stated, 'We say to the Palestinians, we recognize you as a people. We do not intend to deal with the conflict between us by force or by imposing force. You will not defeat us by terror and we have no intention of vanquishing you by war. The path is a path of talking together — with representatives who would reflect your desire for a settlement, and not the illusion of violence, or with a joint delegation made up of you and Jordan (*Ha'aretz*, 11 April 1986).
18. *Ha'aretz*, 30 October 1986.
19. *Ha'aretz*, 6 November 1986.
20. *Ha'aretz*, 7 November 1986.
21. *Ha'aretz*, 7 November 1986.
22. *Ha'aretz*, 9 November 1986.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Shamir had in mind the Soviet—American joint declaration for the settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict published without any prior consultation with Israel.
27. Schultz's initiative was based on the 1987 decision by the Reagan Administration in support of convening an international conference as a frame for negotiations between Israel and her neighbours. In a letter Schultz addressed to the leaders in the Middle East, published on 4 March 1988, he proposed the creation of a link between the talks on an interim settlement and those on a permanent one, with a seven-month interval between them, while according to the Camp David accords the negotiations for a permanent settlement should start only during the third year of the interim arrangement. No party to the conflict accepted Schultz's initiative.
28. Shultz's talk with two American professors, members of the PNC — held contrary to Israel's recommendation — was

interpreted by the Romanian leadership as US readiness to negotiate with the PLO, and the American administration's willingness to accept the idea of an international conference, on the one hand, and the readiness of the PLO to accept the idea of the autonomy which it had rejected in the past, on the other hand.



## 5 Romania's Jewry during the Late Ceaușescu Era

The national status of Romania's Jewish community during the Ceaușescu era was unique in the East European communist bloc. This standing resulted from the historical continuity of its structure, the nature of its organizational leadership in the spiritual-religious, social and cultural spheres, and Ceaușescu's needs in internal and foreign policies towards the USA, the West, and Israel.<sup>1</sup>

Its unique characteristics were, first, the Jewish community in Romania, within its present borders, which preserved, the continuity of its traditional structure owing to the non-deportation of local Jews during the Holocaust to extermination camps. This excludes the Jews of South Bucovina, expelled to Transnistria together with the survivors of the pogroms in Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina (areas the Romanian army recaptured from the USSR at the beginning of the German—Soviet war), and the Jews of north Transylvania, then under the fascist regime of Hungary, deported in 1944 to Nazi extermination camps. In Regat and southern Transylvania, not only were the entire Jewish communities saved from the Holocaust but many of the community institutions, such as community centres, schools, synagogues, and hospitals, never ceased functioning during the war years. They even dispatched material aid to the deportees in Transnistria and extended their assistance to those Jews from northern Transylvania who had been fortunate enough to rescue themselves by crossing the border to south Transylvania, evading the threat of extermination. In this respect, this Jewry's fate differed from that of the majority of Jewish communities in East Europe.

Moreover, during all the years of communist rule, and even before the accession to power of Ceaușescu, whose attitude to Romania's Jewry was better than that of his predecessors, when any national activity in the Jewish communities was totally prohibited, even then the structure of the communities was not harmed, except for private Jewish schools and hospitals that were nationalised. Of course, under the communist regime the community's activities were under constant surveillance by the internal and security authorities and could no longer operate independently. With their continued existence, however, they rendered indispensable services to the community as a whole, especially in the final years of Ceaușescu's rule.

Even as the community continued to function, important changes occurred from within that demographically shattered the Jewish population owing to mass emigration to Israel of almost entire communities. This situation ran from the end of the Second World War to the collapse of the communist regime. At the War's close the Jewish population (within the present borders) numbered 428,000,<sup>2</sup> including some tens of thousands of Transnistria survivors and the

Czernowitz Jews who had left the USSR as well as the Holocaust survivors in north Transylvania (under Hungarian rule 1940–45, but again part of Romania after the War). In the mid-1960s when Ceaușescu came to power, an estimated 100,000 Jews remained.<sup>3</sup> At the end of his era, December 1989, some 19,000 Jews were left.<sup>4</sup> (By the close of the 1990s, they numbered about 12,000, half of them over the age of 60.) Immigration figures are shown in Table 1.

Despite the gradual decrease in the Jewish population, community institutions are carrying on their activities — especially in the large towns — as they did under the communist regime but now with greater freedom.

Second, the community had and still has a deeply-rooted Jewish national consciousness, linked with Israel and the outside Jewish world, with a very strong feeling of common destiny and national belonging.

It was not just a coincidence that the Jewish national awakening in the nineteenth century started in Romania before Herzl founded the Zionist movement, and even before the *Hovevei Zion* movement emerged in Russia.<sup>5</sup> The settlements of Rosh Pina and Zichron Ya'akov were established in Eretz Israel in the 1880s and 1890s by ardent Zionists from Romania motivated by national inspiration and enthusiasm. This spirit of returning to the historic homeland was the prevailing characteristic of the Jewish community in Romania throughout the twentieth century, including the communist era. This may also explain why the bulk of Romanian Jewry emigrated to Israel. It was not only their roots which characterized them, but their way of life in the traditional Jewish spirit — in the educational, cultural, religious, social and economic fields.

[Table 1: Demographic Situation of the Jewish Population in Romania in the years 1985–89\\*:  
According to Data from the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania \(FCER\)\\*\\*](#)

Group	June 1985	Dec. 1986	Dec. 1987	Dec. 1988	Dec. 1989
Total	25,455	23,154	21,232	20,005	18,750
Age group					
0–5 years	370	343	331	265	231
Over 60 years	12,700	11,210	10,482	9,840	9,453
Main cities					
Bucharest	11,785	10,478	9,821	9,114	8,517
Timișoara	1,311	1,228	1,318	1,237	1,200
Iași***	1,398	1,264	1,170	1,023	1,030
Oradea****	859	791	730	662	700
Arad***	806	905	794	729	700
Cluj***	702	740	622	616	651
Bacău	713	620	538	494	464
Galați	618	537	497	466	410

\*A spread of 120 localities and in 55 organized communities. In many localities there are fewer than ten people.

\*\*The statistics are based on the data of registered Jews in the various communities. It doesn't include Jews who for their own reasons (for example, intermarriage, assimilation, fear of being identified as such, etc.) are not registered; there is no exact data for these people. The assumption is that the majority of the Jewish population is registered in the communities for national, religious, welfare and economic reasons.

\*\*\*Including neighbouring villages.

Combining these two aspects, the structure with the national spirit, one encounters the physical and national basis, lacking in other parts of the Soviet bloc, which guaranteed the continuity of the community. But this apparently would not have been sufficient for national

survival in a communist state were it not for the community's central leadership, headed by the late chief rabbi and president of the Jewish communities in Romania Dr David Moses Rosen, who succeeded by his personal wisdom, national personality, spiritual and religious authority and leadership ability to strengthen the national roots of the Jews in Romania, in the spirit of Jewish tradition and out of love for Zion, taking advantage of Ceaușescu's internal and foreign policies to foster the community's national aspirations. I know that the chief rabbi's personality aroused some resentment in certain Jewish circles in Romania, and even among some of Israel's envoys in Bucharest, perhaps due to the forceful way he ruled the community, even to the manifestation of totalitarian trappings in his immediate surroundings or maybe owing to suspicions of collaborating with the communist regime, since on his visits to the West he customarily praised the authorities' attitude to the Jewish minority during the Ceaușescu period, as they allowed the Jews to develop their life as a national minority (while the national aspirations of the Hungarian minority were thwarted). The issue of collaboration also came into question because he was summoned to help Romania obtain MFN status from the USA, with the assistance of American Jewish organizations and of Israel, while human rights in Romania were suppressed as they were in other communist bloc countries.

As one well acquainted with the broad scope of Rabbi Rosen's activities — at times very dangerous ones — before I assumed my mission as Israel's ambassador to Romania, I cannot but note his great contribution to ensuring the existence of Romanian Jewry during the communist regime, particularly in the Ceaușescu era.

He deserves all due credit for his contribution, but it could not have been effected without the assistance he received from Israel, the United States, and the Jewish organizations in the West, be it in his struggle for the national rights of the Jewish minority ensured by the constitution, such as the rights for religious education including the study of Hebrew, the preservation of Jewish tradition, culture and festivals, or his strong public demands to ban anti-Semitic manifestations in all its forms. Actually, the Jewish minority in Romania was the only one to enjoy a wide range of these rights. Romania did not see itself threatened by granting national rights to Jews to the extent that it felt threatened by the Hungarian nationality, for fear of its political separation. Therefore, the response to Rabbi Rosen's demands, supported from the outside, enabled him to lead Romanian Jewry under Ceaușescu's rule as if it were not living under a communist regime.

There were a large number of important Jewish institutions, unparalleled in other Soviet bloc countries, functioning during the period under survey. First was The Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania (FJCR), presided over by Chief Rabbi Rosen. This central organization dealt with all the educational, cultural, religious, social and welfare matters concerning the Jews of Romania, both in organized communities and in scattered, unorganized localities. The Federation also represented the communities in frequent contact with the authorities, from the Department of Religious Affairs to the prime minister and president of the Republic, in daily matters as well as in those connected with the struggle against anti-Semitism.

There was a synagogue, as a religious, national, and public centre, in every Jewish locality. In Bucharest the Coral Synagogue served Rabbi Rosen as a rostrum for his sermons on interpreting the Torah readings, stressing his steadfast confirmation of the unity of the Jewish people with its national and spiritual centre: Eretz Israel (or as he called it the Holy Land, so as not to give the communist authorities a pretext that he was preaching loyalty to a foreign state). He was the only rabbi in the whole communist sphere who gave such sermons publicly, and he used to recite a

prayer every Saturday and on Jewish festivals for the well-being of the State of Israel, its ministers and advisers. This was a courageous act that was not even performed by all rabbis in the West. The prayer was offered in Hebrew and followed by a prayer in Romanian for the welfare of the president and the government of Romania.

Throughout this time kosher restaurants served thousands of people daily in the main cities. Elderly people received meals in their homes on a daily basis. Talmud Torah Schools of a religious nature taught prayers, Jewish tradition, the Bible, and Hebrew to youngsters. Youth choirs in the main cities had a very large repertoire consisting mainly of Hebrew songs linked to Zion, Israel, and Jerusalem (some of them had been sung by the Zionist youth movements when they were openly active before the communist regime was installed), as well as songs in Yiddish from Jewish folklore. These choirs were a source of pride and inspiration in all communities, constituting a sort of Zionist training for *aliyah*. These groups were the only forum, in addition to the synagogues, in which Jewish youngsters could meet and foster their connections to Jewry, Judaism, and Israel.

Lectures on Jewish themes on the adult level, given by Jewish (and occasionally non-Jewish) university lecturers, were convened once a week in Bucharest and once or twice a month in the other main cities within Jewish communities. This cultural activity served as an Institute for Jewish Enlightenment.

Medical assistance was provided exclusively to members of the Jewish community. It included the services of doctors and nurses as well as the supply of medicines (not always available locally) with the assistance of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).

Ritually slaughtered kosher meat [was purchased...] by the JDC with foreign currency and sold for local currency at a low price, enabling a regular supply of meat to members of the Jewish community, while in the local butcher shops there was a constant shortage of it.

Old Age Homes, financed mainly by the JDC, were the most important institutions for lonely elderly people. The residents paid a small sum and received full medical and social welfare care in addition to full board. These homes were, and continue to be, equipped and run to Western standards, and can be regarded as the pride of the Jewish community.

The Jewish Museum was founded in Bucharest in the late 1970s in one of the synagogues scheduled for demolition as part of the New Municipal Planning. Saved by its designation as a museum, the building houses exhibits of important historic documents from the beginning of the Jewish community in Romania until after the Holocaust period. Also on display are collections from the Jewish press, including Zionist and other publications, testifying to the contribution of the Jews to the cultural, economic, and social development of Romania. A Jewish museum was also founded in Iași in the mid-1980s.

A nationally oriented bi-monthly social-educational-cultural magazine, *Revista Cultului Mozaic*, was published in four languages<sup>6</sup> — unique in Europe. Distribution covered Romanian institutions and personalities, Jewish communities throughout Romania, and Jewish communities across the border, such as the Moldavian Republic (formerly Bessarabia) and west Ukraine (formerly northern Bucovina). This was an important educational implement and means for disseminating information on Jewish history and events in the Jewish world (including Israel), Rabbi Rosen's interpretation of weekly Torah readings, an obituary section covering the various Romanian communities, and so on. The magazine's editor, Professor Haim Riemer, a learned

expert in Hebrew and Yiddish Jewish culture, tradition and history, immigrated to Israel at the beginning of the 1980s. After a short period, Rabbi Rosen called him back, temporarily to continue editing the magazine, giving it a Jewish-national character. After Rabbi Rosen's death, Riemer ended his mission in Romania and returned to Israel.

Each issue of the magazine — which had to be approved by the Department of Culture prior to publication — was the subject to frequent differences of opinion, since the censors regarded the material as too nationalistic in spirit. Consequently, certain articles did not pass the censor, particularly Rabbi Rosen's criticism of anti-Semitic manifestations in Romania. Since Rabbi Rosen was the magazine's founder and enforced his control over all its articles, some people called it, either jokingly or affectionately, 'Rosenblatt', meaning in Yiddish 'Rosen's newspaper'.

The Centre for Research on the Jews' History in Romania collected important data and documentation from the Jewish communities and institutions as well as from State Archives<sup>7</sup> and non-Jewish institutions. The Centre published three volumes on the history of Jewish settlement in Romania, a monumental work, and one volume of documents on the Holocaust of Jews under the fascist regime in Romania. I believe that two additional volumes on the history of Jews in Romania appeared after the 1989 revolution.

The Jewish Theatre was and remains an important cultural institution, enjoying the full financial assistance of the Romanian Council for Socialist Education and Culture. Though it performed outside the framework of the Jewish community establishment, it was firmly attached to the life of the community. The Theatre's repertoire drew mainly from classical Jewish drama, with a strong national tendency cultivating local Jewish heritage. Two of its outstanding artists, Tricy Abramovici and Bebe Bercovici, immigrated to Israel at the end of the 1980s.

Finally, the organization of Public Seder Nights attracted not only ordinary people but many Jewish intellectuals, including persons who participated for the first time in their lives at such events. They would listen until 2 a.m. as Rabbi Rosen explained the *Haggadah*, dreaming of being redeemed from bondage to freedom.

Among the Jewish intellectuals were writers, artists, painters, musicians, journalists, scientists and university professors, one of them, Professor Nicolae Cajal, the current president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania. Some of them appeared to me to be 'detached persons'.<sup>8</sup> They were born Jewish but attempted with all their might to assimilate into Romania's society and culture. And, the more they tried, the less likely were the Romanian nationalists in the local hierarchy inclined to absorb them. They always remembered their Jewish background. Therefore, we find that not a single Jew, in the period under survey, served in the higher echelons in the Ministries of Defence or Foreign Affairs. And, if I am not mistaken, not even in the other ministries, such as Education, Culture, Science, Economic, or Industry.

Though Jews were active in the fields of literature and art, in no instance were they elevated to a senior status of leadership and administration. Since they were regarded as aliens, many whom we came to know from the intellectual circles began to look for their roots and became interested in the Jewish past and in Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people, always ready to absorb them should they receive permission to leave Romania. I am certain that such an alternative was always in their minds. It was the Jewish community — again at Chief Rabbi Rosen's initiative — that attracted them to its events. They slowly revealed themselves to the representatives of Israel, despite the danger involved and were quite overjoyed to receive our invitations to participate at official and social events and receptions, attending if they could receive permission from the

security bodies. But we were never invited to their private homes, presumably for fear that they might be suspected of espionage in favour of Israel. While they considered Israel a potential refuge during critical times, it was the Jewish community, with its social and cultural activity, that brought about something of a return to their roots and a feeling of national belonging to the Jewish people.

Another definitely unique enterprise was the 'Hannukiada' — again initiated by Chief Rabbi Rosen. This was a project involving travelling to scattered Jewish communities in Romania for the purpose of kindling the lights of the Hannukah menorah with local members. In addition to Rabbi Rosen, those who went to these places included community leaders from Bucharest, representatives from the Israeli embassy, and foreign guests and journalists from Israel and the USA. Before the lighting of the Hannukah candles, Rabbi Rosen gave festival greetings and lectured on the national significance of the festival. All present enjoyed feasting on traditional dishes. This was a distinctive, heartwarming phenomenon that symbolised the hope for freedom and redemption. I doubt whether there is a similar example anywhere in the Jewish Diaspora the world over. Fortunately, this tradition goes on, even after the rabbi's death in 1994.

Most of the enterprises listed received the backing of the JDC. Even so, without the spiritual and organizational guidance of Rabbi Rosen, it is doubtful whether they would have been carried out. The JDC activities in Romania during the Ceaușescu era were the only ones permitted in Soviet bloc countries. In fact, Romania was gaining alleviation from carrying out its economic, medical, and social welfare responsibilities towards the needy among the Jewish community, which it would otherwise have had to fund itself. Ironically, the permission given for JDC operations was interpreted as a good will gesture on the part of the Romanian authorities. Still both they and the Jewish communities benefited — and continue to do so — from JDC activities.

The community structure continues to function — ten years after the revolution — demonstrating the vitality of the community despite its constant demographic decline. We must keep in mind, however, that had there not been the driving force of the central leadership, outside aid from the JDC, the links with Israel and with the rest of the Jewish world, and the tolerance displayed by Ceaușescu's authorities, it is quite doubtful that the framework would have remained operational in face of the shrinking Jewish community in a communist state.

I have enumerated here only the main activities of the FJCR, to demonstrate the institutionalised life of Romania's Jewry as a unique phenomenon in a communist regime. The national importance embodied in it is no doubt the preservation of the Jewish heritage, namely, Jewish survival and the cultivation of Jewish consciousness also as a means for promoting *aliyah*. No wonder that when Israeli leaders from all political streams used to visit Romania and see for themselves the miracle of Jewish national existence there in comparison to the situation prevailing in this domain in the neighbouring Soviet bloc countries, they profusely praised the blessed enterprises of Chief Rabbi Rosen, performed with the help of a small number of staff members, the majority being pensioners wholeheartedly devoted to the community work. The late President Haim Herzog gave concrete expression to the deep appreciation and admiration that he felt for the rabbi's enterprises by hosting a festive reception in his honour in July 1988, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his rabbinical activities and the 40th anniversary as chief rabbi of Romania's Jewry, at the President's Residence in Jerusalem in the presence of cabinet ministers, Knesset Members, representatives of government ministries, members of the Association of Jews from Romania in Israel, Israel's ambassador to Bucharest, and hundreds of invited guests from all strata in Israel. The American president, Ronald Reagan, also voiced his

appreciation to the rabbi on this occasion by sending a congratulatory message to him at a similar event held in Bucharest by the FJCR in the presence of rabbis from Israel, Western countries, Moscow, and the ambassadors of the USA and Israel in Bucharest. Among those in Romania who went out of their way not to congratulate the rabbi were Ceaușescu and his cabinet ministers. True, Rabbi Rosen had never taken a demonstrative part, as was customary in those days in Romania, in the Ceaușescu personality cult, whether it be in organizing public assemblies in his honour in the Coral Synagogue or in his appearances in Romania's Parliament as the representative of the Jewish minority. Moreover, I do not remember ever seeing Ceaușescu's picture hanging in the rabbi's bureau or in the FJCR offices. I also do not recall the Jewish Youth Choirs ever singing even one song of praise in honour of Ceaușescu (customary in those days). Thus, it is strange that some of the Romanian Jews in Israel tried to create the impression that Rabbi Rosen collaborated with Ceaușescu and even supported him.

During my mission in Bucharest, my wife Hanna and I visited almost all the Jewish communities scattered throughout Romania. In each of them we were welcomed wholeheartedly by all members of the community. Our encounters with them were always held in the local synagogue by prior coordination with Romania's foreign ministry and the FJCR. In localities with active Youth Choirs, we were greeted by the song 'Welcome in the name of God' and other Hebrew songs. The president of the local Jewish community used to greet us, tell us about the community's activities, its demographic situation, and incorporate into his words praise for Romania's government under President Ceaușescu, 'which enables the Jewish minority to live its traditional life', to Rabbi Rosen for his spiritual leadership and to the FJCR for its material aid. In localities where the Jews had not been deported to extermination camps, the president of the community would mention the approximate number of Jews who had emigrated to Israel. Communities whose members went through the Holocaust would mention the number of those who had perished in Transnistria's ghettos and camps. This scenario repeated itself in each community we visited.

Immediately afterwards I would be invited to address the audience. I would bring them greetings from Israel, tell them about the development of Israel—Romania relations, the integration of Jews from Romania into all domains of our life in Israel (with detailed examples) and end by expressing our hope that all those who wished to do so would come to Israel to join their brothers there. Everything was conducted without a hitch, with no interference. I was the first or perhaps the second Israeli ambassador (after Dr Abba Gefen) whom the Romanian authorities permitted to address a Jewish audience publicly and officially — true, in the synagogue or community centre. In communist countries at that time, it was a unique phenomenon. Our visits to the Jewish communities were extraordinary experiences for us, to be cherished forever as a vivid, heartwarming memory of encounters with Jewish communities that for many years had been disconnected from us, yearning endlessly for live contact with us. Our very appearance in their midst, as they told us, was the concrete embodiment of an independent Jewish state of which they were always dreaming but which until then had not been a reality for them. They were excited to meet and talk with us, beyond the official part. In one case, the excitement ended up with the death of the president of the Radauji Jewish community, Shlomo Schlein, about ten minutes after we took leave of the community members in the local synagogue. He apparently suffered from a heart condition, collapsed and died on the spot. When we had said our farewells upon leaving the synagogue, he expressed his wish to emigrate to Israel before his death. To the great sorrow of all of us, he never realised his dream. May his memory be blessed.

Besides us, the communities were visited by members of the embassy staff and envoys of Nativ, who were an integral part of the embassy staff dealing with *aliyah* matters and daily meeting local Jews who visited the embassy to receive information and guidance relating to their approaching emigration to Israel. As a rule, the embassy fulfilled a most important function in strengthening the links between Israel and local Jews and institutions. They also dealt with all the matters involved in the immigration of Jews from the USSR to Israel as they travelled through Romania.

Almost every month delegations from American Jewish organizations used to come to Romania to become acquainted with the remnants of the Jewish communities, the federative structure of the community, and the manner in which the JDC's financial aid was utilised in education, culture, health and welfare. The visits were beneficial for the encouragement they gave to the Jewish communities in Romania in the name of the American Jewish organizations; for the inspiration the delegations drew from their contacts with Romanian Jewry; and for their demonstration of interrelations between American and Romanian Jewry.

The programme of their visits included a reception at the residence of Israel's ambassador in Romania, during the course of which I would present a survey of local Jewry and Israel—Romania relations. Among the Israeli personalities who used to visit Romania frequently were the leaders of the Association of Jews in Israel from Romania, Itzchak Korn and Itzchak Artzi. They used to meet with Rabbi Rosen and with presidents of Jewish communities in Romania, and were also received by representatives of the government authorities. Their visits also greatly contributed to the fostering of mutual links between the remnants of Romanian Jewish communities and Israel.

## **ACTIVITY AGAINST THE DEMOLITION OF BUCHAREST SYNAGOGUES**

I was personally involved at the highest authoritative levels, together with the ambassadors of the USA and Spain in Romania, and certainly in close cooperation with Chief Rabbi Rosen, in the effort to prevent the demolition of Bucharest synagogues within the framework of the New Municipal Planning under the personal command of Ceaușescu. We tried to prevent the destruction of the Sephardic Synagogue. We only heard of the intention to demolish it at quite a late stage, so we only took action belatedly. The number of Sephardi Jews in Bucharest reached no more than 150 people and few worshippers came to the synagogue services. Yet, it was the only historic asset of this community in the city.

Despite the political pressure that we applied on the authorities, we failed to save it. All the arguments I pointed out to the Romanian Foreign Minister and the Commissioner for Religious Affairs were to no avail. I remember that what shocked my interlocutor at the MFA was the comparison I had drawn between the Iron Guard legionnaires who had destroyed the Great Sephardic Synagogue in the Bucharest pogroms in January 1940 and the intention to demolish the second and last Sephardi synagogue in the city by the communist regime in 1986. Much to our sorrow, our efforts, those of the Americans and the Spanish, the severe criticism aimed at Romania in Israel's media, and the great number of protests sent by Sephardic communities in Latin America to the Romanian authorities — all of these did not succeed in preventing the synagogue's demolition. It was an act condemned, by the way, by some Romanian historians, among them Dinu Giurescu, in a firm protest letter sent to Ceaușescu (published in the West) —



a unique phenomenon in the communist regimes of those days. Though we did not manage to prevent the demolition of the Sephardic synagogue, we did bar the demolition of the three remaining synagogues in Bucharest: the Coral Synagogue, the Great Synagogue, and the synagogue which houses the Jewish Museum. All three had been on the list of buildings scheduled to be pulled down (together with the Romanian churches) as part of the New Municipal Planning.

When expressing sorrow and disappointment on behalf of Israel's government to senior officials of Romania's Foreign Ministry for the destruction of the Sephardic Synagogue in the city, I demanded the prevention of the demolition of the remaining Jewish institutions of historic importance. I repeatedly stressed that the Romanian authorities ought to be more sensitive to such problems, since Romania was strongly linked to history. Romania was an active member of UNESCO for the preservation its antiquities, while such demolitions contradicted its efforts in this direction. Finally, I reminded the Romanians that they had churches all over the world in whose existence they were undoubtedly interested. I found my interlocutors attentive and understanding. I have no doubt that our firm intervention along with that by the USA, and the demands by Rabbi Rosen to prevent destructive acts, helped us receive from Deputy Foreign Ministry Dr Olimpia Solomonescu, an official promise in the name of Ceaușescu that the three synagogues would not be demolished. This important victory saved historic Jewish assets in Bucharest.

In this instance, as in similar ones — and they were not few — the influence of the Israeli, American, and US Jewish organizations exceeded the local pressure applied, as important as it was, since it alone could not have attained the desired annulment of the decision to destroy the buildings.

As noted, the external pressure determined the final outcome on this issue. Ceaușescu's sensitivity to his positive image in the world and his dependence upon Israel's, America's, and the West's good will towards him were the main factors that helped us ensure the national interests of local Jewry. Moreover, the support given to Rabbi Rosen by Israel, the USA and world Jewish organizations in carrying out his national functions, helped him present a sort of insurance policy to the Romanian authorities against any evil they might have intended to use against him. On the basis of this insurance policy, Rabbi Rosen could maintain his standing as a national leader at a level that leaders of the other Jewish communities in the Soviet bloc countries could not attain. Perhaps, they were not as talented as he at tightrope walking.

I frequently visited the synagogue, with my wife and members of our embassy staff, and I admit that this was not only for religious reasons. I had the feeling that each of our visits to the synagogue demonstrated the national link between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora in Romania, not only to the local authorities but also to local Jewry. I also participated, along with the embassy staff, at all memorial services connected to the Holocaust and the pogrom victims of Bucharest (1940) and Iași (1941), and in the final three years of my mission also at the memorial services in remembrance of the Jews from Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria who had perished in the Second World War — acts forbidden until then. Chief Rabbi Rosen accepted my arguments that there was no reason not to remember these victims together with those from North Transylvania. They were all murder victims, the former by Romanians, the latter by Germans. When for the first time he organized such a memorial service in memory of victims from Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria the Romanian authorities were shocked, they even protested to him. Within two years they had accepted the notion.

In our day it would be difficult to conceive how much energy was invested by the Jewish community and how much courage was needed by Rabbi Rosen to invoke the memory of over 300,000 Jews killed by the Romanian soldiers under Antonescu's fascist regime. His act contradicted the official RCP line that claimed, as Rabbi Rosen was told, that commemorating these areas — Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina, and Transnistria — in memorial services would complicate matters for the party with the USSR. This was a baseless argument. Their main fear probably stemmed from the fact that revelation of the truth might damage the ideal self-image the Romanians had. Much to our sorrow, no radical change in this regard has taken place in Romanian historiography in post-Communist Romania.

## ALIYA

From the statistics, it can be seen that *aliya* from Romania during the Ceaușescu era flowed slowly. Most applicants for emigration underwent tremendous difficulties until they received their exit permits to Israel.<sup>9</sup> And, although during my mission, certain emigration procedures were made easier, a would-be emigrant still had to wait about six months for the exit permit, in addition to many other bureaucratic procedures they had to go through. Despite this, *aliya* took place continuously and, with the exception of a short period after the Six-Day War, uninterrupted during all the years of Ceaucescu's rule (see Table 2).

[Table 2: Aliya from Romania, According to the Registration of Immigrants upon their Entry into Israel](#)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Immigrants</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Immigrants</i>
1948–64			
1948–49*	31,274	1975	2,382
1950	47,000	1976	2,200
1951	40,625	1977	1,506
1952	3,712	1978	1,273
1953	61	1979	1,113
1954	54	1980	1,241
1955	235	1981	1,179
1956	714	1982	1,720
1957	595	1983	1,340
1958	8,778	1984	2,010
1959	9,672	1985	1,374
1960	9,247	1986	1,348
1961	20,778	1987	1,673
1962	9,135	1988	1,473
1963	11,461	1989	1,499
1964	24,332		
1965–89**		1990–99****	

1965	10,949	1990	1,457
1966	3,647	1991	520
1967	779	1992	472
1968	230	1993	393
1969	1,755	1994	510
1970	5,524	1995	306
1971	1,828	1996	227
1972	3,005	1997	268
1973	4,123	1998	194
1974	3,728	1999	269

---

\*15 May 1948 to the end of 1949.

\*\*The Ceaușescu era.

\*\*\*The post-Communist era.

At least two motives prompted Romania, from its point of view, to permit *aliyah* to Israel: first, to solve in this manner the Jewish Question in Romania, gradually ridding itself of the Jews, thus vacating their jobs for Romanian workers, besides receiving payment from Israel for each immigrant, depending on age and education; second, demonstrating consideration of demands by Israel and the West to let out the Jews from Romania as a humanitarian act in the framework of what the Romanians called unification of families. Yet, this was not simply semantic cover. Rather, it was a way of presenting *aliyah* that would release them from Arab pressure, who saw it as mass emigration to Israel, as well as to avoid the impression, in both East and West, that many people were not content with living under the communist regime and wanted to escape it. Internally, there was comment that the ‘unification of the families’ alleviated the suffering of the Jews in the Holocaust, when members of Jewish families were separated from each other. This argument was important in answering Romanian citizens who themselves wished to emigrate to the West, since it meant something like, ‘the Jews have a case, but you...?’ Ceaușescu was better than his predecessors in knowing how to take advantage of permitting *aliya* to Israel as a bargaining card with the USA, first for attaining MFN status and then in insuring its continuation. Israel, which was interested in the continuation of *aliya* and in the liberal policy towards the Jewish minority, intervened more than once with the American authorities for the granting of this status to Romania. Annual renewal, as noted previously, was conditional upon the submission of a positive report on the number of exit permits granted to Jews, Germans, and Hungarians.

Romania also served as a transit station for immigrants from the USSR on their way to Israel. When I applied to Ceaușescu in May 1987 on behalf of Prime Minister Shamir, for his permission to allow this, he gave it to me on the spot, on the condition that the USSR agree to it. Indeed, the USSR accepted the idea that month. Thus the immigrants could arrive in Bucharest by direct flight from Moscow or by train from all over the USSR, and after a short stay there continue by air to Israel.<sup>10</sup>

Ceaușescu's Romania knew how to exploit permission for *aliya* and applying a relatively liberal policy towards its Jewish minority, as well as not breaking diplomatic relations with

Israel, although it did not always receive what it had expected to, to improve its image in the USA and the West so as to obtain benefits from them in the fields of trade, economy, science and technology as well as in their policies towards Romania on the international scene. In addition to the beneficial aspects, and Romania always benefited, its prestige grew in the Soviet bloc and in Third World countries without Romania making its internal policy more flexible. Ceaușescu aimed at influencing international events beyond Romania's geopolitical position in its region. Thus, he stood out as the only leader in the bloc who did not slavishly follow the Soviet track, but rather only when it served Romania's national interests. This happened rarely. And to the extent that he took advantage of the Jewish and Israel card in order to advance Romania's interests in the West, so did the leadership of Romania's Jewish community, on the one side, and Israel, on the other, obtain from Romania advantages corresponding to their own interests.

## MANIFESTATIONS OF ANTI-SEMITISM

I would be renewing nothing, if I said that anti-Semitism was, and continues to be, engraved upon the consciousness of generations of Romania's citizens. During my mission to Romania, though not so much as prior to it, such manifestations were rarely given public expression. During the previous periods, there had been ups and downs concerning them.

Ceaușescu's regime, in my opinion, did not have anti-Semitic or anti-Zionist tendencies. In his public addresses Ceaușescu would condemn anti-Semitism together with racism. This, too, was a unique phenomenon in East Europe. If anti-Semitism did raise its head in Romania, Ceaușescu did more to contain it than encourage it. I remember three outstanding events that occurred in the period of my mission there: two of them in Romanian publications and the third, an attempt to set fire to a synagogue in Buhuși, in the Moldova district.

The first case was connected to an article written by a Romanian journalist, Mihai Pelin, that appeared in the annual issue of *Saptamîna*, a weekly magazine published by the Cultural Department of the Bucharest Municipality, on the pogrom against the Jews of Iași in June 1941. The author claimed that only 1,000 Jews were killed in the pogrom (and not 12,000 as given in the data of the Jewish community of Iași). He accused the Germans of staging the pogrom, whereas in fact it was executed by soldiers of the local Romanian gendarmerie. Moreover, he suggested granting public rehabilitation to the Romanian army commanders responsible for executing the pogrom for which the court of communist Romania had sentenced them in 1948, variously, to death, life imprisonment, or forced labour.

The article's author, born in 1941, apparently was an advocate of the Romanian school of thought common during Ceaușescu's rule claiming that the Romanians were goaded in the Second World War by Nazi Germany against their will and that they themselves were victims of Antonescu's fascist regime of 1941<sup>14</sup>, though the Romanian people did not permit Antonescu to deport the Jews of Romania to extermination camps, despite the heavy pressure bearing down on them from Nazi Germany. Taking that line of thought, this school claimed that the Jews of Romania had been saved (without specifying that this applied only to the Jews of Regat and South Transylvania) during the Holocaust.

While pointing out that the Jews of these districts had been saved, this school of thought ignored the tragic fact that during the Holocaust under Antonescu's fascist regime, the Romanian army, at Antonescu's order, had carried out mass murder of the Jews in Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina immediately after invading those districts (then under Soviet rule) and, under torture

and with great suffering, deported survivors of the attacks to the ghettos and death camps of Transnistria. Many perished. Pelin's article coincided with the tendency in Romanian historiography to rehabilitate the fascist regime of its crimes against the Jews. Rabbi Rosen protested to the authorities, and I made my own reaction against the distortions, on the political and party levels. Dr Jean Ancel, historian of the Holocaust in Romania who published several works on the pogrom in Iași, severely criticized the book and the tendency behind it in a Romanian broadcast on Kol Israel (The Voice of Israel) heard by many Jewish and non-Jewish people in Romania. These protests, as well as the sharp criticism aired in Israel and the western world, compelled the editors of the annual to reprint it, omitting that article (for more details see pp. 287–8). The authorities, therefore, did take into consideration protests by myself and the rabbi as well as the criticism levelled at them in Israel and the West. According to a rumour then spread, Pelin was forbidden from publishing articles on historical events. I had no illusions that even if such an order were given, it would not be carried out. Yet, it seems that the article did help us in the sense that it pointed out the tendency to forgery in Romanian historiography relating to the Holocaust period. This urged some Israeli researchers to confront this — parallel to our intervention — on the basis of reliable historic documents proving the truth. In a book that Mihai Pelin published in 1994, *Legend and Truth*, he repented his previous claims.

In the second instance, in the literary supplement of the communist weekly, *Scînteia; Tineretului* (*Scinteia for Youth*), of 14 June 1986, an ultranationalist poem appeared whose words were taken from the days of the Iron Guard legionnaires pogrom in Bucharest (January 1941), when Jews were hung on animal hooks in the slaughter house. The poem does not mention Jews by name, and anyone not familiar with the pogrom events would think this was merely a patriotic poem.

The poet, Petre Ivancu, born in 1951, had already published several books of poetry and even enjoyed good reviews. He probably absorbed the anti-Semitic expressions he had heard at home or in his surroundings, whereas the editor of the literary supplement, who also was a young man, probably was not familiar with the anti-Semitic language of an earlier generation and therefore did not pay attention to it. Rabbi Rosen, who did remember those anti-Semitic expressions from his youth, was shocked by this poem and immediately submitted a protest letter to the weekly's editorial board, a copy of which he sent to the RCP. Media in Israel, including the Romanian broadcast of the Voice of Israel, on 7 October 1986, sharply criticized the poem's publication, as did a number of Jewish leaders from America who happened to be visiting Romania at that time. Rumour had it that the editor of the literary supplement was replaced. So we see that once again the authorities took the pressure and criticism of the Jews into consideration. Also, the poems of Ivancu were no longer published, at least during Ceaucescu's era.

The third instance occurred in Buhusi where local vandals attempted to set fire to a synagogue. A day earlier, Hasidic Jews from Israel had held a party there, leaving remnants of food.

The authorities responded with alacrity to Rabbi Rosen's demands, parallel to mine to Deputy Foreign Minister Pop, to catch the vandals and bring them to court. Reacting to my plea, Pop told me that we should be confident that the Romanian authorities would do all they could to find those responsible and bring them to justice. 'As in the past', he said, 'we now also condemn any criminal and anti-Semitic act in all forms. We regard the attempt to burn the synagogue not only as one contrary to the anti-religious law but a pure anti-Romanian act'. Different interpretations could be given to that last sentence. But the fact is that the perpetrators were apprehended, brought to trial (in the presence of a representative of the FJCR), and sentenced to seven years in

prison. The synagogue itself was not burned thanks to the quick action of the fire brigade. It may well be that after the 1989 revolution, all the criminals involved were released from jail. (I have no evidence that they were not let out even earlier.) In any event, the authorities responded quickly. They had no interest in being portrayed in the world press as being unwilling or incapable of banning anti-Semitism at home or of ignoring anti-Semites.

In comparison to these three instances, we can only turn pale at the poisonous anti-Semitic campaign being waged currently in Romania on a limitless scale as a by-product of the democratisation process in post-communist Romania under the guise of 'freedom of speech'. Then, at least, the authorities reacted to our pressure and protest, while today they, too, are helpless and disinclined to open a decisive struggle against the anti-Semitic trend for fear they would not receive the electors' votes upon which depends the continuation of their coalition.

To judge by the example of Poland, where signs of anti-Semitism often surface despite the fact that only about 5,000 Jews remained there within a population of 38 million, then there is reason to fear that when the Jewish community in Romania is even more reduced, anti-Semitic manifestations will continue to occur against the background of the old Romanian tradition and in the spirit of modern anti-Semitism pointing at alleged Jewish influence dominating the world and interfering in the economy and policies of Romania.

I have already mentioned that half of the Jewish population of Romania (numbering some 12,000 at the end of 1999) is over the age of 60. Exactly as the case was at the end of the 1980s, though the numbers have declined by one-third from then to the end of 1999. And, although from time to time, new Jews are discovered — perhaps because they feared to reveal their true identity until now — their number drops from year to year. The reasons are known: a low birth rate in comparison to a high death rate and the continuous emigration to Israel (though to a lesser extent than in previous years). The potential for *aliya* is focused on that half of the Jewish population which is under age 60, meaning about 6,000 people. It depends, of course on the motivation for emigration, which derives from five main factors: Hebrew education and Jewish national consciousness; linkage to Israel and knowledge of its achievements; anti-Semitism as a danger to life or as an obstacle to progress and to becoming an integral part of local society; economic difficulties; and Israel's absorption capabilities.

I don't believe that all those included in the category of potential *aliyah* will emigrate to Israel. *Aliyah* is a free choice, yet in spite of that only a few hundred Romanian Jews emigrate to Israel annually. I am convinced that a small Jewish community will remain in Romania for a long time to come. That being the case, the functions for Jewish leadership have not ended and must continue to deal with the Jewish public in the field of education, culture, and welfare with the generous assistance of the Joint Distribution Committee. The Jewish leadership ought to continue, also with help, in its struggle against the prevailing tendencies in Romanian historiography, inherited from the communist era, to disavow the Holocaust of the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria<sup>11</sup> and against anti-Semitism in all its forms and manifestations, as did the community heads in the communist era and at the start of the post-communist era, by legitimate and informative means. These manifestations include, among other things, the tendency to grant rehabilitation to the fascist dictator Ion Antonescu, which should be halted at all costs. At the same time, the Jewish historic past should be preserved through the saving of an increasing number of documentary sources on the history of Romanian Jewry for the benefit and use of present and future researchers in Israel and elsewhere.

All of these are weighty tasks, not easily realised. But, just as we have helped Romanian Jewry in times of need and distress, during the communist regime, so we ought to continue helping it today, under the democratic regime, too, in its survival and preparation for *aliyah*.

## **ACTIVITY AGAINST ROMANIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY DENIAL OF THE HOLOCAUST OF JEWS IN ROMANIA**

Communist Romania's denial of the Holocaust of the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria was a common phenomenon in Romanian historiography.<sup>12</sup>

This Holocaust took place in three phases: first, the mass killings of Jews executed by Romania's fascist army soldiers in Bessarabia and North Bucovina, when they invaded these regions with Nazi Germany's army, beginning July 1941 after opening a large scale attack on the USSR, on 22 June 1941. Within a few days about 120,000 Jews were murdered in these regions, not counting the city of Odessa, in the Ukraine, where Romanian soldiers massacred tens of thousands of local Jews.<sup>13</sup> In the second phase, they cruelly deported the about 200,000 survivors of the pogrom (July 1941) together with the Jews of South Bucovina and Dorohoi district (Autumn 1941, Summer 1941) to the death camps and ghettos of Transnistria.<sup>14</sup> The third stage was the gradual annihilation of the deportees in Transnistria itself until liberation by the Soviet Army in March 1944. In the second and third phases more than half of the deportees perished through executions, exhaustion, freezing, hunger, thirst, and epidemics (with medicines lacking). All these, mass killings, deportations, and intentional annihilation carried out on the order of Marshal Ion Antonescu (Romania's fascist leader September 1940-August 1944), were not mentioned in Romanian texts and research works dominated by RCP ideologists. Mention existed in a few marginal footnotes<sup>15</sup> in certain historical research that cloaked itself in a mantle of assumed objectivity in presenting the events of that black period in the history of the Jewish and Romanian nations. In general, this topic, the Holocaust of the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria, was taboo, even 40 years after the War. At the same time, Romanian historiography intentionally highlighted the real fact that Jews of the other regions of Romania (Regat and South Transylvania) were not deported to extermination camps, despite German pressure on Romania to do so.<sup>16</sup> Thus about 300,000 Jews were saved. Yet, this fact was presented purposely in such a manner as to imply that *all* Romanian Jews were saved from the Holocaust, intentionally omitting all reference to the Holocaust of the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria that were then, like Regat and South Transylvania, under Romania's domination (see pp. 281–2).

Similarly highlighted is the fact that the Jews of North Transylvania, an area annexed by Hungary from Romanian territory in 1940, were deported to extermination camps at the beginning of 1944 (with the rest of Hungarian Jewry), while the Jews of South Transylvania, under Romanian domination, were saved from expulsion to the extermination camps. The tendency to point out this fact, true in itself, was particularly salient in the period of Romanian-Hungarian confrontation about Hungarian minority rights in the whole of Transylvania (whose northern section was reintegrated into Romania after the War). Romania's aim was to prove that fascist Hungary was much worse than fascist Romania.

Hiding the factual information from the young generation of communist Romania about the crimes of Antonescu's regime, of all that related to the annihilation of the Jews of Bessarabia and

Bucovina as well as the cruel deportation to Transnistria to face gradual annihilation, deeply amazed us. First, after the War, it had been the Romanian court, even before the Nuremberg trials, that had sentenced Antonescu (and other war criminals) for these crimes and for cooperating with Nazi Germany in its war against the USSR. This occurred in 1946, when the communist regime began to consolidate its power in Romania. Second, Romania's communist regime glorified its role in the anti-fascist revolution against Antonescu on 23 August 1944 (establishing this date as a national holiday, celebrated annually in Romania with much grandeur, until the collapse of the communist regime). Third, the young generation in Romania after the anti-fascist revolution, like the young generation in all European countries that had been under Nazi occupation, had not had anything to do with the annihilation of Jews and their being persecuted under the fascist regime. Consequently, they were not responsible for the deeds of their fathers. Why, then, was it forbidden for them to gain knowledge of this chapter in national history? Moreover, the communist regime could have gained from people learning about anti-Semitism, racism, and fascism, a policy that Romania preached in its slogans, if they had only been taught an objective chapter on the persecution and extermination of Jews under Romania's fascist regime.

The ideological policy of the RCP, however, particularly during the 25 years of Ceaucescu's rule, endeavoured to stress educational values on a national basis, presenting the Romanian people as humane and cultured. The fact that soldiers of the Romanian army murdered tens of thousands of Jews at Antonescu's order (even before Nazi Germany decided at the Wannsee Conference on the 'Final Solution of the Jews'), seducing, robbing, and viciously deporting survivors of the massacres, only for them to be lost in Transnistria, contrary to Germany's policy in July 1941 (of not placing exiled Jews near the front with the USSR) — these facts were not revealed by Romanian historians, the majority of whom were nationalists, some of whom were anti-Semites.

The revealing of the facts would have contradicted the myth of the ideal image of the Romanian people (this also corresponded to the ideology of the party). Second, a large part of Romanian historians admired Antonescu (though they did not express it officially) as a great national leader who decided to attack the USSR (together with Nazi Germany) to liberate Bessarabia and North Bucovina, which the USSR had taken away from Romania one year earlier. They did not pay any attention to the Jewish aspect involved. Holding back, until the close of the Ceaușescu era, on revealing the facts about the 'Stolen Territories' and of the attempt by Antonescu to get them back during the war against the USSR, may have fitted in with the policy of the communist regime in Romania that was apparently afraid that dealing with Bessarabia and North Bucovina might lead to a confrontation with the USSR. Thus the regime and its historians had a common interest in keeping silent on the subject, though their motives differed. The denial by Romania's historiography of Antonescu's crimes, and Jewish national interest in not letting them be forgotten, compelled me to direct our activities regarding this to three levels: first, the intensification of cooperation between Israel's Holocaust researchers and the Romanian researchers at the Historic-Economic-Sociopolitical Institute of the RCP, directed by Ion Popescu-Puțuri with whom I maintained a frequent dialogue. Then by the distribution of 12 volumes of *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry During the Holocaust*, selected and edited by Jean Ancel (published by the Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, New York, 1986). I handed these volumes, constituting an antithesis to the disavowal policy of Romania's historians of the Holocaust years in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria, to the institute mentioned above and to the History Department of the Bucharest, Iași, and Cluj Universities and



the Romanian Academy of Social and Political Studies in Bucharest.

The dispatch of an informational letter drew these matters to the attention of researchers and public personalities, as did the holding of conversations with Romanian historians on Romania's part in the Holocaust of the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria. I worked in close cooperation with Chief Rabbi Rosen in undertaking steps for the increase of the Romanian public's consciousness of the disavowal of the Holocaust in those regions and the tendency to grant 'public rehabilitation' to Romanian war criminals, especially Antonescu.

On each of these four levels, in to which I will go in detail, I acted openly, with no misgivings of a confrontation with the Romanian national communist historians. Taking into consideration, however, the prevailing circumstances under Romania's communist regime I tried, to the extent possible, to give my activity not a political but rather an academic-research character, hoping to bring about a gradual change in the official attitude that seemed to be from the very beginning an impossible mission in a national-communist regime like Romania's. I would not be so presumptuous as to say that we succeeded in changing the attitude dictated by Romania's historians in the late Ceaușescu era, but I do think that some of its foundations were no doubt undermined.

This undermining helped us to continue our struggle against those ignoring the truth. The fruits of our endeavours only recently ripened when Romania's president, Professor Emil Constantinescu, for the first time in the history of the country, admitted, in a letter addressed to the president of the FJCR, Nicolae Cajal, on Holocaust Day, 4 May 1997, to the role the Romanians played in the persecution and annihilation of tens of thousands of Jews in the Holocaust.<sup>17</sup>

### **Scientific Cooperation between Yad Vashem and the Institute for Historic-Economic-Sociopolitical Research of the RCP**

In 1982 an agreement was signed between the chairman of Yad Vashem, Dr Yitzhak Arad, and Professor Ion Popescu-Puturi, director of the Institute for Historic-Economic-Sociopolitical Research of the RCP, concerning the exchange of researchers, research papers, and archival material. This was the first agreement of its kind signed between Israel and an East European state in general, and during the period of broken diplomatic relations between Israel and the rest of that region in particular. I regarded it as an important achievement, giving it all my support as director of the East European Department of the MFA in Jerusalem.

This agreement opened an important doorway for elucidating issues connected to the research of the history of Romania's Jews on the eve of the Second World War and in the course of the War in general. We had a particular interest in encouraging, at this level, research on the Romanian side and in receiving archival material from the Romanian Institute on the Holocaust of the Jews in Romania and on the period preceding it. Scientific symposia were held between historians from Israel (Yad Vashem, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa universities) and those from the Institute. During my mission in Romania, there took place the third scientific Israeli—Romanian symposium, held in Jerusalem in January 1986, and the fourth, in Bucharest in June 1988.

While the research papers presented by the Romanian historians at the symposium in 1986 were written objectively, the reporting about them and about the Israeli research papers in

Romania's journals<sup>18</sup> was tendentious and manipulative, as for example the tendency to smooth away the responsibility from Antonescu's regime for the execution of the mass murder of the Jews of Bessarabia and Bucovina as well as for the forced deportation (not 'emigration') of the survivors of the pogroms for gradual annihilation in Transnistria. Although, there was nothing new in this approach, the mere expression of this tendency against the background of the convening of the Israeli—Romanian symposium in Jerusalem, could have led to the acceptance of this approach. I immediately intervened officially, requesting that Professor Popescu-Puțuri put things in the right proportion. It became clear to me that he was not the one who had formulated the text of the report on the symposium, even if he was formally responsible for it. Following my recommendation, the distinguished Holocaust researcher, Dr Jean Ancel, of Yad Vashem, reacted to this distortion on a Kol Israel radio broadcast (in Romanian) and severely criticized the tendentious, distorted report.

In my letter to Yad Vashem Chairman Dr Yitzhak Arad of 26 May 1986, I noted:

Following the distorted Romanian report on the symposium and my talks with Romanian officials, a concrete picture could be drawn up of the objectives of Romania's historiography as aspiring to rehabilitate the Antonescu regime from its crimes against Jews, at least in two directions: (a) accusing Horthy's regime of the annihilation of North Transylvanian Jews; (b) completely ignoring the crimes of Antonescu's regime against the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria. Things reached such a degree that even Deputy Foreign Minister Traian Pop, a professor of education at Bucharest University, argued with me that Antonescu's regime had not been fascist but just military.

The Romanians' approach, in my opinion, had two aims: they expected world Jewry to acknowledge the fact that the Jews of Romania had been saved under Antonescu's rule and to give a certain legitimacy to Antonescu as the head of a national state that did not give in to Hitler's dictates. I have argued with the Romanians and still claim that Antonescu's policies towards the Jews should be examined and judged, both according to his deeds in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria and his actions in the other Romanian regions. It is not possible to indicate one part of his activities and completely ignore the other, the tragic one...

Should the next symposium (1988) discuss this tragic chapter of the Jews of Bessarabia and Bucovina and their deportation to Transnistria, I would justify holding it. But, if it would once again direct condemnation to Horthy's regime, using it in contrast to the Jews saved under Antonescu, then I would recommend forgoing it...

Indeed, the June 1988 symposium<sup>19</sup> did include a discussion on Antonescu's tragic policy towards the Jews of Bessarabia and Bucovina, and the report on it in the Romanian media was less tendentious in comparison with the previous one.<sup>20</sup>

In my letter of 13 June 1988 addressed to Dr Arad, following the symposium that had just been held in Bucharest, I noted, among other things, that in my view two objectives had been achieved: the shaking up of the RCP establishment over the role of fascist Romania in the annihilation of Jews; and the preparation of new cadres in the party for fresh historical and research thinking on fascism and anti-Semitism in Romania...this preparation should be very important for future cooperation on historical research — in objectively balancing, to the degree possible, the presentation of facts and events that had been ignored.

After the December 1989 revolution that put an end to communist rule in Romania, the Institute for Historic-Economic-Sociopolitical Research of the RCP was dissolved, putting an end to the mutual scientific symposia, at this level, that had been part and parcel of our struggle against communist Romania's disavowal of its role in the Holocaust of the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria. Although, Israeli—Romanian cooperation in historical research during Ceaușescu's era had lasted a relatively short time, it may be said that it was mutually beneficial in getting to know the documentary material at the disposal of the Romanian historians, in receiving from them archival material, and in intensifying their awareness of the need to uncover the crimes of Antonescu's regime and his responsibility for the Holocaust of the Jews under his rule on the one hand, and in encouraging objective historical research on the Jewish aspect, on the other. It can also be proven that even during Ceaucescu's rigid communist regime, there had been a discernible, limited amount of space in which we could act against the official party ideology that ignored the Holocaust of the Jews in Romania. This was achieved thanks to the sympathetic attitude of Professor Ion Popescu-Puțuri on an objective approach to historical research, relative to that of other historians of Romania's communist regime, and to his exceptional status in the Romanian hierarchy at that time as a veteran member in good standing of the RCP.

### **Distribution of the Twelve Volumes of Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry During the Holocaust**

On 20 June 1986, I presented the Institute's director, Professor Popescu-Puțuri, with the 12 volumes of documents in the presence of his associates, also historians, and with the participation of Dr Jean Ancel, the compiler and editor of this series of volumes, and the counsellor of Israel's embassy, Shmuel Meiron. The presentation ceremony took place in the meeting hall of the Institute. In my opening words, I noted that much effort had been invested in collecting the relevant material, demanding professionalism and profound knowledge. But above all, the work on collecting, revising, and editing this material had been carried out with great motivation which only historians and researchers would be able to appreciate. I added that in handing over these volumes for review and research by the Romanian historians, we saw a dual importance: first, this is another expression of the cooperation existing between Yad Vashem and the Institute for Historical Research of the RCP and sincere evidence of our readiness to continue developing it in good faith and good will, in the mutual respect and friendship that characterized the scientific relations between Israeli historians and their Romanian colleagues. In referring second, to the very importance of this reservoir of knowledge, testimonies, and documentation on the fate of the Jews in Romania during the Holocaust period, I said:

The day after tomorrow will mark 45 years since Romania's army under Antonescu's fascist regime joined Nazi Germany in its attack on the USSR. After crossing the Prut River, the Romanian soldiers murdered tens of thousands of innocent Jews in Bessarabia and North Bucovina, under the pretext that they were Soviet agents, while survivors of that onslaught together with the Jews of South Bucovina and Dorohoi districts were cruelly deported to the death camps and ghettos of Transnistria to face gradual annihilation. True, this was not a death in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, but lives ended through hunger, freezing, epidemics, and sporadic executions — in short, physical annihilation by other means. We believe the time has come to uncover and analyze those tragic events openly, exactly as is done in the instance of the rescuing of Jews under the same leadership in Regat and South

Transylvania.

Such an analysis is possible in the Romania of today under the anti-fascist regime of the Communist Party. It is also vital for becoming better acquainted with the past and for insuring that those cruel deeds and black chapters of contemporary history not be forgotten.

Dr Jean Ancel, who spoke afterwards, contradicted the Romanian version that claimed that anti-Semitism in Romania was an imported product, by citing the names of Romanian writers who displayed a hostile attitude to Jews without any outside influence. Ancel, therefore, believed that Romanian anti-Semitism was an internal product that burst forth in Romania's collaboration with Nazi Germany. He called upon the Romanian historians to do research on the bloody period in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria, to find an explanation for the events that took place *vis-à-vis* the acts of rescue in the other parts of Romania. In particular, he pointed out the ninth volume in the documentary series containing much useful material for Romania's historiography. He also asked to receive documentary material from the Institute that could be integrated into his future research. He was open-minded with the historians. It was evident that he had taken moral stock regarding the traditional Romanian stand on anti-Semitism over the past generations.

Popescu-Puțuri answered both of us at length. He did not reject our proposal on continuing research on the subject of the Holocaust of the Jews in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria during the fascist regime in Romania, he even suggested expanding it with the cooperation of Israeli historians who do not deal exclusively with the Holocaust. Popescu-Puțuri — considered friendly to the Jews and Israel — expressed his gratitude for the volumes, promising that they would be put at the disposal of the historians.

Leaving the Institute, the three of us believed that the mere fact that the volumes were accepted constituted some kind of silent admission of ignoring the Holocaust of Romanian Jews in its historiography. We saw this as a certain breakthrough and a sign that the other academic institutions would accept the 12 volumes for their reading and research.

At the beginning of October 1987 we presented the second set of volumes to the president of the Academy of Social and Political Sciences, Professor Mihnea Gheorghiu. The Academy building had been undergoing renovations on the date we had set for this event. To our regret none of the Academy researchers was present on this occasion except for its president and a protocol official. The president apologised for the absence of the others due to the renovations. He reacted to my words at the presentation, of similar substance to what I had spoken at the Institute, very warmly, promising that the volumes would be put to the disposal of the researchers and students interested in the subject and that he himself would take care that 'information about their existence would be disseminated in broad circles', adding that 'he regarded the study of the subject as a most valuable means in the struggle against forgetting and actively allowing part of the anti-Semitic factors to be forgotten'. Actually, without saying it, he identified them with Romania's national-communist ideologists of those days.

Based on his encouragement I left the Academy with the feeling that our message had been absorbed. In my future talks with Professor Gheorghiu I found him a friend of Jews and Israel, a fighter against anti-Semitism, and a man who was not deterred from uncovering the truth.

In mid-March 1988 I presented the third set of 12 volumes to Professor Mircea Petrescu-Dimbovița, director of the Xenopol Institute of History annexed to the University of Iași, with the Institute's researchers and historians in attendance. Again I spoke, as on the previous two

occasions, of the importance of Dr Jean Ancel's scientific work (before his immigration to Israel, he had been a student at this Institute) and about our expectations that the material contained in these volumes would enable Romanian historiographers to deal with the subject of the Holocaust of the Jews under Antonescu's regime more effectively than heretofore.

In the course of our conversation Professor Petrescu-Dimbovița mentioned that he had received the approval of the Council for Socialist Culture and Education of Romania to accept the volumes. Professor Gheorge Buzatu<sup>21</sup> of the Institute joined him in thanking me for providing the volumes. Both seemed to be excited, telling me that they had already appointed three researchers to deal with the topic of the Holocaust under Romania's fascist regime. Professor Buzatu even showed me one of the volumes that he had received on loan from the Institute for Historic-Economic-Sociopolitical Research of the RCP. Thus, we may conclude that the volumes were already being put to use by the Romanian historians. In the course of my mission to Romania we expanded our relations with the Xenopol Institute, and we supplied them with important publications on Holocaust research in Israel, particularly from Yad Vashem.

On 14 November 1988 I presented the fourth set of these volumes to the rector of Cluj University, Professor Aurel Negucioiu, in the presence of the rector and director of the Institute of History, Professor Ștefan Pascu, known by his nationalist articles published in the Romanian journal *Magazin Istoric*.

During our conversation, in which I spoke about the importance of this scientific research and about our expectations for making broad use of the volumes in revealing the past no matter how painful research on the Holocaust in Romania may be, Professor Pascu (much to my amazement and to the sorrow of the participants) remarked that the number of Jewish victims of the Holocaust among Romanian Jewry, estimated to be some 300,000 people, included those of North Transylvania deported by Hungary to the extermination camp of Auschwitz. 'So we do a great deal of damage to Romania which was the only state in Europe to rescue hundreds of thousands of Jews, thanks to the regime's policy that was indeed fascist, but did not give in to Germany'.

I answered that the documentation speaks for itself. If he would read it, he would find facts and figures in Romanian sources and, *inter alia*, see that the figure of 300,000 victims was attributed only to the mass killings of the Jews of Bessarabia and North Bucovina, and to those who perished during the cruel deportation to Transnistria and in Transnistria itself. These acts of murder and annihilation were carried out by soldiers of the Romanian Army under the order given them by Marshal Antonescu. I added that the facts should not be ignored, of course, that at the same time and under the same regime the Jews of Regat and South Transylvania were saved, but 'today's historian should write the chapters of history with no idealisation and no ideological motivation. He should instead concentrate on presenting the truth on the basis of existing sources, and take into consideration that his writing will be judged by future historians and that it would be a pity if his reputation were sullied when viewed by future historians'.

When reading the research studies by Professor Pascu, it was difficult to free oneself from his tendency to glorify Romania's past, not only by ignoring the horrible acts of Romanian soldiers in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria, but also from his comments that these regions had belonged to the USSR (from 1940) and since Romania (in 1941) was in a state of war against the USSR, the Romanian Army behaved towards the Jews in these areas as enemies of their regime.

The discussion at the presentation ceremony became inflamed. I asked him whether the

horrifying acts perpetrated against the Jews by the Romanian Army were in his mind less criminal because the innocent victims were considered, 'as it were', 'enemies of Romania'. I went on to say that according to this logic the horrendous acts perpetrated by the Nazis in Europe would have been justified, since Hitler considered all the Jews to be enemies of Nazi Germany. The Jews of Bessarabia and Bucovina were not enemies of Romania. The responsibility for their mass annihilation and their cruel deportation to Transnistria lies squarely on the shoulders of the Romanian soldiers who followed Antonescu's orders, since they were responsible for the territories conquered from the USSR. The saving of the Jews of Regat and South Transylvania did not absolve the horrid Romanian acts carried out in the other regions. I repeated my sincere hope that the 12 volumes I had just presented on the fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust would be beneficial to the students and researchers at their university, both in their academic and other activities in delving into the past and uncovering it, as well as in enriching their knowledge about the most tragic period in the history of the Jewish people.

The rector attempted to defuse the tension by telling me about the academic activities of the university and about the courses studied, as well as that in the past the language of study had been Hungarian until the students had 'demanded firmly' to change the language to Romanian, claiming that the process of integration in their occupation, upon completion of their studies, would be much easier if they studied the professions in Romanian. The university management, he added, was compelled 'to give in to their demand'. The rector, unintentionally of course, thus revealed the imposition of Romanization on the Hungarian University of Cluj, without realizing that his interlocutor was not so naive as to believe his version of events.

This conversation with Professor Pascu stands engraved in my memory as one of the most difficult ones I had during all my mission in Romania. I had no doubt that the 12 volumes I had handed over to the rector of the university, actually to the director of the History Institute, would be locked away without any students or researchers having access to them as long as the University of Cluj was a fortress of Romanian nationalism.

This conversation reminded me of another difficult one I had had with Deputy Foreign Minister Pop at a reception we held in our residence in Bucharest on the occasion of our Independence Day (May 1986), in the presence of Minister of Tourism, Ion Stanescu, and director of the Asian and Middle Eastern Department of the Romanian MFA, Marcel Dinu.

Ministers and senior officials had the habit of isolating themselves with the host ambassador for a serious chat in a closed room near the main reception hall, in an unofficial atmosphere. This custom, which seemed to me strange enough, repeated itself at the receptions of foreign ambassadors on the occasion of their national days, when the host was 'kidnapped' and considered absent by his guests. Since this was the accepted way things were done, it seemed to me that the guests were used to it, while my colleagues the foreign ambassadors and I scarcely considered it a normal phenomenon, in those days.

My conversations with both ministers and the head of the Middle East department focused on political and bilateral subjects concerning Israeli—Romanian relations. The topic soon deviated to the subject of Romania and the Holocaust, at the initiative of Deputy Foreign Minister Pop, who said that: President Ceaușescu is a sympathiser with the Jews. His attitude towards them is very positive and the Romanians strictly follow his instructions [even if they do not agree? Y.G.]. If I were to visit Transylvania, in one of whose villages he was born, and go from house to house, I would hear evidence of hundreds of Jews who had been rescued by Romanians from the

hands of Hungarian murderers (meaning the region of North Transylvania that was under Hungarian occupation in 1940–44, from where Jews had run to South Transylvania when the deportation to extermination camps began).

Not only Jews suffered under Antonescu's military regime; many Romanians were tortured. Should a statistical account be made, it would prove that the number of suffering victims on both sides were equal relative to their proportional weight in the population. Much injustice is done at Yad Vashem where a memorial plaque stands attributing to Romania the number of victims in North Transylvania instead of indicating Hungary [Indeed, Yad Vashem did have such a plaque, but it had been corrected ten years earlier. Of course, I told this to Pop, but he seemed not to have heard of it nor to have known about it.] Thus, world Jewry should be grateful to the Romanians for saving Romanian Jews under Antonescu's regime, as he was not a fascist but a military man (here Dinu interfered saying, 'but it is not possible to call him anti-fascist'). It is greatly regrettable that today there are Jews, true, Israel is not responsible for them, who are hostile to Romania. To my question, as to which Jews he had in mind, he answered, 'the Press'.

I was compelled to interrupt him, commenting that I had not heard of any pogroms perpetrated against Romanians similar to those wreaked upon the Jews of Bucharest, Dorohi, and Iași. The Jews of Bessarabia and North Bucovina were subject to mass murder with 120,000 losing their lives before the others were deported for annihilation to Transnistria by direct order of Antonescu and his regime. True, that part of Romania's Jews were saved, but the fate of the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria under the fascist regime of Antonescu was horrible.

Romania's contemporary historiography should confront both aspects at the same time. Rescue, on the one hand, and mass murder and deportations, on the other. Romania's current generation is not guilty for the crimes of its fathers, and in my view as an historian, the terrible tragedy suffered by the Jews in the regions mentioned that were then under Romania's rule should not be ignored nor denied, exactly as one cannot ignore the sad fate of the Jews under Hungarian rule.

I went on to say that I do not know of any world Jewish organizations that took a stand against Romania. On the contrary, I do know of Jewish organizations in the USA and of Israeli ambassadors in Bucharest and Washington who are quite active on behalf of Romania towards obtaining the status of 'Most Favored Nation'. This does not mean that they will prove to be successful, but at least they try very hard and, so far, they are the only ones on this front.

Pop returned to the subject of the 'World Press', saying that the Jews are known to have a strong influence on it and could assist Romania [in correcting its negative image?], admitting that it was not the proper place to talk about it and that it was appropriate to discuss it on another occasion.

I did not reply and did not commit myself. I exhibited some signs of discomfort. Dinu remained silent, while the minister of tourism looked at me as if he agreed to what I had said. We raised a glass of wine, 'Le'Chayim', and the conversation ended (after 45 minutes!).

Reporting to the MFA in Jerusalem about this strange conversation I remarked:

1. My previous talks with Deputy Foreign Minister Pop were quite correct. But it was the first time he had shared his views on the Jewish subject with me. My colleagues in the diplomatic corps completely belittled him, and my predecessor as ambassador, Zvi Brosh, did not attribute to him much sagacity. Though he had a few glasses of whisky, I did not

notice that he was drunk.

2. It is clear that his views gave voice to a tendency (reminding us of the Romanian classical argument that Israel ought to reward Romania with trade benefits or technology, in return for Romania's decision not to cut off diplomatic relations with us — something that I always firmly rejected) to demand from world Jewry something in return for the Jews saved in Romania, actions to correct Romania's negative image in the Western press. This is the political capital Romanians wanted to make out of the joint Israel—Romania symposia.
3. To sum up, it seems that we will have to confront this tendency directly to root it out of Romania's propaganda. We must ensure that Antonescu's regime be judged not only for the Jews saved from the Holocaust under it, but also be seen in light of its policies of destruction of the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria.

### **The Distribution of an Informative Letter on the Number of Jewish Victims under Romanian Rule during the Holocaust**

Dumitru Lazar, director of the Department for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries of the Council for Socialist Culture and Education, with whom we maintained close working relations, asked me in May 1988, 'Does the number 300,000 victims from the Holocaust attributed to fascist Romania comprise also the number of victims of North Transylvania, then under Hungarian rule?'

I answered No and sent him an official letter, enumerating the statistical composition of the victims in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria as well as explaining them. Undoubtedly he forwarded this memorandum to his superiors — and perhaps even to the Romanian leadership. I distributed this note, with very few changes, to dozens of Romanian researchers, historians, and other personalities in the framework of the struggle against the Romanian disavowal of the Holocaust victims under fascist rule in the country. (At a later stage Chief Rabbi Rosen published it in the form of an interview with me in the FJCR magazine, *Revista Cultului Mozaic*.) The full text of the letter appears below:

You have questioned me whether the total number of 300,000 Jews perished under the Fascist regime of Antonescu, as estimated in the book by Abba Eban, *Heritage*<sup>22</sup> — consists also of the number of victims of North Transylvania, which was then under Hungarian rule.

It does not. I looked up the data and found that the quoted number in Eban's book is correct and is related mainly to the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina and of a remainder deported to Transnistria. However, the exact number, of victims may seem to be higher, though they will probably never be known.

The statistics are based on the following data: according to the Romanian Official Census of 1930 there were about 207,000 Jews living in Bessarabia, at that time, and about 144,000 in Bucovina.

After the mass killings of the Jewish population in these provinces, executed according to Antonescu's order, within the first week of the crossing the Prut river, early July 1941, the survivors were expelled and deported, as you know, to the ghettos and camps in Transnistria, where about 146,555 (according to Romanian data) of them arrived.



Practically the whole Jewish population of Bessarabia and Bucovina (with the exception of about 19,000 Jews of Cernăuți [Czernowitz]) were deported to Transnistria.

According to the data reported by the Romanian Gendarmerie Headquarters of Transnistria there were about 56,000 surviving Jews living there (in most miserable conditions) by March 1943 — a year before Transnistria was liberated by the Soviet Army:

13,980 Jews from Bessarabia

1. 36,761 Jews from Bucovina

6,025 Jews from Dorohoi (out of 10,000 deported Jews)

These figures correspond more or less with the data of the Bucharest Jewish Aid Committee, as well as with the International Red Cross reports of March 1943.

Deducting therefore the number of survivors in 1943 from the total Jewish population of 1930, one reaches the number of about 300,000 victims.

In reality, however, the number of Jewish victims must have been much higher, since these estimations lack:

1. the natural increase rate of the Jewish population between 1930–41;
2. the number of those perished in the ghettos of Transnistria from March 1943 to March 1944;
3. the number of those killed in the pogroms of Bucharest, Iași, Galati, Dorohoi, during 1940–41;
4. the number of the local Jewish population in the Ukrainian cities and localities that were tragically affected by the atrocities of the Romanian administration in Transnistria (by killings, deportations across the Bug and deaths caused by hunger, cold and epidemics — like the Jews deported from Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Dorohoi).

Plain statistics. To this one should add the fact that some 300,000 Jews who lived under the same regime, in the rest of the Romanian territories, were not affected by mass annihilation and deportation and thus survived to the day of the anti-fascist revolution of August 1944.

To this informative letter I attached a long bibliographical list of research papers and books, published in Israel and abroad, on the topic of the Holocaust of Jews in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria. (To that I added a remark saying that ‘this list does not include testimony given by survivors filed in the Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem nor does it contain a list of works published in Hebrew’). My point was to show the wide range of studies produced on these topics, while in Romania proper no research on the subject had been published up to then.

It would be difficult for me to judge if and to what extent the distribution of the ‘informative letter’ influenced the Communist Party's ideologists and historians to admit the historic truth and to reveal it. Even though the letter's dissemination was not massive, presumably it reached the policy-makers who had declared silence on the topic and who almost certainly knew by then of the existence of the 12 volumes of documentation related to the Holocaust years in Romania.

I have no doubt that the historians, researchers and other personalities regarded the letter as not only an attempt on our part to break the ‘taboo’ on dealing with the subject, but also as a national challenge they would have to grapple with sooner or later.

Indeed, first inklings of this came within a year, in an article that appeared in a Romanian magazine, *Magazin Istoric*, by a Romanian historian (of Jewish origin), Oliver Lustig, who specialised in the history of the North Transylvanian Holocaust. He briefly mentioned the Holocaust of the Jews of Bessarabia and North Bucovina. This was the first time that Romanian historiography in the Ceaușescu era noted it, even if this were done in a modest way. This reference would not have occurred had not Dr Jean Ancel and myself, orally and in writing, urged Lustig earlier to do so, and if it had not been for the cooperation of Dr Cristian Popișteanu, chief editor of the magazine, whom we easily convinced to deviate from the official line. (Popișteanu had previously visited Israel and met with the Yad Vashem authorities. I had always found him open-minded towards absorbing our arguments. In 1987 he was the key speaker at a festive rally organized [in cooperation with the Romanian authorities] for Israel's Independence Day; he presented his impressions of Israel in an address suffused with sympathy and admiration for Israel and our people.) After my May 1989 letter congratulating Lustig for his article containing mention of the Holocaust of the Jews in Bessarabia and Bucovina, and expressing the hope that he would expand on the subject in future articles by delving into the horrendous events that occurred during the Holocaust, Popișteanu invited me to his office for a talk in Lustig's presence. I reiterated the claims I had made to their colleagues, the other Romanian historians, among them the well-known Dinu Giurescu,<sup>23</sup> on the total disavowal in Romania's historiography of the Holocaust of the Jews in Romania under Antonescu's fascist rule.

I also argued with Popișteanu and Lustig that Matatias Carp's book (*Carea Neagra*, published in three volumes in Romanian, Bucharest, 1946, documenting the Holocaust of the Jews in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria), and books that perpetuate the memory of the destroyed towns and hamlets published in Israel, contradicted the assumptions by Romanian historians claiming that the terrifying acts of the Romanian Army and its collaborators were mainly carried out by the German Army and that the number of Romanian Holocaust victims was actually much lower than the figures according to our data. This applies to the June 1941 pogrom in Iași as well, that took place about a week after the German—Romanian invasion of the USSR. (Both Popișteanu and Lustig had received my 'informative letter' a year earlier.) I expressed my amazement that the present regime in Romania, that condemned fascism and anti-Semitism everywhere, chose to ignore those horrible acts and argue that Antonescu's regime was not responsible. I concluded that if this disavowal continued, it would be interpreted as if the regime did not oppose the fascist policy of Antonescu's regime.

Popișteanu admitted the existence of what he termed indirect disavowal, explaining that the topics of Bessarabia and Bucovina, had been, until a short time ago, taboo in Romanian historiography. Thus also the fate of the Jews in those regions, either during the period between the two World Wars or afterwards, received no attention at all in their publications.

By saying 'until a short time ago', he meant to say that a breakthrough had been made, either in Lustig's article or in volume two of a monograph that had just been published in Bucharest (see below) under the aegis of the Central Committee of the RCP that contained a chapter on the Jews in Romania in the 1930s. Volumes three and four, he added, would also be closely connected to the Holocaust of the Jews in those regions. (Those volumes never appeared. About six months after our conversation, the anti-communist revolution broke out in Romania.)

I informed Dr Arad, Yad Vashem chairman, of the main subjects of my talk with Dr Popișteanu. I added my assessment that we should continue shaking up the Romanian establishment, accusing it of purposely disavowing the painful subject, demanding that it reveal

the events as they unfold through Romanian sources (parallel to their exposure through the work of Dr Ancel). The convulsion caused, I assumed, would be transmitted to both groups participating in the Yad Vashem meetings within the framework of joint symposia and even through conversations we would initiate between our historians and theirs.

The second volume of the monograph mentioned above was published in Bucharest in 1988. This was part of a comprehensive research work, *Romania after the Great Unification*, produced by the Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House and written by two historians whom I happened to know well and who were considered experts on contemporary Romanian history, Mircea Mușat and Ion Ardeleanu.<sup>24</sup> The volume covers the period from November 1933 until September 1940 — the accession to power of Marshal Antonescu. One instructive chapter contains revealing details on the fateful high drama that shook Romania's integrity from the moment the Soviet ultimatum was submitted to Romania — to retreat from Bessarabia and North Bucovina within 48 hours — until the decision was taken to accept the imposed withdrawal (namely, surrender with no resistance, following the advice given by Germany to Romania's query whether or not to resist). The Romanians had not known then that the Soviet ultimatum was based on an earlier agreement between the USSR and Nazi Germany regarding the transfer of these regions to the Soviet Union, as stated in the secret protocol attached to the Mutual Non-Agression Agreement, signed in Moscow in August 1939 between the USSR and Germany, commonly called the Ribbentrop—Molotov Agreement.

Jews have a specific interest in this chapter of history, since the Holocaust of the Jews of Bessarabia and North Bucovina is connected to Romania's withdrawal from these regions and their reoccupation a year later by the German and Romanian Armies. After having read this chapter in the Mușat—Ardeleanu book, I found it necessary to draw Popișteanu's attention to its erroneous and misleading concepts and to request that he make my comments known to the authors. In line with what was usual in those days, I assume that my letter was further transmitted to the 'competent authorities'. I quote here the relevant part of my letter to him, dated 2 July 1989. After praising the authors' comprehensive work as rich in sources, I wrote:

There is, however, when mentioning the Jewish aspect in connection with the Romanian Army's retreat from Bessarabia and North Bucovina, a certain misleading conception, when the authors quoted from the memoirs of N. N. Nagy-Talvera, p. 1132, without footnoting their reservations, namely: 'The Ukrainian and Jewish population in their joy at the departure of Romania's administration from the most poorly governed part of the country, behaved toward the withdrawing Romanians in such a manner that they had to pay very dearly for it, one year later'; or from the words of Raul V. Bossy: 'It should be noted with profound bitterness that the Jewish population in the cities of Kishinev, Cetatea Alba, and Czernowitz, who had always enjoyed a humane attitude on the part of the Romanian administration, had a weakness to throw stones at our soldiers in the process of their imposed withdrawal, being happy to see the arrival of the communist authorities, among whose ranks were many Jews.'

And the misleading conceptions:

'One cannot talk about the Jewish population as a whole. There must have been individuals, particularly members of the Communist Party, who were glad to welcome the Red Army exactly as there were Ukrainians, Russians, and even Romanians. The bulk of the Jewish population, however, though mistreated by the king's policies and the anti-Semitic

administration, belonged either to the Zionist movement or preserved their traditional religious way of life. For them the entry of the Red Army must have meant the end of their contacts with the rest of the Jewish world, the end of their activities towards emigrating to Palestine, and the beginning of a new life in which traditional Jewish habits (such as observing the Jewish Sabbath and Holidays) also came to an end.'

To take individual cases and generalise them reminds one of the long-time accusations against the Jewish people of killing Jesus Christ.

'I have the impression that it was General Antonescu's fascist regime that invented the myth of the Jewish population's so-called behaviour to justify the mass killings among the Jews by the Romanian Army as it crossed the Prut River and shortly afterwards the deportation of the remainder by the most cruel means to Transnistria. (There is a reference to this in Nagy-Talavera's words, when he says that the Jewish population had to pay a high price one year later [meaning June–July 1941] for having been overjoyed in their welcoming of the Red Army)'

I think that these misconceptions must be corrected, since they do not correspond to reality and may lead, albeit inadvertently, to a certain justification of the massacres and deportations — which I presume was not the intention of the authors.

I sent copies of this letter to Romania's MFA, to the Council for Socialist Culture and Education, and of course, to the Institute for Historical Research of the RCP.

During my mission as Israel's ambassador to Austria (1993–95), Mihai Pelin, the Romanian historian and journalist who served the official Romanian historiography during Ceaușescu's era (but who began to write objectively in the post-communist era), sent me his book, *Legendă și Adevărul*<sup>25</sup> (*Legend and Truth*, Edrat, Bucharest, 1994), in which he confirms the facts, on the basis of testimonies and documents, that Antonescu's accusations were indeed baseless. I found in it a serious attempt by the author, not only to take back some of his tendentious and misleading conceptions, which he had written in the communist era, but to take a fresh approach that is finally gaining expression in contemporary Romanian historiography, contradicting Antonescu's pretext for ordering the Romanian soldiers to carry out the mass killing of Jews in Bessarabia and North Bucovina as an act of revenge for having humiliated Romanian soldiers during their retreat from these regions when they were annexed to the USSR. Will Mihai Pelin's book remain an isolated one or will his conclusions become well accepted? Time will tell.

### **Cooperating with Chief Rabbi Dr Moses Rosen**

The relations between the Embassy of Israel in Bucharest and the chief rabbi depended to a large degree on two main factors, one political, the other personal. During Romania's Stalinist regime, the relations were of an official nature, taking into consideration the great danger facing the rabbi if he were to be accused by the authorities of acting against Romania's interests. Open contacts by the embassy staff with him were maintained during their visits to the synagogue. There were instances, however, in which the rabbi would inform Israeli diplomats about news concerning the fate of Romanian Jewry. During the period of Ceaușescu, who adopted a liberal attitude to the Jewish community in comparison to that of his predecessors, our relations with the chief rabbi and the Jewish community were unrestricted and unhindered. We used to call on him at the Community Centre, whenever we deemed it necessary and he used to visit us at the embassy for

talks of mutual interest and at the ambassador's residence on the occasion of official events. It goes without saying that the ambassador and embassy staff always participated in official, social, and cultural events organized by the community of Bucharest. Still, these relations knew ups and downs, being subject to a certain degree on the common language our emissaries found with the chief rabbi. Some of them, and they were an absolute minority, considered him leader of a (relatively) small community who exalted himself over his subordinates in an attempt to copy the domineering manners of Ceaușescu as leader of the community, and who felt himself more important than Israel's official representatives in Romania. In this way they headed for clashes with him, without taking into account, as I see it, the circumstances under which he operated in the face of a rigid regime that stood for the subordination of all human values to the national ideology of Romanian communism, with all its implications, including tracking him suspiciously in everything that he did. This was contrary to the supreme national interest that guided him to preserve the life of the Jewish communities in Romania, from the national, social, religious, and cultural points of view, and their links to Israel and the Jewish communities of the Diaspora. He tried to realize his goals internally and externally, by using the limited means at his disposal, including those that he perhaps considered as capable of enhancing his status and his office in the eyes of the local authorities, not only for the sake of his own ego, but for the purpose of deterring them from harming the national activities to which he dedicated his entire life. His 'insurance policy' was the State of Israel, the world Jewish organizations, and the community's attitude towards him. The other part of his endeavours was devoted to his relations with the authorities, especially his resolute struggle against anti-Semitism and falsification of Holocaust history in Romania. On that level he found in Israel true assistants.

As early as in the first days after my arrival in Romania we held frequent working sessions to exchange information and assessment of the situation, particularly in regard to problems connected with the battle against anti-Semitic manifestations in Romania and our common activity against the tendency to ignore the Holocaust of the Jews in fascist Romania. We stood together in a common national front, and if we were successful it was due to his courageous leadership and the good relations that developed between us. I shall cite here a few examples of our cooperation, which in my estimation were an important factor in our joint effort to give greater depth to public consciousness of the Holocaust of the Jews under fascist Romania, its scope, and its nature.

### **Mihai Pelin's article in Saptamîna, 1986**

A Romanian acquaintance of mine drew my attention to this article, characterized by its historic distortions and dangerous conclusions. After having read it, shocked by its contents, I drew the attention of Chief Rabbi Rosen and that of Jean Ancel. Both had been unaware of it and told me that they would respond severely — Rabbi Rosen to the mayor of Bucharest and others, as well as in his public speeches; Dr Ancel in Kol Israel's broadcast in Romanian, since many Romanians of the state administration listened to it, as well as in his writings on the pogrom (see pp. 263, 264).

The chairman of the Bucharest Jewish community, Theodor Blumenfeld, who himself resided in Iași during the pogrom, contradicted the distorted facts in Pelin's article one by one at the Memorial Remembrance Assembly in memory of the victims, held in Iași's Jewish cemetery, in mid-July 1986, in the presence of myself and the American Chargé d'Affaires, Henry Clark. In his address at this gathering, Rabbi Rosen called the weekly 'fascist', shocking the audience of

thousands, Jews and non-Jews, including representatives of the Municipal authorities, by revealing the Romanian tendency to ignore the Holocaust of the Jews in Romania with the intention of rehabilitating Antonescu's name from his characterization as an anti-Semitic phenomenon. He added that 'neo-fascists are raising their heads again in Romania and we will not permit them to desecrate the victims sacred memory'.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the rabbi would not have delivered such an acidic speech, considering the circumstances of living under a communist regime, if it were not for Israel's official presence at this function.

The rabbi also addressed a protest letter to the Central Committee of the RCP in addition to the one dispatched to the Bucharest city mayor.

The head of the Culture Department prohibited the editor of the Jewish bi-weekly of the FJCR, *Revista Cultului Mozaic*, from publishing the full texts of Rabbi Rosen's and Theodor Blumenfeld's speeches at the Memorial Assembly, in which they condemned Pelin's article and in particular the tendency to mask the responsibility of the Romanian Army for the Iași massacre. Conversely, the censor proposed the introduction into the text of their speeches elements which might have rehabilitated Antonescu for his crimes against the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria. In light of the interdiction against publishing the speeches, Blumenfeld informed the Culture Department that the editor would publish nothing about the assembly in Iași in the FJCR magazine. The authorities' ruling demonstrated their bias. Rabbi Rosen sent a protest letter to the head of the Culture Department sharply criticizing the Romanian inclination to purify Antonescu's name. Anyone reading this letter will admire the wisdom and courage he expressed in it under the circumstances of communist Romania.

In my talks with Romanian journalists and historians, the details of which were probably reported to the Romanian MFA, the Central Committee of the RCP, and the Security Services, I stressed not only the offensiveness inherent in this tendency to falsify history, but also the warning that if this inclination were not halted, the day would not be far off in which various researchers in history would call for the rehabilitation of the reputations of the war criminals tried at Nuremberg.

At the same time, in Israel, Jean Ancel and Israeli journalists published severely critical reactions to Pelin's article and to those backing him, intensifying public consciousness in Romania, in Israel, and in the Free World, in face of the inclination to distort Romanian historiography. Concurrently, the publication of Pelin's article stimulated researchers of the history of the Holocaust of the Jews into fascist Romania, both in Israel and in the West, to confront the tendency to twist historic truth, on the basis of authorised historic documentation from Romanian sources.

## **Memorial Assembly for the Holocaust Jews of Fascist Romania**

The FJCR led by Chief Rabbi Rosen customarily initiated and organized Memorial Assemblies attended by large audiences on the occasion of the following events:

Commemorating the Day of the Pogroms against Jews in Bucharest (January 1941): as we know, 120 Bucharest Jews were massacred during the pogrom by the *Garda de Fier* (Iron Guard) legionnaires, who acted under Nazi Germany's inspiration but contrary to the stand of Antonescu (already Romania's leader) who acted vehemently against them until their activities were brought to a halt. This Memorial Assembly was held in the Coral Synagogue of Bucharest and attended

by a large crowd, including representatives of the Cult Department and the municipality, Romanian intellectuals, and foreign diplomats, headed by the Israeli ambassador and embassy staff.

The Central Memorial Assembly in memory of the Jews who had died in the Iași pogrom (June 1941) was held in the Iași Jewish cemetery where 2,000 victims were buried. Afterwards a convoy of those in attendance, including representatives of Israel's embassy, went on to memorial services in the vicinity of Iași in the Jewish cemeteries of Tirgu Frumos, and Podul Iloaei, where hundreds more pogrom victims had been laid to rest. Yet one must keep in mind that the burial site for the majority of pogrom victims remains unknown. Presumably their remains were scattered in neighbouring surroundings. One day it is hoped that the locations will be discovered.

At these assemblies Chief Rabbi Rosen and the chairman of the Jewish community of Iași, Dr Simion Kaufman, were the main speakers. Both invoked the memory of the deceased, recounting the horrifying acts perpetrated against the Jews, admonishing not to forget them and calling for the drawing of the proper conclusions. The memorial services concluded with the reciting of the *kaddish* and the *El Male Rakhamim* prayer.

Chief Rabbi Rosen customarily organized two additional yearly memorial services, the first in memory of the 769 (illegal) immigrants on board the ship *Struma* which sank in the Black Sea on the way from Romania to Palestine.

I took part for the first time in the *Struma* memorial service in February 1986, held in the Jewish cemetery of Bucharest near the monument set up by the local Jewish community, upon which are engraved the names of all the immigrants who found their last resting place on the bottom of the sea. The *Struma* had set sail from the shores of Romania and was mistakenly attacked and sunk by a Soviet torpedo boat, which suspected it was an enemy boat, on 24 February 1942 — there was only one survivor.<sup>27</sup>

On the commemoration of Holocaust Day in the Bucharest Coral Synagogue, in the absence of the chief rabbi, the secretary of the FJCR, Emil Schechter, a cultured, refined man who was a devoted Zionist (he emigrated to Israel with his family in the late 1980s and shortly afterwards passed away), gave the eulogy. He pointed out the silence of the Free World in the face of the Holocaust and concluded by making a courageous statement (in relation to those times), 'The State of Israel is now the only guarantee for the physical existence of the Jews in the Diaspora'. He also commemorated in his speech the victims of the pogroms of Bucharest, Dorohoi, Iași, and North Transylvania (then under Hungarian rule), but avoided mentioning, probably from fear of the authorities, the Jewish victims in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria.

I was astounded, but found out that this was the rule. I remarked to Schechter, and separately to Chief Rabbi Rosen, that the custom should also be to note the Holocaust victims who suffered under fascist Romania. The chief rabbi did not hesitate for a moment, so it was that on Holocaust Day in May 1986 he made explicit mention of them, for the first time, without asking for the authorities' permission. Moreover, I concluded with the rabbi that a separate memorial service would be held in memory of these victims on the occasion of commemorating that 45 years had passed since the terrible massacre perpetrated by the Romanian Army in July 1941, and the subsequent deportation of the survivors to Transnistria.

Thus there was a separate Memorial Assembly to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust

of the Jews of Bessarabia and Bucovina, marking 45 years since the terrible massacre executed by the Romanian Army, July 1941, and the deportation of the survivors to Transnistria. The first such memorial assembly was held on 16 October 1986 in the Coral Synagogue, with a large audience attending, including the heads of Jewish communities throughout Romania, Israel's embassy staff, and foreign diplomats, as well as a representative of the Cult Department and many Romanian intellectuals. Chief Rabbi Rosen, who had organized this function, courageously gave public exposure to the crimes of the Antonescu regime against the Jews in those regions. Before the event President Ceaușescu was not happy with the programmed memorial service, and one day before it was to be held Rabbi Rosen was summoned to Ion Dincu, Politburo member, who received him in the presence of the head of the Cult Department, Cumpănașu, to protest on behalf of the president.

Dincu stressed in his talk with Rabbi Rosen that the president was about to cancel the Memorial Assembly and only out of his feelings of respect for the rabbi did he hold back on doing so. Also, the president wondered why such memorial assemblies had not been held in the past, and why Rabbi Rosen had chosen this particular time when the Warsaw Pact ministers had come to Bucharest for a conference.

As Rabbi Rosen saw it, the president was afraid that this assembly would be interpreted as a provocative act against the Soviets to remind them that former Romanian territories are now under their domination. According to the contents of the talk, filed by Rabbi Rosen (a copy is in the Israel MFA archive), the atmosphere surrounding it was 'dramatic'. Rabbi Rosen responded to Ceaușescu's arguments fearlessly and with great Jewish national pride.

President Ceaușescu's protest can be taken as affirmation of the extent to which the senior political rank of the Communist Party was sensitive at being reminded of the bloody days in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria under Antonescu's fascist regime. The president's arguments as presented by Dincu were totally baseless. On the contrary, had the Soviets really wanted they could have argued that 'you lost your rights to these regions, when fascist Romania attacked the USSR, behaving very cruelly to the Jewish population'. At the bottom of their hearts the senior ranks of the RCP had not accepted the theft of these regions from Romania under the infamous Ribbentrop—Molotov agreement, which had been publicly condemned by Ceaușescu.<sup>28</sup>

I am inclined to think that the tendency to omit mentioning these regions attested to a lack of reconciliation to the annexation by the USSR, while the tendency to omit mentioning the Jewish victims should be judged against the background of praising the national character of the Romanian people. At any rate, Chief Rabbi Rosen was not deterred by President Ceaușescu's objections, and from then on the Jewish victims of the region were commemorated, together with other Romanian Holocaust victims, in all the memorial gatherings and services held under Rabbi Rosen's leadership during the communist era in general and in the post-communist era in particular.

Since such assemblies were convened in the presence of an official representative of the authorities, intellectuals, Romanian historians, and representatives of the Israel embassy, they constituted a new dimension in the public struggle against the disavowal by communist Romania of the Holocaust of the Jews under the fascist regime of Romania.

At the beginning of 1991, I told Chief Rabbi Rosen in Jerusalem about the deep impression made upon me by the Remembrance Monument dedicated in the courtyard of the Budapest Great



Synagogue in memory of the Jews of Hungary who perished during the Holocaust. I suggested that he consider working towards setting up a similar monument at the entrance of the Coral Synagogue in Bucharest in memory of the Romanian Holocaust victims on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the massacres against the Jews in Bessarabia and North Bucovina, and the deportation of the survivors to the hell of Transnistria. Rabbi Rosen reacted promptly and positively, with no hesitations, saying that he would act to make the idea a reality.

By July 1991 the monument in front of Bucharest's Coral Synagogue had been inaugurated, commemorating the region's Jewish Holocaust victims, including those of the Bucharest and Iași pogroms (1941) and the North Transylvanian Jews, then under Hungarian domination (1944), who were deported to the extermination camps of Auschwitz.

At the inauguration ceremony, where Rabbi Rosen delivered the main address, among the participants were the Israeli Minister of Religious Affairs, Zevulun Hammer; the ambassador of Israel, Zvi Mazel; the head of Nativ, Judge David Bartov; representatives of the Holocaust survivors from Israel and the Jewish world; and myself as deputy director general of Israel's MFA, with the honour of unveiling the plaque dedicated to the memory of the Jewish victims of Bessarabia.

This is the only monument in Romania dedicated in memory of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust who perished in 1941–44 under the fascist regime of Romania.

## NOTES

1. See Y. Govrin, 'Organization of the Jewish Communities of Romania During the Ceaușescu Era', *Shvut* 16 (1993).
2. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 14, p. 410.
3. *Ibid.*
4. FJCR sources.
5. See Y. Govrin, 'Landmarks of Jewish National Awakening in Romania', *Gesher* 1/108, (1983) (Hebrew).
6. *Revista Culturii Moziac* (Romanian), founded by Rabbi Rosen in 1956. Published in Romanian, Yiddish, Hebrew, and English. Since 1995, it is published under the title *Realitatea Evreiască*, in Romanian, English, and Hebrew.
7. Thus far five volumes of historic documents have appeared. The last one is devoted to the Holocaust years, 1940–44, under Antonescu's fascist regime.
8. A term I learned from my university teacher, Professor Shimon Halkin, when he referred to Jews belonging to the Enlightenment (*Haskalah*) period in east and central European Jewish history and literature, who abandoned their Jewish surroundings but were not absorbed into the non-Jewish milieu.
9. Shaikhe (Yeshayahu) Dan of Nativ was in charge of current negotiations with representatives of the Romanian authorities on establishing the *aliyah* quota and the financing of *aliyah* payments per person. Calculations were made according to the person's age and educational level.
10. The appeal was made at the proposal of Judge David Bartov, the head of Nativ in charge of the organization of *aliyah* from the USSR and East Europe. Soviet acceptance was given to Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress, and to Morris Abram, president of the National Committee for Soviet Jewry, when visiting Moscow, 25 March 1989.
11. A comprehensive study on 'The Holocaust and Romanian Historiography: communist and neo-communist revisionism', by Victor Ashkenazy, in: Randolph L. Braham (ed.), *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry* (The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, Graduate Center/The City University of New York/Social Sciences Monographs, Boulder, CO/Columbia University Press, New York: 1994).
12. *Ibid.*
13. Bessarabia and Bucovina were annexed to Romania in 1918, after the First World War, in which Romania participated on the side of the Entente Powers: Bessarabia from Russia and Bucovina from Austria. On 26 June 1940, the USSR submitted an ultimatum to Romania demanding the return of Bessarabia within 48 hours. In addition, the USSR demanded that North Bucovina be given to the USSR as compensation for Romania's holding Bessarabia in the years 1918–40. Romania surrendered, after reaching the conclusion that the alternative would be to open war against the USSR, a situation in which

Romania's forces were greatly inferior to those of the USSR. Thus Romania wanted to save the remaining parts of the territories from war and occupation. Even so, its surrender to the USSR invited outside pressure on Romania: (a) by Hungary's aspiring to get back from Romania Transylvania, which prior to the First World War had belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire; (b) by Bulgaria demanding back south Dobrogea, annexed from its territory to Romania following the Second Balkan War (1913).

Finally it was agreed between the conflicting sides, with Nazi Germany's support, that Hungary would get North Transylvania (30 August 1940) and Bulgaria south Dobrogea (7 September 1940). Romania continued to keep under its domination South Bucovina and South Transylvania. One of the reasons Romania, under Antonescu's leadership, joined forces with Nazi Germany in the attack against the USSR was its hope of retrieving Bessarabia, North Bucovina, and North Transylvania. Following the overthrow of Antonescu (23 August 1944) and Romania's joining forces with the USSR in the war against Nazi Germany, North Transylvania was returned to Romania in accordance with a peace treaty signed between the parties concerned in February 1947. Thus Bessarabia and North Bucovina continued to be an integral part of the USSR and South Dobrogea of Bulgaria.

14. Transnistria is the region in Western Ukraine between the Dniester and Bug rivers that Nazi Germany handed over to Romania's administration (according to the Tighina Agreement of August 1941) after having conquered it from the USSR, as compensation for Romania's participation on the German side in the war against the USSR.

As for the mass killings of Jews perpetrated by the Romanian Army in collaboration with the local Christian population immediately after the conquest of Bessarabia and North Bucovina from the USSR and the deportation to Transnistria, see:

1. Matatias Carp, *Carea Neagra*, vol. 3, *Transnistria Fapte si Documente. Sufferințele evreilor din Romania 1940–1944 (The Black Book: Facts and Documents, The Sufferings of the Jews of Romania 1940–1944)* (Socec: Bucharest, 1946–1947). First volume: *Legionari*, 1940; Second volume: *Iași Pogrom*, 1941; third volume: *Transnistria 1941–1944*.
2. *Pinkas ha-Kehillot* (Hebrew) (*Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities*), Romania. Edited by Dr Jean Ancel and Dr Theodor Levi (Yad Vashem: Jerusalem, vol. 1, 1969; vol. 2, 1980).
3. Jean Ancel (ed.), *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust*, 12 vols (The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation: New York, 1986–1987).
4. Avigdor Shachan, *Burning Ice. The Ghettos of Transnistria* (East European Monographs, Boulder, CO/Columbia University Press: New York, 1996).
5. Jean Ancel, *Haderekh ha-Romanit le-Fitron Ha-ba'aya ha-Yehudit, he-Bessarabia u-ve-Bucovina (The Romanian Way of Solving the Jewish Problem in Bessarabia and Bucovina, June–July 1941)*, *Yad Vashem, Kovetz Mehkarim (Collection of Studies)*, vol. 19, (Yad Vashem: Jerusalem, 1989).
6. Jean Ancel, *Antonescu and the Jews: Kovetz Mehkarim*, vol. 23 (Yad Vashem: Jerusalem, 1994).
15. See for example:
  1. Ion Popescu-Puturi (ed.), *La Roumanie pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale*, (Editions de l'Academie de RPR: Bucharest, 1964), pp. 28, 49, 50 and 65, mentions for the first time that the Hitlerites and the fascist authorities of Romania created an atmosphere leading to pogroms against Jews (without mentioning the mass killings of Jews in Bessarabia and Bucovina) and that 38,000 Jews from Dorohoi and South Bucovina were deported (it does not say to where); of whom a large number perished...It also notes that 170,000 Romanian Jews were concentrated in camps and ghettos 'in the Bug region' (The name Transnistria is not mentioned), tens of thousand of whom perished. Since the book was published in French, it obviously was intended more for external consumption than for internal needs.
  2. A. Karețki and M. Covaci, *Zile insingerate la Iași (28–30 June 1941) (Days of Bloodshed in Iași 28–30 June 1941)* (Editura Politica: Bucharest, 1979). The book ignores the role of the Romanian Army in the pogrom in Iași, where 12,000 Jews were killed, but lays the full responsibility on the German Army, contrary to eyewitnesses and the documentation. In its preface, signed by N. Minei, we find among other things: 'Out of all countries under Nazi occupation, Romania was the only one that did not know any ghettos or deportations to extermination camps such as Auschwitz and Maidanek'. In a footnote to this sentence, Minei adds: 'As for the deportations beyond the Dneister carried out by the Antonescu authorities, there was no tendency, above-board or secret, to annihilate the deportees...' He enumerates three main reasons for a certain number of losses among them. Two of them were acts of corruption and mistreatment on the part of the authorities (Romanian) and executions perpetrated by Nazi soldiers. Noting that, Minei praises the Romanian authorities for giving permission in 1943–44 for all the survivors (namely, from Transnistria) to return to Romania. The brutal acts of mass killings of the Jews of Bessarabia and North Bucovina were, of course, not mentioned either; the same applies for the ghettos of Transnistria where the survivors of the mass killings in these regions were deported together with the Jews of the South Bucovina and Dorohoi districts. He also does not mention the number of victims at all stages until Transnistria was liberated by the Red Army at the end of March 1944. An additional incorrect assessment concerns the permission given to return to Romania — it applied only to surviving deportees of Transnistria, 2,000 orphans who were repatriated there. It is most probable that not all the facts and data were at Minei's disposal. See also, Dr Jean Ancel, 'The Jassy Syndrome', in *Romanian Jewish Studies*, 1 (Spring 1987); 2 (Winter 1987).
16. See Jean Ancel's article (in English), „Plans for Deportation of the Romanian Jews and their Discontinuation in Light of

Documentary Evidence (July–October 1942), in *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 16 (Yad Vashem: Jerusalem 1984), pp. 381–420; also, ‘Antonescu and the Jews,’ *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 23 (Yad Vashem: Jerusalem, 1993).

17. Published in Israel's daily in Romanian, *Ultima Ora*, 20 June 1997.
  18. The subjects of this symposium focused on the situation of Romania's Jews in the years 1938–44 (with the exception of the lecture by Dr Yitzhak Arad, the Yad Vashem Chairman, on the Belzec extermination camp, where the Jews of Regat and South Transylvania were scheduled for deportation, in Autumn 1942. The Israeli group at the seminar consisted of Dr Jean Ancel, who lectured on ‘Romania's Attitude Towards its Jewish citizens in Germany and in Occupied Europe’; Dr Leon Volovici on ‘Jewish Intellectuals and Romanian Intellectuals in the Years of Antonescu's Dictatorship’; Dr Ephraim Ophir, on ‘Romania's Attitude to the Question of Jewish Emigration 1938–40’; and Pinhas Heikis, on ‘Germany's Diplomatic Efforts to Annex Romania to the Nazi Camp, Summer 1940’. The Romanian group included the researchers of the Institute for Historic-Economic-Sociopolitical Research: Dr Ion Calafeteanu who spoke on ‘The Situation of Jewish Citizens of Romania who were Abroad during Antonescu's Dictatorships’; Dr Livia Dandara on ‘Romania's Position in the International Debates concerning Jews in Europe in the Years 1938–39’; Dr Ion Bulei, on ‘The Situation of Romania, Summer 1940, and its Oppressive Policy towards the Jewish Population.’
  19. The titles of the symposium lectures by the Israeli participants were: Professor Zeev Sternhell, on ‘The Birth and Development of the Fascist Ideology’; Dr Jean Ancel, on ‘The Characteristics of the Antonescu Regime in Romania 1940–1944’; Dr Arye Steinberg, on: ‘The Attitude of Antonescu's Regime to the Emigration Program of the Jewish Population 1940–1944’. Those on the Romanian side were: Dr Ion Calafeteanu on, ‘The Attitude of Antonescu's Regime to the Emigration Problem of the Jewish Population’; Dr Constantin Petculescu, on ‘Anti-Fascist and Anti-Radical Attitudes of Romania's Public Opinion in the Years 1933–1941’; Dr Constantin Buturan, on ‘Aspects of Anti-Semitism in Romania until the Second World War.’
  20. A precis of the lectures was selectively published in the Romanian magazine *Anale de Istorie*, 3 (1986) and 5 (1988). The full text of Dr Dandara's lecture was published in this magazine, 4 (1986).
  21. Gheorge Buzatu, *Din Istoria Secretă de a celui de al doilea Război Mondial (Pages from the Secret History of World War 2)* (Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică: București, 1988). While in this book, written and published in the late Ceaușescu era, Buzatu describes Antonescu's regime as a treacherous, fascist one, imposed on Romania with the assistance of Nazi Germany (p. 146) in the post-communist era he belongs to the stream of Romanian national historians who strive in their works to rehabilitate Antonescu and clear him of his crimes, presenting him as a national hero.
  22. Abba Eban, *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson: London, 1985), p. 301.
  23. Dinu Giurescu was one of the senior professors of the History Department at the University of Bucharest. He is the son of a well-known Romanian historian active prior to the Second World War, Constantin Giurescu. We maintained very friendly relations with him and his wife. He was also a strong opponent of Ceaușescu, distributing a protest letter to him in which he condemned the policy of destroying historic monuments (churches, synagogues) as part of the new municipal planning in Bucharest and other localities. Consequently he was dismissed from his university post and was compelled to emigrate to the USA with his family at the end of the 1980s. After the anti-communist revolution in Romania he returned to Bucharest to his academic and scholarly activities. In the field of historical research he was known, *inter alia*, by his comprehensive book, *Illustrated History of the Romanian People* published by Sport-Tourism (Bucharest, 1981). The book covers the period from the Second World War to the 1980s. We argued strenuously over the absence of a proper reference to the Holocaust of the Jews in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria under Antonescu's regime, on the basis of Matias Carp's book and condemnatory material against Antonescu produced at the Great Trial of War Criminals held in Romania in 1946. Whereupon Giurescu replied that all that he had written about the events up to the Second World War was nothing but the truth (meaning that what he wrote about events occurring after the war were written under the vigilance of the communist censorship).
- I was pleasantly surprised when the Romanian historian Cristian Popisteanu sent me the magazine *Magazin Istoric* of which he was the chief editor October–November 1997 (until his death). The issue contained two articles by Giurescu in which he mentions the scope of the Holocaust against the Jews of Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria. The surprising thing about it was that he published it ten years after our talks on the subject. But, undoubtedly, this is an important dimension in Romanian historiography which still differs on describing the full range of Antonescu's crimes against the Jews.
24. Mircea Mușat and Ion Ardeleanu, *Romania după Morea Unire (Romania after the Grand Unification)*, vol. 2, part 2, *November 1933–September 1940* (Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică: Bucharest, 1988). Both historians passed away in 1994. After the anti-communist revolution in Romania, it became known that they both had belonged to the nationalist stream among Romanian historians striving to rehabilitate Antonescu. Mușat was even elected to the post of vice-president of the extreme right party Romania Mare (Great Romania) ignoring Antonescu's role in the Holocaust of the Jews in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria.
  25. Mihai Pelin, *Legendă și Adevărul (Legend and Truth)* (Edrat: Bucharest, 1994); also mentioned on pp. 263–4.
  26. For further details see Radio Free Europe/Research, 11 August 1986.
  27. The (illegal) immigrant ship *Struma* had 770 persons on board. The boat was sunk on 24 February 1942 by a Soviet

submarine in the Black Sea, which suspected that it belonged to the enemy fleet. This was first revealed in I. Vaneyev's *Chernomortsy v velikoy otechestvenoy voyne (The Activities of the Soviet Fleet in the Black Sea During World War II)* (USSR Ministry of Defence: Moscow, 1978). Until the appearance of this book it had been believed that a German submarine sank the ship. On the tragedy of the *Struma*, see Dr Ephraim Ofir, *Nirdafim lelo Motza (With No Way Out, the Story of the Struma)* (A.C.M.E.O.R.: Tel Aviv, 1999).

28. In his address at the festive assembly held on 25 January 1988, on the occasion of his 70th birthday (*Scînteia*;, 26 January 1988) and in his address at the 14th Congress of the RCP on 20 November 1989 (*Scînteia*;, 21 November 1989).

## 6 Israel—Romania Bilateral Relations

With all due consideration to the political dialogue which we conducted with the Romanian authorities on all levels to clarify our position on the Israeli—Arab conflict and to become better acquainted with their position as a result of their involvement with both sides to the conflict towards finding an agreeable solution, I preferred to focus together with my colleagues of our embassy staff in Bucharest, on strengthening and expanding Israel—Romania relations on the state and information levels (as much as it was possible at that time), in the mutual fields of economics, trade, culture, science, and education; the further intensification of the relations with the FJCR, led by the late Chief Rabbi Rosen; on visiting the scattered Jewish communities throughout Romania; and on cooperating in the mutual struggle against manifestations of anti-Semitism and the phenomenon of disavowal of the Holocaust and its dimensions — in that period customary in Romania's historiography. In all these activities I was assisted by a devoted embassy staff<sup>1</sup> who were aware of the importance of our political and Jewish mission in communist Romania of those days. I would not be mistaken saying that we made great efforts to take full advantage of any inch of freedom given to us under the local conditions. Moreover, in some cases we developed more activities than any other Western embassy in Bucharest.

Although we had talks with the representatives of the administration, as will be further described, they did not meet my expectations. Perhaps this resulted from a bureaucracy that derived from the character of the regime or from ideological reasons, even though the development of Israel—Romania relations served Romania's cause in the West, in East Europe, and in the Middle East.

But there were also talks that were fruitful, and they belong to the majority of cases, with the help of the head of the Asian and Middle East Department of the Romanian MFA, first Marcel Dinu and afterwards Ion Mielciouiu, who showed relative flexibility and good will in advancing our mutual relations, beyond the bureaucratic barrier, and for that I am most appreciative.

All our appeals were well received. The majority of them had a positive response. This was not an easy task, particularly in domains where we undertook new initiatives considered the first of their kind. But, despite the bureaucratic obstacles, we were successful in attaining some important achievements, in comparison to other Western countries then represented in Romania, that had no parallel in the neighbouring East European countries, even when we had diplomatic relations between them and Israel. Israel—Romania relations, characterized in the late Ceaușescu era by their constant expansion, served Romania's interests well, as previously noted, in the international arena, presenting Romania in a positive light, unique in the extent of its independence relative to the other countries in the communist bloc. This was so be it in the Middle East sphere, where Romania had an advantage over others in maintaining diplomatic

relations with Israel and the Arab states, or be it in the field of bilateral cooperation from which Romania was the main beneficiary. The expansion of mutual relations no doubt served Israel's political and economic interest in Romania itself and among its co-members in the bloc whose status declined in the international and Middle East arena in the absence of relations between them and Israel. Hence, it could be concluded from the Israeli—Romanian point of view that the communist bloc countries, headed by the USSR, lost out in the absence of relations. Romania, served as an example of how to preserve the principle of universality of relations, particularly when they could be of help in looking for a solution to regional and international problems, and at the same time benefit from cooperation with Israel in the fields of agriculture, economy, trade, tourism, culture, science, and technology.

### **RELATIONS ON THE STATE LEVEL**

While there was a stream of Israeli state visits to Romania (prime minister, foreign ministers, ministers of trade and industry, ministers of tourism and agriculture, Knesset members and public personalities), personages from the Romanian administration (particularly after the Lebanon War), with President Ceaușescu topping the list, refrained from paying official visits to Israel. This was not the rule for the Romanian minister of tourism who did visit Israel in 1984, and the ministers of foreign trade and foreign affairs who came in 1988, as well as for Ceaușescu's emissaries who used to go to Israel for talks with Israeli leaders, and senior members of the RCP who were invited to come to the opening of conferences held by the political parties Mapai, Mapam, and Maki, taking advantage of these visits to meet the heads of Israel's opposition and coalition parties to update themselves on the latest developments in the Israeli—Arab conflict.

During all the years of his rule Ceaușescu held back from paying an official visit to Israel under the pretext that would come only after peace prevailed between Israel and the Palestinians. This reasoning was contrary to the many visits he made to a large number of countries, including those that had border disputes with their neighbours still unsettled today. It is unclear to me whether his reason for not visiting Israel was true. Perhaps he did not want his stay in Jerusalem to be interpreted by Palestinians and Arab states as if he had given legitimacy to the city as the capital of the State of Israel, whereas to come to Israel and not visit Jerusalem would have been interpreted as an affront to Israel. In contrast, however, he could have taken a good example from Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, since Sadat certainly did not recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and probably did not accept Israel's domination over the entire city. At any rate, it was sufficiently clear that the visit by a minister in Ceaușescu's government depended only upon him. During my mission, I was of the opinion that we should not repeatedly invite him to Israel just to hear his excuse for postponing the trip. Instead, I concentrated my efforts at other state levels. It was only in 1988 that two ministers accepted our invitation to visit Israel. The first was Foreign Minister Ioan Totu in January 1988 accompanied by Department Director Mielcioiu.<sup>2</sup> The second was the minister of foreign trade and international cooperation, Ioan Ungur, who came to Israel in October 1988 as the head of a Romanian delegation to the mixed economic Israeli—Romanian commission, accompanied by the director-general and senior official of his ministry. (See below.)

### **RELATIONS ON THE PARLIAMENTARY LEVEL**

About a month after my arrival to assume my functions in Bucharest, I paid a visit to the chairman of the Romanian Parliament, Nicolae Giosan, considered by the diplomatic corps as a very close collaborator with Ceaușescu. He was very much engaged in foreign affairs at the parliamentary level and outside it; he used to travel abroad frequently and was professor of agriculture at the University of Bucharest. When he was minister of agriculture in the 1960s, he had visited Israel. He had been deeply impressed, so he told me, by Israel's agricultural achievements and consequently raised the idea of establishing agricultural cooperation between Romania and Israel. Indeed, following his visit such an agreement was signed and implemented for a few years until frozen by the Romanians. My presumption was that the Romanian authorities feared that their agriculturists who came to specialise in Israel would choose to remain there or run away to the West. Another possibility is that they were afraid that upon the agriculturalists' return to Romania, they would, when speaking with their colleagues, criticize the work systems there, which lagged well behind those in Israel.

Beyond this protocol visit, following the usual custom, I wished to explore with him the possibility for advancing the exchange of visiting delegations of parliamentarians between Israel and Romania, headed by the chairman of both respective Parliaments. (The Knesset chairman at the time was Shlomo Hillel, and before leaving for Bucharest, I had coordinated this subject with him.) Although the activities between the two Parliaments differed, I had thought that the visit to Israel by a Romanian parliamentary delegation would enable the participants to stand by Israel at the conference of the Inter-Parliamentarian Union (IPU), at which fiercely anti-Israel draft resolutions were proposed. To obstruct them, we needed every friendly vote. Though we must remember that support for us did not depend on the Romanian parliamentarians themselves, but rather upon 'what President Ceaușescu would have to say' on how to vote. Yet, the visit by an Israeli parliamentary delegation to Romania would have allowed us to present Ceaușescu with a wide range of views on the Israeli—Arab conflict; it would also have had a positive echo among the local Jews and those in neighbouring countries.

I explained to Giosan my purpose in visiting him and the importance I attributed to the idea of the visit by exchange delegations. Among other things, I remarked that although he had met some Israel Knesset members among the Israeli personalities visiting Romania, and although Romanian personalities of the same status had visited Israel, this could not be regarded as exchange visits by delegations of parliamentarians, headed by their respective chairmen, with the aim of furthering mutual acquaintance and cooperation between both parliaments. I added, since to the best of my knowledge such a delegation from Romania had never visited Israel, the time had now come to implement such a programme to intensify relations at this level between our countries.

Giosan answered that even if such visits had not taken place in the past, both sides had already maintained political contacts during the past few years, be it with the president or with him, with each side well aware of the other side's positions. In his view it was important to raise the economic and technological relations to the political level. From here on he gave me a lecture on Romanian policy towards the Israeli—Arab conflict and on the unique Romania—Israel relations, concluding by saying that when the conflict was resolved 'many opportunities would open up for political cooperation between us'. In effect, Giosan only repeated Ceaușescu's argument, with slight modifications of the formula.

I made clear to him the characteristics of the Israeli—Arab conflict, with peace being denied to us since the time we gained our independence, while foreign forces in our region aspired to

destroy us. I reminded him that the European states had achieved their current borders only after hundreds of years of wars between them and that a similar phenomenon was taking place in the Middle East. We hoped that the process would take much less time than it had in Europe. I concluded jokingly by asking him, 'Should we wait until then to develop the parliamentary relations between us?' He answered, 'By no means', citing the example of the cooperation existing between the Romanian and Israeli delegations at the IPU conferences, resulting in Romania's opposition to the negation of Israel's membership in this union. I thanked him, expressing my hope that Romania would continue this policy in accordance with Romania's sacred principle regarding the universality of relations among nations.

We also discussed the East European countries' policy towards us and their disruption of relations with us that had lasted — as of then — 18 years. He agreed with my remark that this situation had weakened the international system of relations more than it had strengthened it, making it more difficult to advance peace in our area.

The talk was held in a congenial atmosphere. Giosan invited me to approach him with any problem that I deemed necessary. Yet he explicitly evaded the idea of exchanging visits. When leaving the parliament, his counsellor, who had been present at our talk, hinted to me that I should not regard his answer as final. Perhaps he wanted to say that the subject would be brought up for Ceaușescu's consideration, but he did not make that explicit. During my mission in Bucharest, I visited him every year, on the eve of the IPU conference. In this respect I maintained direct contacts with his deputy, Dr Marin Ivașcu, who headed the Romanian delegation to the conference, asking his delegation to oppose the anti-Israel draft resolutions at the conference, be it the negation of Israel's membership or the proposal of imposing sanctions on Israel, or the condemnation of Zionism. Both Giosan and Ivașcu always told me that they would try to moderate the extreme position of the participants and mediate between the conflicting parties. And, indeed, this was so. The Romanian delegation always opposed the extreme draft resolutions, acting according to the instructions received from Bucharest. Regarding the subject of the Middle East, it called for an international conference to settle the Israeli—Arab conflict (following the known Romanian formula) and for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon (namely, not only, Israeli). Thus, I always appreciated the contacts with the heads of the Romanian parliament who were always attentive to our arguments, extending us their help in our political struggle at the IPU.

When Uzi Baram visited Romania in July 1986 as the guest of the RCP, I suggested to him that he raise the topic of exchange visits between parliamentary delegations in his talk with President Ceaușescu. Baram did it. Ceaușescu accepted the idea in principle. Having his positive answer, I was requested, in August 1986, to hand over to Giosan a letter addressed to him by the chairman of Israel's Knesset, Shlomo Hillel, extending an official invitation to him for a Romanian parliamentary delegation to visit Israel. Forwarding this letter to Giosan, I mentioned that according to our impression, President Ceaușescu had accepted the idea and hoped that he too agreed to it. Giosan was somewhat confused. It seemed that he was unaware of Ceaușescu's reply to Baram. Hearing once again the repetition of his argument that the visit would be possible only when peace would prevail in our region, I told him the following joke: Reagan and Gorbachev appealed separately to the Almighty to make peace between them. God answered each of them 'not in your days'. When Peres appealed, asking the Almighty to make peace between Israel and the Arabs, he was answered, 'Not in My days'. Giosan burst out laughing, saying that he understood the joke to mean 'not to postpone the visit until peace would come'.



When Giosan attended the reception held in the Israeli residence on the occasion of Israel's Independence Day 1988 'to bring the greetings of President Ceaușescu and those of the Romanian people to the president, to the government, and to the nation of Israel', he referred on his own initiative to the subject of a parliamentary visit to Israel, headed by himself, during 'this year'. When he noticed my hesitation, he emphasized, in the presence of Deputy Foreign Minister Pop, that the visit would really take place. Alas, this never came true during Ceaușescu's rule.

## **ISRAELI STUDENTS IN ROMANIA**

The travelling of Israeli students to Romania to attend university there was a relatively new phenomenon. These young people were mainly those who had not been accepted to study medicine at Israeli universities. In Romania there was no limitation on their being admitted to the schools, after having learned Romanian for one year or proving that they already knew it. A considerable portion of the Israeli students came from Israel's Arab sector and from Judea, Gaza, and Samaria. In general, they were granted fellowships and living expenses by Romania's government. The majority of Israeli Jewish students had to depend on material aid they received from their families in Israel. Besides them, additional students from foreign countries used to study at Romanian universities and it seemed that the Romanian authorities had developed a kind of 'studies industry' along these lines, which on one hand became a source of foreign currency income, while on the other constituted a burden on the state budget, considering the fact that many of the foreign students, particularly from the developing countries, were exempt from paying tuition and in addition received living expenses grants. Owing to the rigid regime at the Romanian universities, which always suspected the foreign students since they might have been intelligence sources or involved in espionage for foreign countries, the students often found themselves, including the Israelis, isolated from the host society. And although the doors of the embassy were always open to them so they could receive Hebrew newspapers and up-to-date information on what was happening in Israel, many of them were afraid to approach us for fear they would be traced, suspected, and ordered to leave. This kind of fear prevented them from visiting us at the embassy on a more frequent basis. Here and there some of them did come when social distress prompted them.

A short time after my arrival in Bucharest I received a group of students for a talk. I wanted to hear from them how they were coping with their problems and to see if, and to what extent, we at the embassy could make their stay in Romania easier. On one of these occasions they came to inform us that the university authorities were lodging them in housing together with Arab extremist students. Their protests against this were in vain. Consequently they felt threatened, fearful for their lives, whenever they returned to their rooms. They asked for our urgent help. As I checked into this I found out that this was the first time the embassy had been asked to intervene officially on behalf of Israeli students. Until then the embassy had had no status at the universities, since, as I was told, on subjects such as these the Romanians considered it merely an internal university affair.

These circumstances prompted me to pay an official visit to the Minister of Education and Study, Dr Ion Teorianu on 30 October 1985, earlier than I had planned. I was accompanied by the embassy's counsellor, Mr Shmuel Meirom. The minister welcomed me warmly and gave me an overview of the student structure in Romania.

I defined my visit as having two goals: one, to hear his assessment on the hundreds of Israeli students studying in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry as to their standard of studies and their acclimatization in these educational institutions to which they were not accustomed; second, to express our worry over their well-being, in view of the university's intention to house them together with students from Arab states who had an actively hostile attitude towards Israel, a situation that might lead to an undesirable political confrontation between them.

In this respect I reminded him that we had sent him official notes asking for his urgent intervention in preventing the implementation of this housing programme. I did not hide the fact that we had learned all of this from the students themselves who were asking for our assistance in resolving the issue. In my explanation, I made it clear that the studies of these Israeli students in Romania constituted a certain burden on our state budget, since their families had to transfer to Romania foreign currency to finance their children's expenses and living costs. It was therefore important that we know how the Romanian authorities evaluate the extent of their success in their studies. Also, we noted we were aware of the fact that these students expected their embassy in Bucharest to act on their behalf as long as it was necessary, since they are citizens of Israel who had fulfilled their duties by serving in the Israeli Defence Force. I asked him as 'common parents' of these students — Israeli secondary education had prepared them for higher education and Romania was now educating them towards an academic profession — to involve ourselves in their well-being and prevent, in advance, confrontations between them and the Arab students, many of whom were considered extremists, as I had been told.

The minister said that the 1,000 students studying at three universities — Bucharest, Iași, and Cluj — took their studies seriously and that this number had not changed in the last three years. Some 80 per cent of them were studying medicine and medical professions (1985/86 academic year). The authorities attempted to prevent confrontations between students, at the universities and at the housing facilities, and promised to solve the problem I had raised. He added that it was actually also in the interest of Romania that circumstances be kept calm and studious. In quoting me he expressed his willingness to serve the Israeli students as 'common parents', preparing them for life. If not, the university authorities would be making two mistakes: one, they would not be training experts for their professions; second, they would be harming Romania's image. Both goals were dear to their hearts and they could give full attention to solving the issue at hand. Finally, he suggested that it would be good if frequent contact would be maintained between the Romanian Ministry of Education and Study and the Embassy of Israel for the exchange of current information and for solving any problems that might occur with good will. In thanking him for this proposal, I promised him full cooperation on our part.

Since we had been introduced to two of the minister's assistants in charge of Israeli student affairs, Machedon and Carpatu, I suggested counsellor Meiron as our man to be in direct contact with them on these matters. The conversation was held in good spirit and was a fitting foundation for further relations with this ministry.

Beyond the political, economic, cultural, and Jewish spheres of embassy activity, it was also engaged in the sphere of Israeli students, since their number in the coming years would be increasing. Timișoara joined the list of cities where they studied. I made certain that a meeting with our students be included in my visiting programme. We could not satisfy their demands in every instance, yet we did whatever we could for them. In all of the cities where they studied they could eat at the kosher restaurants of the local Jewish community, subsidised by the JDC. They did, indeed, take advantage of that. The restaurant managers were happy to see them. This,

however, did not bring them closer to the members of the Jewish community, and much to my regret, in certain instances there was total detachment between them.

As noted, the embassy in Bucharest was always open for them. From time to time I would receive large groups of students to tell them about current events in Israel. The annual festive gathering we organized for them on the eve of Israel Independence Day was heartwarming for them and us. I am confident that their studies in Romania, with all the difficulties involved in their daily life under a communist regime, helped them, at any rate, to gain satisfactory access to their professions in Israel because of their serious attitude to their studies and the material aid they received from their families in Israel.

## **RELATIONS AT THE TRADE UNION LEVEL**

At the end of January 1986 I paid a courtesy call to Lina Ciobanu, chairperson of the Central Council of the Trade Unions in Romania. A vigorous woman, lecturer in Engineering Sciences at Bucharest University, she was known as a veteran member of the RCP and a great admirer of Ceaușescu.

In the course of our conversation, I offered to her and to her colleague my good offices in strengthening the relations between the Histadrut (General Organization of Workers in Israel) and the Trade Unions in Romania that would lead to a better knowledge of mutual activities. For instance, I suggested two things: to mount a photo exhibition of Working Israel in all branches of the Trade Unions in Romania and in return they could display their exhibitions at our local councils; and to conduct a more frequent dialogue at the Trade Unions level to become more thoroughly acquainted with each other.

Lina Ciobanu welcomed my proposals. Then she gave me a lecture on the main principles of Ceaușescu's policy (his name was mentioned at least 20 times!) with the intent of emphasizing that the implementation of his policy was actually borne by the workers. This placed heavy responsibility on the Trade Unions to 'deepen the ideological-patriotic consciousness of the workers, to urge them to improve the quality of their finished products by constantly perfecting their professional standards'. For a moment this seemed to be the characteristic model that she had, presumably, learned to repeat to her listeners. But what she presented was actually the goal of the Trade Unions in return for the social benefits granted the workers in those days in Romania, where the labourers were still discriminated against in comparison to their colleagues in Israel and the West.

As for bilateral relations, there was an important point concerning us in her words: the need to do more than what had been done until now to strengthen mutual relations (this, too, she said was in accordance with Ceaușescu's policy to expand relations with the countries of the world). Her concrete aim was the more frequent exchange of visits in both directions, and in this respect she mentioned that a Histadrut delegation was invited to attend the Romanian Trade Unions Congress, scheduled to open on 20 April 1986. I favoured this idea and expressed my wish to intensify our mutual relations. When saying good-bye to her, I promised that for whatever depended on us, we would extend full assistance to reaching this goal. 'I wish', she said, 'that Romania's ambassador to Israel had been more active in this direction'.

I was surprised to hear that from her. The Romanian ambassador, Ion Covaci, who had served in Israel for many years, was a wise, intelligent man, very active in the political and economic

fields. He maintained close relations with the senior members of the Histadrut, with Knesset members and public personalities, leaders of the Labor Party and Mapam as well as with mayors, particularly those who had immigrated from Romania. During his long mission in Israel, he had acquired many friends — this should have been considered a Romanian asset in Israel. He frequently came to the MFA in Jerusalem and when I was director of the East European Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, we maintained a frequent dialogue on bilateral subjects, the Israeli—Arab conflict (a subject upon which he was very well informed), East European affairs, and so on, always in a friendly atmosphere. He also revealed great interest in the information guidelines on political subjects then on our agenda. He carried on a parallel dialogue, though at a slower pace, with my colleagues in the ministry. Upon completing his mission in Israel, he was appointed Deputy Director for International Relations of the Trade Unions under Lina Ciobanu's directorate.

A rumour spread that Ceaușescu did not like him anymore — although he probably served him with all his power. The reason for his falling into disfavour, or so the story went, was that the tone of his reports from Israel was too friendly, meaning that he identified himself too closely with Israel's policy. Even now I do not know if this rumour had any basis. Yet, I have no doubt that upon his return to Romania he was completely neutralised from the current work at Romania's MFA, leaving his accumulated knowledge about Israel no outlet or use. Since we had parted in Israel in a most friendly manner, it was only natural that upon his return to Romania I would ask the Protocol Department of the Trade Unions to arrange a meeting between us at their headquarters to follow immediately upon my appointment with Ciobanu.

As I left her office, supposedly to be accompanied to Covaci's room, I saw at once that he was in the company of two men, most likely from the *Securitate*, who had probably been ordered to listen to our talk. Our meeting took place standing up in the corridor and not as I had expected, in his office. After an exchange of a few words of greeting, Covaci attacked me on Israel's policy towards the PLO in a tone totally uncharacteristic of the style of our conversations in Jerusalem. Instantly, I understood that he wanted to demonstrate a harsh attitude towards me, paying lip-service to his superiors who assumedly had accused him of absorbing too much of our political guidelines.

I responded in the same sharp tone; again for the same reason, so as not to display in front of the security personnel any friendly relationship. During my mission in Romania I met him once or twice at receptions held in the Egyptian ambassador's residence, with his 'musketeers' always alongside, listening carefully to every word we uttered. I found out that the invitations we addressed to him to attend our Independence Day and other receptions were simply never handed over to him. He also did not receive our traditional New Year's gift of citrus fruit from Israel that we used to send to our Romanian acquaintances. I took this as a visible sign of the administration's policy to erect a barrier between him and me to discredit him in our view. To keep an eye on him, I used to phone him to express my wish to see him among our guests at our receptions. But he never came and was probably prohibited from doing so. I was very glad to hear that after the revolution he was rehabilitated and appointed ambassador to Egypt, serving until his retirement.

In my report to the MFA in Jerusalem after my meeting with Lina Ciobanu, I suggested certain ideas that could be effected. I noted, *inter alia*, that 'the Romanian Trade Unions had 26 cultural centres all over Romania that could host our exhibitions, and that concerning mutual visits, it was clear nothing substantial would come of them. Still, their mere taking place would

enable us to expand our local contacts. Beyond this, great things should not be expected’.

In the course of time I met with Lina Ciobanu on many occasions. She helped us greatly to arrange our exhibitions at various centres in Romanian cities in cooperation with the local cultural councils. In the majority of cases this was the first time we held such showings in those localities. Also, mutual visits were more frequent. These were the only contacts that the Histadrut maintained in East Europe during the period of disrupted relations with the countries of the region.

## **COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS**

From my first political conversations, held in Bucharest with President Ceaușescu, Foreign Minister Andrei, and Director of the Asian and Middle East Department Dinu, my interlocutors expressed the desire to ‘raise the rank of our economic relations to that of the political’. Dinu even claimed that the volume of our mutual trade was lower than that of Israel's trade with the communist bloc countries with which Israel had no diplomatic relations (his argument actually applied only to Yugoslavia). Their expectations, and those of Romanian ministers, as they came to be expressed during my mission and even earlier, were that greater preference should be given to exploiting the economic potential of both countries to increase mutual trade, to establish joint industrial enterprises (based on transferring Israeli technology to Romania) for marketing their products to Third World countries, and the granting by Israel's government of incentives for the increase of tourism from Israel to Romania, similar to those granted to Egypt.

In each of those domains we tried to be forthcoming towards Romania's leadership, but we were not successful in every instance owing to reasons connected more with Romania's policy than ours. Examples follow.

### **Repayment of Foreign Debts**

The decision of the Romanian government to increase the rate of its repayment of foreign debts had led to a drastic cut in the volume of Romania's imports from abroad (including products vital for the development of the economy, industry, and science, doing considerable harm to the whole system and causing a decrease in the living standard of Romania's citizens). This decision obliged Romania to dedicate a large portion, if not the majority, of its foreign currency to this purpose.

Israel's trade with Romania was based in the period 1985–89 on the principle agreed between Israel's Minister of Industry and Trade, Gideon Pat, and his Romanian counterpart in Bucharest when Pat led Israel's delegation to the mixed Israeli—Romanian economic commission, in 1984 — according to which Israel would import goods from Romania at a volume twice that of goods exported by Israel to Romania. This was an Israeli gesture. This ratio was not always maintained and there were times when Romania limited the volume of its imports from Israel and vice versa. When the mixed economic commission convened four years later in Jerusalem, in October 1988, the Romanian delegation was headed by the Minister for Foreign Trade and International Economic Cooperation, Ioan Ungur, and once again relative progress was made in the area of mutual trade. Ungur, who returned to Bucharest much impressed by his visit to Israel, told me about his programme to bring about a gradual reduction in customs duties between our two countries. He was never able to implement this because of the economic and political crises that

wracked his country in the course of 1989.

## **Low Quality of Products**

The low quality of Romania's products deterred foreign importers from bringing them into their countries, even if their prices were lower than those of other places (for example, the export of the Dacea—Delta car at a relatively cheap price from Romania to Israel could have opened an important market for the car, if it had not been for serious deficiencies detected by the laboratories of the Haifa Institute of Technology, which resulted in a ban by the Transport Ministry against importing it.

## **The International Fair in Bucharest**

Every year Israel used to take part in the International Fair in Bucharest. This was the only fair at which Israel could exhibit economic and technological achievements at an Israeli national pavilion that was a focal point for many visitors, including businessmen from the communist bloc countries. On the opening day we customarily received President Ceaușescu and his wife as well as the economic ministers who accompanied them, and we would explain to them the products on display. We also used to hold a reception there for Jewish community leaders and have a press conference. Our participation was always reported extensively in the local press. Although the exhibits of the pavilion did not actually give sufficient exposure to our attainments — on that I had constant arguments with our colleagues at Israel's Ministry of Industry and Trade — our presence at the fair was of political, informational, and economic importance.

## **Bureaucracy**

The slow and bureaucratic process of decision-making by the Romanian administration was responsible for the failure of a number of industrial cooperation projects. (An initiative that was to establish a battery plant in Timișoara was mired in planning for eight years!) Moreover, Israel could not transfer technology to Romania that included American components, nor to any other communist bloc country, for that matter, with which Israel traded during the period of disrupted diplomatic relations.

## **Tourism**

There was an absence in Romania of a modern tourist infrastructure for welcoming foreign tourists, despite the attractive prices the country could offer the Western tourist at that time. Once again, as a gesture to Romania, Israel agreed to a 50 per cent discount in the payment of travel taxes for every tourist intending to go to Romania. This was promised by Prime Minister Peres when he visited Romania in February 1985 and accepted by the Knesset Economic Commission in consideration of the special link characterizing the relations between the two countries.

## **Israeli—Romanian Trade**

The volume of trade between Israel and Romania in 1985–89 is presented here in Table 3:

[Table 3: Imports to Israel from Romania;  
Exports from Israel to Romania, 1985–88](#)

<i>(In millions of US dollars)</i>		
<i>Year</i>	<i>Imports to Israel</i>	<i>Exports to Romania</i>
1985	20.3	10.0
1986	28.8	6.9
1987	30.6	6.8
1988	34.0	11.0
1989	24.1	14.2

The main items imported to Israel were metals, tractors, textiles, and shoes, wood, chemical and plastic products, furniture, jam, and wines.

The main export items were phosphates, agricultural equipment, food (mainly kosher supplies to the Jewish communities).

### **Total Services**

- About an average of 20,000–25,000 Israeli tourists visited Romania annually.
- Some 1,000 Israeli students have studied in Romanian universities.
- Hundreds of immigrants and tourists flew through Bucharest on the USSR—Romania—Israel route.
- Dozens of Romanian aeroplanes were repaired at the Bedek plants in Lod.
- Romanian goods were shipped on Zim ships to Israel, the Far East, and the USA.
- El Al flights, Lod—Bucharest—Lod, flew once a week in the winter and four times a week in the spring and summer. The same schedule applied to Tarom flights.
- El Al and Zim had permanent representatives in Bucharest. Tarom had a government tourist bureau in Tel Aviv.

Israel—Romania trade actually comprised traditional products. All our efforts to variegate the goods did not succeed. President Ceaușescu in his talk with Prime Minister Peres in February 1985 suggested the nomination of two ministers from each side to work out a programme for the intensification of mutual trade, and to examine the possibilities for cooperation in exporting to third countries. (Ceaușescu had in mind obtaining our help to increase Romania's export to the USA and West Europe, whereas we had in mind Romania's assistance in exporting our goods to the USSR and Arab countries.) Peres agreed to it on the spot, but this proposal was never implemented. Another idea that never came to fruition was the one proposed during Sharon's visit to Romania in July 1988, namely, the joint production of a passenger car for the American market.

In dozens of talks which I held in Bucharest with Romanian economic ministers and senior officials of the Romanian MFA, with the economic attache of our embassy working on the same theme at his rank, I emphasized the need to break through the usual frames of trade and to move in the direction of joint export to third countries. I pointed out the existing potential for the export of our goods to the USSR, through Romania, in the absence of direct trade between Israel and the USSR. In addition, I indicated the practical possibilities for transferring our goods

through Romania to Arab and Asian countries with which Israel did not have trade relations while Romania did. But nothing came of these discussions. In my opinion, Romania failed to take advantage of this potential and of its geographical position as a land and maritime bridge to the USSR. So mutual trade was conducted dilatorily, although we invested great effort in our talks in Bucharest on all practical levels to increase its volumes and to implement the idea of founding joint industrial plants for marketing their goods to third countries.

## **AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION**

In December 1974 an Israeli—Romanian agreement on technical cooperation in agriculture was signed in Jerusalem. Accordingly, Romanian citizens could travel to Israel for a short period for advanced training in agricultural work. Romania took full advantage of this agreement, with some dozen Romanian agriculturalists coming to Israel. But from 1980 to the end of the Ceaușescu era the agreement fell into disuse, though neither party to it pronounced its cancellation. The rules of the agreement asserted that in order to extend it representatives from the two parties should convene intermittently, once in Bucharest and once in Jerusalem. When it was Jerusalem's turn the Romanians informed us that they would be ready to discuss extending the programme at a meeting in our capital, but this should not be mentioned in the protocol. This was to avoid noting that the Protocol was signed in Jerusalem, so that the Romanians would not be accused of recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital. We rejected this and our last proposal was that the Romanians be host to the participants at a gathering in Bucharest, since it would be their turn again any way. The Romanians avoided giving us an answer. Since according to this agreement Romania benefited more than Israel, we did not press them to extend it. So it remained on paper only, even though many Romanian agriculturalists could have made good use of it.

A similar case is that of a Romanian Tourism Ministry delegation that visited Israel in December 1986 to discuss the need to intensify the stream of Israeli tourists to Romania. The main points reached with their Israeli counterparts were put into a Memorandum of Understanding. When it was noted in the Memorandum that the talks took place in Jerusalem, the Romanians refused to sign it. The stumbling block was the Romanian refusal to mention Jerusalem as the site for the discussions and decisions. The document remained unsigned. Once again, the Romanians missed a beneficial opportunity with political considerations outweighing the practical.

## **CULTURAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND INFORMATIONAL RELATIONS**

In his memorandum of 31 January 1985, David Rivlin, director of the Cultural and Scientific Department of the MFA in Jerusalem summed up the situation of the Israeli—Romanian cultural relations, noting *inter alia*:

There is a basic [frame of a] cultural agreement between us and Romania, signed in Bucharest on 17 September 1979. There is no formal continuation to this frame agreement by any operative programme of cultural and scientific interchanges, as is the custom with other countries that have signed cultural agreements with us.

The activity within the frame of cultural relations with Romania is taking place without any ongoing programme of interchanges and is, much to our regret relatively quite limited,



depending, in each case, upon the good will of Romania's government, while on our part there is always a readiness to cooperate in expanding relations. Needless to say that, contrary to the free countries in Europe, there is no possibility for Romania to maintain operative cultural activity by direct contacts between institutions and cultural entities but only through the [Romanian] government and with its authorization.

This was, indeed, an exact description of the situation. Being aware of the specific importance of our cultural relations with countries in the world in general and with a communist country in particular, I invested a great deal of effort, during all my mission in Romania, to develop these relations under the prevailing circumstances, in order to acquaint wide circles in Romania with our cultural values. I admit that I regarded it a first-class diplomatic task, either as a means of distributing our cultural values within Jewish and non-Jewish circles, or as a countermeasure to the militant image of Israel in the local media. I thought that every effort should be invested in this direction, particularly in a country where we could not act openly in the information field as we did in the West. From the very beginning of my mission, I initiated talks, to which I was accompanied by Counsellor Meiron, with such people as the director of the Romanian Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, Ioan Botar, a kind person friendly towards Israel who was always forthcoming with assistance to us, and the director of the Council for Socialist Education and Culture, Professor Suzana Gidea, and her deputy, Mihai Dulea. We cooperated with them, and they, too, were always ready to help us. The Council, which actually operated like a ministry, was the supreme authority validating from the ideological and administrative point of view, the implementation of our proposal, as for example the displays of our exhibits in Bucharest itself and in other cities, as well as the locations where the exhibits were scheduled to be held; translation and publication of Hebrew literary works into Romanian; visits of writers and lecturers from Israel to Romania and organizing Israel Film Week in Bucharest.

I also had a series of talks with a number of academicians, intellectuals, and others involved in cultural spheres, such as Bucharest University's rector, Ioan Lubit-Popescu as well as with the rectors of the Timișoara and Iași universities and with the scientific director of the Association of International Law and International Relations (ADIRI), Nicolae Fotino. The Association organized lectures on political subjects in a forum of senior officials of the MFA, university researchers and lecturers as well as of the Academy for International Law and Political Sciences, journalists, and political commentators. It also published a regular magazine on these subjects. I also met with the director of the Univers Publishing House, Professor Romul Munteanu, a writer himself and university lecturer in literature, on the publication of Israeli literary works in Romania; with the chairman of the Writers Association, Dumitru Radu Popescu, concerning the invitation of Israeli writers to Romania; with the Chairman of the Journalists Association and Deputy Director of Agerpress, Adrian Ionescu, regarding the invitation of Romanian journalists to visit Israel; and with the *Lumea* editors, particularly with the head of the Middle East section, Crăciun Ionescu,<sup>4</sup> who was considered to be an expert on the Israeli—Arab conflict and known for his one-sided opinions promoting Arab arguments and ignoring Israel's; with the researchers of the Institute for Historic-Economic-Sociopolitical Research of the RCP, directed by Professor Popescu-Puțuri. In addition, I had to conduct parallel talks with the director of the Asian and Middle East Countries of the MFA — first it was Marcel Dinu, afterward Ion Mielcioiu — to obtain political support for implementing our proposals.

In my letter of 20 November 1985, addressed to the Department for Cultural and Scientific Relations of the MFA in Jerusalem, I surveyed the conclusion of my first series of talks by

noting:

I must say that we find here an openness greater than I had imagined in Jerusalem for Western culture, and a readiness to absorb it by supplementing the local culture as long as the events and activities do not contradict the spirit of the regime. From our point of view, there is certainly room for activity

This assessment proved, over the course of my mission, to be correct. I could confidently ascertain that the bulk of our proposals were favourably accepted, even though the decision-making process was lengthy, demanding from us patience and persistence in comparison with our experience in the West. Yet, there were programmes, as will be further detailed, that were not carried out more because of us than because of the Romanian authorities. I shall present these after a brief account of the cultural events during my mission, which were unique for that time in their volume and content, and also in comparison with those of other countries, and unprecedented in their scale in relation to the other communist countries in East Europe.

## **Hebrew Literature**

In December 1985 I concluded with Professor Romul Munteanu an agreement to publish a second edition of an anthology of short Hebrew stories, *Pînă în Zori (Until Dawn)* with a printing of 10,000 copies (with partial financial support from Israel) by contemporary Hebrew writers. The first edition, 300 pages long, had been printed in Bucharest in 1980 with works by 20 Israeli writers. We also agreed to translate Aharon Appelfeld's book *Badenheim 1939* that had received very favourable echoes throughout the world, of which Professor Munteanu had been unaware. I told him and the translator, Antoinette Ralian, who was present at our talk, about the book's contents and its universal implications.

Both items were published by Univers in 1988 and earned excellent reviews in Romanian literary magazines.

## **Publication of a Special Issue of Ariel in Romanian<sup>5</sup>**

Three years passed from the moment I proposed publishing a special edition in Romanian of Israel's literary and art magazine *Ariel* by the Department of Cultural and Scientific Relations of the MFA in Jerusalem until it was published there in summer 1989. First, we needed to obtain the necessary budget. Second, we had to select articles from previous editions and have them translated (by Dr Nicolae Minei) into Romanian. Third, we had to obtain authorization from Romania's MFA to distribute it in Romania (to its credit, the procedure did not take a long time). Finally, the printing had to be carried out in Jerusalem.

This special edition has been, thus far, the only one to appear in Romanian, and if I am not mistaken is still serving today

## **Visits by Israeli Writers to Romania**

In autumn 1985, the chairman of the Romanian Writers Association accepted my proposal to invite Israeli writers to visit Romania to acquaint themselves with its writers and people. Accordingly, two Israeli writers visited Romania: one was Aharon Appelfeld, for the first time in 1987 and for the second time upon the publication of his book, *Badenheim 1939* in June 1988.

As expected, the book received excellent reviews in the literary weekly, *România Literară*. An interview with Appelfeld also appeared in the Romanian magazine *Tribună Românei*, accompanied by his story 'Kitty' (in Romanian translation). The second writer was Sandu David, a poet. A selection of his poems was published in the Romanian newspaper *Scînteia; Tineretului* and an interview with him appeared in *Tribună Românei*.

The publication of a number of works by these writers and the interviews with them widened the narrow circle of Romanian intellectuals who were acquainted with Israel's literature.

## **Visits by Israeli Lecturers to Romania**

According to conclusions reached with the ADIRI chairman, two Israeli lecturers did address Romanian audiences. In August 1986, Professor Gur Ofer from the Faculty of Economics of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem spoke on the 'East European Economy'. Upon that occasion we organized a meeting between Professor Ofer and the Deputy President of the Academy of Economic and Social Sciences, the economist Professor Moldoveanu and his staff, and with the Deputy Director of the Institute for World Economy of Bucharest University, Professor I. Vasile. Then, in September 1988, Dr Meir Rosenne, former legal adviser of Israel's MFA and ambassador to Paris and Washington, lectured on 'International Aspects of the Peace-making Process in the Middle East'. He also spoke on this subject at the University of Iași (the city where he was born), and at the Jewish communities of Bucharest and Iași on 'Forty Years of Israel's Independence'. He was also given a cordial reception by Deputy Foreign Minister Dr Olimpia Solomonescu for a talk on Israel's main principles for establishing peace in the region.

Although I received the approval of the rectors of the universities of Bucharest, Iași, and Timișoara, after the Minister of Education and Study's authorization, to host university lecturers from Israel for a certain period to deliver a series of lectures on aspects of Hebrew literature or on selected chapters in Jewish history for students and researchers at their universities, I received no positive reply, much to my regret, from those responsible in Israel regarding this project. So we missed a good opportunity to present our cultural heritage to an academic audience.

Another opportunity was lost when our authorities in Israel did not respond to my proposal to send an exhibition of scientific and technological books (and like publications) published in Israel, after having received the approval of the president of the Romanian Academy of Sciences to display them at the Academy.

## **Conferences and Symposia**

On January 1986 and June 1988, a conference of Israeli and Romanian historians on Holocaust research was held in Bucharest.<sup>6</sup> In autumn of the same year a joint dentistry symposium in Timișoara, in continuation of a similar one held in Israel in 1985, took place. Israeli dentists who had immigrated from Romania initiated these meetings in view of the fact that many of them had completed their studies in Romania or had begun them there and then continued to completion in Israel.

In May 1989, Dr D. Front, director of the Institute of Nuclear Medicine at Rambam Hospital in Haifa lectured on nuclear research in the field of medicine in Israel at a national medical conference in Bucharest. He also delivered a lecture on a similar subject to a large audience of physicians. Attempts by Dr Front and myself, on the Israeli side, to institute cooperation between

both countries among workers in this field and in similar medical areas bore no fruit. The Romanian Ministry of Health was sincerely interested in such endeavours, including mutual research, but there were not concrete discussions about it between the two ministries of health. The revolution at the end of 1989, and the turbulent months that preceded it, prevented both sides from initiating serious talks about this.

### **Attempts to Reach a Cooperation Agreement regarding Archives**

We had great interest in reaching an agreement with the Romanian authorities on receiving documentary material of common interest. In this context the Director of the Central Archive on Jewish History, the late Arye Segal, came to Romania in 1988 with the purpose of holding talks with Professor Ion Popescu-Puțuri. The talks advanced satisfactorily and they concluded a draft agreement of principles for further cooperation. When I received the proposed agreement from Arye Segal, I immediately forwarded it to Popescu-Puțuri for his perusal and subsequent approval. He reacted by saying that the draft seemed acceptable to him and that he had in mind ‘to add one or two paragraphs and pass it on for confirmation by the leadership’ (meaning Elena Ceaușescu, chairperson of the Scientific and Technological Council with status equal to a ministry). Quite a while passed and we heard nothing from Popescu-Puțuri despite oral and written reminders. When I went to say good-bye to him at the end of my mission I asked him about the fate of the draft agreement. He showed it to me and even read me some of its full text, noting that it was ready to be signed, but adding, to my surprise, that while the leadership did not reject signing, it had not approved it either, ‘due to Israel’s hostile position against President Ceaușescu’. When I remarked that such a stance was unknown to me and asked him to provide me with more details, he pointed out the correspondent of Radio Free Europe who lived in Israel, Jean Steiger, who criticized Ceaușescu as a leader in his broadcasts made from Israel (there was indeed much to be criticized). He based his assessments on the interviews and articles he used to collect and bring to his broadcasts.

Obviously I denied any link whatsoever between Steiger and the official spokesmen of the Israeli government. I asked him to make this clear to the leadership and to stress that they must make no connection between advancing our relations in this sphere and the criticism by a radio broadcaster who happened to live in Israel, that he aired on a foreign station that had nothing to do with Israel. Professor Popescu-Puțuri and his group at this talk showed signs of agreeing with me. Yet, although he promised to intervene again with the leadership to ask for approval of the proposed agreement, using my explanations, we did not hear anything from him. After the collapse of the communist regime in Romania, the Institute (headed by Professor Popescu-Puțuri) was demolished. This was the end of our efforts in this direction.

### **Israeli Exhibitions Throughout Romania**

In previous years, prior to my mission, we were accustomed to display an Israeli exhibition in Bucharest as part of the events for Israel’s Independence Day, under the auspices of the Romanian Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. This was an important forum but also the only one offered to us by the authorities. As early as my first talk with the chairman of the Council for Cultural and Socialist Education, we received approval, in principle, to display an exhibition in other cities in addition to Bucharest. So we succeeded, not without great effort, in arranging three exhibitions with the help of the Department for Cultural and Scientific

Relations of the MFA in Jerusalem, namely:

1. Contemporary Graphic Art in Israel — shown in Bucharest, Iași and Constanța at the Art Museums, June–July 1987. *România Literară* published an excellent review of it on 24 July written by art critic Amalia Pavel. After having reviewed the development of contemporary painting in Israel against the background of waves of *aliyah* to Israel, foreign influences and internal creativity, and giving much credit to the participating artists, she concluded, ‘Considering all those aspects of the Israel graphics exhibition, besides the beauty and elegance of its works, it offers moments of meditation on life and movement of artistic values’.
2. ‘The Beauty of Nature, Flora and Fauna in Israel’ — displayed in Bucharest, Pitești, Galați, and Brăila at the Museums of Nature, July–August 1987.
3. ‘Forty Years of Israel's Independence’ — photographs by Nowitz, shown in Bucharest, Arad, Tirgoviște, Giurgiu, and Craiova at the local art museums and Houses of Culture, April–December 1988.

These exhibitions opened in Bucharest, with a speech first by the museum director and then myself, in the presence of the Romania's MFA senior officials, representatives of the Council for Culture and Socialist Education, the Romanian Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, the diplomatic corps and, of course, staff members of the Israeli embassy, leaders of the Jewish community, members of the circles of art, culture, academia, representatives of the media, and a large Jewish public.

In the cities outside Bucharest this ceremony repeated itself, also with a large public attendance, the presence of the mayor, the director of culture of the municipality, representatives of the Council for Culture and Socialist Education and of trade unions, people of letters, culture, and the local Jewish community — for them it was a real festival.

In my letter of 28 June 1987 to the MFA in Jerusalem, I described the opening of the ‘The Beauty of Nature’ exhibition in Pitești — a survey typical of the openings in all the other localities where our displays were shown. I noted, *inter alia*:

In his opening speech, the Director of the Museum spoke with great admiration of the exhibition's displays and of the photographic technique, of what could be learned from it regarding the preservation of the natural environment. He also praised the development of Israel—Romania relations. I spoke after him. I pointed out our two struggles: one, against the powers of nature, by draining swamps and making the desert bloom; the other, by cultivating abandoned land and preparing it for agricultural settlement.

The organizers of the exhibition attempted to impart to the event a festive and friendly atmosphere towards Israel. They stressed that it was the first time such an Israeli exhibition had been displayed in their city and requested that more should be sent to them from Israel.

Serving in the Western countries, I would not have seen anything extraordinary in these statements. But under the local circumstances it was really something out of the ordinary, both from Israel's informational point of view and from that of the friendship shown towards Israel. And the conclusion we may draw is that even under the conditions of a local communist regime such events could be held, when willingness existed on our side to take up initiatives in this direction.

The openings of our exhibitions were reported and reviewed in the local media. They provided a respectable platform for us to make Israel's voice heard and to present the country as a dynamic, creative state that despite security problems had attained many achievements, in every sphere of its activities.

### **Israeli—Romanian Meeting of the Mixed Commission for Cultural Exchanges**

For about eight years the Romanian authorities did not respond to our proposals to convene the mixed commission to discuss programmes for cultural exchanges in accordance with the agreement signed between the two countries on 17 September 1979. The cultural exchanges were actually conducted on the basis of initiatives undertaken by the Israeli Embassy in Bucharest and the Romanian Embassy in Israel. It was important for us to revalidate this agreement and work out a detailed programme of cultural exchanges, thus enabling us to reserve an appropriate budget from the Ministry of Finance to fund our cultural activities in Romania.

I renewed our endeavours in this direction shortly after arriving in Bucharest and only in 1987 did we succeed in receiving the go-ahead from Romania's MFA to convene the Mixed Commission and to sign a mutually acceptable programme of activities for the next two years. Consequently, the commission convened in Bucharest in February 1988. Our delegation consisted of Colette Avital, head of the Communications Media Department in the MFA in Jerusalem; Avner Shalev, head of the Cultural Department of Israel's Ministry of Education and Culture; and myself.

The Romanian delegation was chaired by the director of the Asian and Middle East Countries of the MFA, Ion Mielcioiu. The talks were held in a friendly and businesslike atmosphere, extending to the members of our delegation respectable and cordial treatment. We invested great effort in working out the various paragraphs of the activities programme that we raised for confirmation by the Mixed Commission. The signing of the agreement was considered then an important achievement that would not have been attained if it were not for our constant insistence, and Mielciouiu's good will in being helpful in evaluating the achievements of our culture and the existing potential for mutually beneficial cultural exchanges.

The signing ceremony was held in the official Ceremonies Hall of the MFA in Bucharest. After Deputy Foreign Minister Pop had affixed his signature, in the name of the Government of Romania, and I had added mine on behalf of the Government of Israel, we exchanged short speeches. Answering Pop's address I remarked, *inter alia*, on the great importance we attributed to our mutual relations that were an asset in the foreign policy of both countries, and that like Romania, we too stood for the principle of universality of relations between countries which had proved to be justified through our mutual accumulated experience. I added that if Israel had been in Romania's place at the end of the Six-Day War, we would most probably have behaved in the same manner that they did, and as we did toward Cuba after its revolution.

At the end of the ceremony, in reference to my words, Pop did not forget the fact that Romania did not break relations with Israel without mentioning it explicitly, though his aim was understood, namely, that the process of the renewal of our diplomatic relations with East Europe should not be detrimental to our relations with Romania. I replied that the very fact that we express our appreciation to Romania on every appropriate occasion proves that this was kept in mind. Pop's remark attested to the fear, hidden in the sub-consciousness of Romanian senior officials, that Romania's status would decline from our point of view when we renewed

diplomatic relations with its neighbours.

We invited 100 guests to a reception which we arranged in honour of our delegation. Some 70 people attended. In addition to the senior officials of the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Culture, Education, and Tourism, who came to it, also present were stage directors, writers, historians, journalists, artists, art critics, leaders of the Jewish community, actors from the Jewish State Theatre, and others. This was a relatively notable attendance, especially since a week earlier many Romanians had been warned not to attend a reception hosted by my colleague the US ambassador, Roger Kirk, held at his residence upon the occasion of the visit of Under-Secretary John Whitehead to Bucharest. Presuming that nothing happened by chance in Romania, coming to our gathering should have been viewed as a gesture towards us and a sign of interest in intensifying our mutual cultural relations, a wish verbalised numerous times by the Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Culture and Education with whom our delegation met.

The signing of the cultural agreement and its programme of activities for the next two years received extensive coverage in the Romanian media — a sign that it was the Romanian authorities who regarded it as an important event.

### **Producing an Information Booklet, ‘Letter from Israel’, in Romanian**

The production of this booklet,<sup>7</sup> at my initiative, was carried out by the Information Department of the MFA in Jerusalem. It was based on material already known, taken from *Facts about Israel* in our English, French, Spanish, and German editions aimed at mass distribution. The budget necessary for producing the booklet was found rather quickly in Jerusalem. Still, there was a delay in obtaining the approval of Romania's MFA, as was the custom then, for the distribution of foreign material in Romania. I worked together with Ion Mielcioiu of the MFA on almost every problematic sentence. Finally, we did receive his approval and the information booklet reached us in autumn 1988. It served us for a long time as a central source on Israel in Romania.

### **Inviting Romanian journalists to Visit Israel**

For many years the Romanian authorities prevented their newspapermen from visiting Israel. I never understood why they did so. I attempted to break this embargo during innumerable talks with Adrian Ionescu, chairman of the Newspapermen's Association. Only in the course of 1986 did I succeed. In accordance with our invitation two Romanian journalists visited Israel: Crăciun Ionescu, the Middle East editor of the political weekly *Lumea*; and Florea Țuiu, news editor at Agerpress (Romania's news agency). Both published articles on Israel, written with a more balanced tone than their readers had been used to in the past. During 1987 the Romanian Journalists' Association (our invitation was extended to the Association and not personally, as was the rule then) sent Lucian Avramecu, the editor of the communist youth daily, *Scînteia*; *Tinertului*, and Neagu Udroi, the general-secretary of Agerpress. Both were serious and talented journalists. Prior to their departure for Israel, I hosted an ‘informational seminar’ for them lasting four hours (!). Besides them participating in this ‘seminar’ were the two correspondents who had visited Israel in 1986 and Adrian Ionescu. Upon their return to Bucharest, I hosted them again for a brief seminar against the background of their enthusiastic impressions of all they saw and heard. They were grateful for the programme of the visit prepared for them and to their guide from the MFA in Jerusalem, Ambassador Meir Shamir.

Both of them, more than their predecessors, projected this in their articles. Udroi in his political field and Avramescu in the cultural-social sphere. Moreover, they were authorised to negotiate with Itim, Israel's News Agency, on communication cooperation, namely, the exchange of articles for publication in both countries and on inviting Israeli journalists to visit Romania. In my report that I addressed to the MFA in Jerusalem on 26 October 1987, when summing up I wrote, *inter alia*:

The visit of the four correspondents stirred a great echo among their Romanian colleagues who wanted to follow in their footsteps. We have succeeded in breaking through the barrier that meant that until last year Romanian correspondents could not accept our invitations to visit Israel. We should take advantage of this breakthrough by inviting additional correspondents to visit Israel in the course of 1988.

There is limited room for our information activity in Romania that could be expanded (parallel to the cultural and scientific activity), and I strongly recommend taking advantage of it.

Romanian political commentary — in which one has been able lately to discern a more objective approach than in the past; the instructive interviews (such as the one with Prime Minister Shamir published in *Lumea*) and other articles (that appeared in Romania in the last two years) — all have a favourable influence on the atmosphere of mutual relations and on foreign representatives in Romania (particularly those of East Europe, China, India, and the Third World). Hence, the investment is worth it.

My recommendation was accepted. But the visit of two Romanian correspondents scheduled for the second half of 1989 never took place owing to the internal problems in Romania.

### **Address on Romania's Radio and Television on Israel Independence Day**

For many years before my mission in Romania, a tradition had been followed whereby the Romanian authorities allowed our ambassadors in Bucharest to appear on television on Israel Independence Day to give a short speech on Israel's achievements and to host the screening of a documentary film with background music (supplied by our Bucharest embassy). The address was simultaneously broadcast on the radio. Throughout the time prior to my arrival in Bucharest the ambassadors had been obliged to hear annually, from Romania's MFA as our Independence Day approached, that in accordance with the principles of mutuality, we did not have the right to appear on television, since Israel did not reciprocate in granting air time to Romania's ambassador to Israel. They argued that Israeli Television never allotted a place for special programmes for 'National Days'. In fact, the editor of Kol Israel would prepare a programme for the National Day of those countries whose representatives in Israel were interested in such a broadcast. Somehow the Romanian authorities were finally convinced by this approach and at the last minute enabled our ambassadors to appear on television.

In 1985, after our Independence Day, the Protocol Department of the MFA distributed a circular to the heads of diplomatic missions in Bucharest, informing them of the cancellation of the previously accepted custom of allowing anyone who requested it to appear on television, except for cases where mutual arrangements had been made. Without stating it directly in the letter circulated, it appeared that the reason for this change was most probably the intention to economise on electricity through drastic cuts in Romanian television broadcasts, limiting them to



two hours a day.

In 1986 when we started preparations for our Independence Day programme, Romanian Television repeatedly mentioned the principle of mutuality to Counsellor Meïrom. When he pointed out exceptional cases, such as the PLO's appearance, he was told that the MFA should decide on this matter.

I took this issue up with Marcel Dinu, who reiterated most firmly that they could not deviate from the noted principle. I argued that stopping our appearance on Romanian television would be interpreted as a non-friendly step towards us, as a violation of a long-established tradition, and that according to the mutual balance, the Romanian side benefited more in Israel than the Israeli side did in Romania, in view of the fact that in exchange for allowing us a ten-minute programme in Bucharest, the Romanian embassy in Israel enjoyed threefold consideration on Romania's National Day since Kol Israel radio allotted the Romanian ambassador a 30-minute programme; the Romanian ambassador held a press conference, something I was deprived of in Romania, to present his country's achievements; and the press conference was screened in part on Israel Television and the following morning quoted in the Israeli daily papers.

I offered my arguments, Dinu his. It was concluded that we would check into the situation, meaning that there was little chance of solving the problem to our satisfaction. The final answer I received from him, later on, was completely negative. I decided to relinquish the radio broadcast and to recommend to my colleagues in the MFA in Jerusalem to cancel the annual appearance of the Romanian ambassador on Kol Israel radio. My suggestion was accepted. At a later date Dinu told me that our reciprocity steps had, indeed, been put into action with the negation of the appearance of Romania's ambassador in Israel on air. I did not hide my satisfaction.

During the next years of my mission in Romania, I was given the possibility of appearing for 30 minutes (instead of the 7–10 allotted previously) and surveying Israel's policies and achievements. In addition, the festive rally on the occasion of this event, organized under the auspices of Romania's Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries was partially screened on television (in place of my speech on television). This was a kind of compromise reached between me and Romania's MFA that corresponded with the principle of mutuality.

Parallel to the festive assembly held in Israel annually on the occasion of Romania's National Day, and initiated by the Israel—Romania Friendship League, the Romanian Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries also arranged a celebratory event for Israel Independence Day. The key speaker in 1986 was Dr Cristian Popișteanu, editor-in-chief of *Magazin Istoric*; in 1987, the correspondent of Agerpress, Floria Țuiu; in 1988, Lucian Avramescu, editor of *Scînteia; Tineretului*; in 1989, radio correspondent Ruse Nedelea — all four after having visited Israel. Each presented a favourable description of their impressions, accompanied by a short film supplied by our embassy in Bucharest. This event was reported in the Romanian media together with greetings by Romania's president and prime minister addressed to Israel's president and prime minister.

## **MARKING FORTY YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND ROMANIA**

On 11 June 1948 Romania recognized the State of Israel and established diplomatic relations with it. During one of my talks with Ion Mielcioiu at the MFA, in May 1988, I proposed giving

some special expression to the 40th anniversary of those relations by means of an exchange of greetings between the heads of our respective states as well as in the media. I thought, and told him, that considering the ruptured relations between Israel and the East European countries it was important to demonstrate the continuity of relations between our two states — a constructive act in the system of international and bilateral relations.

Mielcioiu was in favour of the idea. I wrote about it to Zvi Mazel, the director of the East European Department, and to the head of protocol at the MFA in Jerusalem. I was pleased to hear that this notion was also accepted by Prime Minister Shamir, who sent the following message to his Romanian counterpart Prime Minister Constantin Dăscălescu:

On the happy occasion of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries, I wish to extend to you personally and to the people of the Socialist Republic of Romania the warmest greetings of Israel and of its people.

During all these years, the Socialist Republic of Romania has shown itself a true friend of Israel with whom a constructive and sincere dialogue has been conducted.

The many Jews who have come back from the Socialist Republic of Romania to Israel, their ancient homeland, are deeply grateful to President Ceaușescu and remain as many ambassadors of good will of your country.

I am sure that the cooperation between our two countries will develop further to the mutual benefit of both our people.

The Romanian press on 15 June 1988 published the exchange of greetings on the occasion of this event, followed by long articles devoted to it. The *Scînteia*; article wrote, *inter alia*:

This political act [the establishment of relations] which took place shortly after the Declaration of Israel's independence, constituted an outstanding event in mutual relations of great importance in the development of relations in many fields between both states and both nations. It is possible to say that the course of development in these four decades and life itself confirmed the fundamentals of these decisions, as shown by the positive and fruitful character of the Romanian—Israeli state relations. And so, in the course of time, many political contacts took place, mutual visits and meetings, including such of the highest level, that became important landmarks in the development of correct relations of friendship and cooperation between Romania and Israel and between the Romanian and Israeli people. In the spirit of the decision taken at high level, a series of agreements of cooperation were signed between both states of mutual interest. A constant rise in economic relations was marked, influenced by the progress of national economy in both states. Trade exchanges increased and new directions were located in diversifying the technical and scientific cooperation as well as tourist and cultural relations, etc. Undoubtedly, the agreements and understandings achieved create possibilities for the continuing development of Romanian—Israeli relations, in the interest of both states and both nations according to the general demands for the deepening of international understanding and constructive cooperation between all states and nations of the world.

The article also stated that the underpinnings of the Romanian position constituted the principles of full equality of rights and noninterference in internal affairs and of mutual benefit:

Our country has believed and continues to believe that diplomatic relations enable the development of political dialogue and reduce controversies, [and] thus create possibilities

for better mutual understanding between the opposing positions, locating points that coincide, in other words, making it possible to play an active role, to initiate consultations, and to act constructively. This is Romania's basic position in its stance towards Israel or towards any other country.

In continuation, the article detailed the known Romanian position on the settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict through an international conference and towards calling for intensified effort and political-diplomatic activities for implementing a comprehensive resolution of the conflict through negotiations.

In conclusion the article stated:

The 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Romania and Israel constitutes a reaffirmation of a mutual desire for understanding, for the development of cooperation also responding confidently to the aspirations of both nations, contributing at the same time to peace, cooperation, and increased understanding in the world.

The article in *România Liberă*, repeated along general lines in *Scînteia*, specified the achievements attained over the course of 40 years of relations between the two states, concluding:

In marking this important event in the history of bilateral relations, the Romanian people confirms once again its belief that the links of friendship and cooperation between Romania and Israel should continue and grow in accordance with the aspirations for progress and well-being of both peoples and for the sake of the general issue of international peace and understanding.

When I forwarded the articles to the MFA in Jerusalem, I noted that ‘they should be regarded as a Declaration of Sympathy and Friendship for Israel in summing up the positive balance of relations between the two states’. These articles also contained justification for Ceaușescu's policies of not being swept up in the decision by the communist bloc, to which he belonged, to sever diplomatic relations with Israel. The authors of the articles wanted to indicate Romania's independent path within the bloc and the benefit of maintaining diplomatic relations between states as a means of reinforcing the system of international relations. This accord of demonstrating sympathy and friendship towards Israel did not change during the remainder of the period of communist rule in Romania. It also helped us prove to the East European countries, with whom we slowly began to rebuild our relations that year, that after all it was they who had suffered in the absence of diplomatic relations with Israel, to a greater degree than they had anticipated. In all my farewell talks at the close of my term in Romania and at all the events organized in our honour on the eve of our return to Israel, on the ministerial level, particularly in Romania's MFA, and on all other levels of our activities, I heard only praise for the progress made in the relations between the two countries in all directions. This opened new horizons in the further continuation of our relations with Romania that apply to the post-communist era too. I felt great satisfaction in having succeeded in developing diversified relations with the only country in the Soviet bloc that maintained friendly relations with Israel in a period of imposed political isolation and innumerable condemnations of our policy in the international arena. Perhaps this feeling prompted the writing of this book as a landmark which I regard highly, in the history of Israel—Romania relations.

## NOTES

1. Staff members of our embassy who worked closely with me were Shmuel Meirom, Counsellor of the embassy, and his wife Sima; Shlomo Barkai, Counsellor, and his wife Pola; Shmuel Katz, First Secretary, and his wife Naomi; Yaacov Kedar, Second Secretary, and his wife Mady; Dov Avidan, First Secretary for Commercial Affairs, and his wife Miriam; Gideon Neeman and his wife Miriam; Dove Segev, Efraim Barak, administrative officers, and their wives Tova and Judith; At a later stage there were Taly Sam-Esh, Counsellor, and Rami Sam-Esh, Commercial Attache.
2. The first Romanian foreign minister to visit Israel, at that time deputy foreign minister, was Gheorghe Macovescu in the beginning of the 1970s. All those who preceded Totu, including Foreign Minister Ștefan Andrei, refrained from visiting Israel.
3. From the beginning of 1989 we planned to hold the first ever Israel Film Week in the Bucharest cinemas, in cooperation with the Council for Culture and Socialist Education. This week did indeed take place in August 1989, shortly after my departure from Romania, under the auspices of our ambassador in Bucharest, Zvi Mazel. The film week was the last Israeli cultural event in Romania in the Ceaușescu era.
4. At the end of 1988, Crăciun Ionescu's book, *Zile ferbinți in Orient (Hot Days in the East)* was published in Bucharest by Editura Politică. It deals with the development of events in the Middle East from the 1880s to the Israel—Lebanon War and is written in a journalistic manner rather than as a research work. Its distinctiveness is in its being the first book of its kind ever to have been published in Romania on this subject. Its aim was to present an objective description of the events, particularly regarding the period prior to the UN resolution of 29 November 1947 on the partition of Palestine into two states: Arab and Jewish. The Israeli—Arab conflict was presented one-sidedly and the work contains a number of inaccuracies, despite the fact that we had supplied him with a large number of books covering the background to the Israeli—Arab conflict in addition to relevant material that he had collected by himself on his visit to Israel as our guest two years earlier. I found it necessary to comment on his mistakes in a long, detailed letter on 3 March 1989 addressed to him (with a copy going to the Romanian MFA). He was not an easy person to speak with. I had a few incidents with him over the way he wrote his commentary. I had the impression, however, that he tended to accept my frequent remarks and in the last two years of my mission to Romania, the tone of his articles was more positive towards us.
5. *Ariel* was a biannual magazine of art and literature published by the Department of Cultural Relations of Israel's MFA.
6. See the chapter in this book dealing with the disavowal by Romania's authorities of the Holocaust of the Jews under fascist rule in Romania.
7. In Romanian called *Scrisoare din Israel*.

## Epilogue

Beside the development of mutual relations in all fields, to the extent that Romania's communist regime in the late Ceaușescu era and under his policy towards Israel made it possible, the political dialogue between both states concerning the Israeli—Palestinian conflict occupied a prominent place in the general system of those relations.

Our opinion about Ceaușescu, as a tyrannical leader of his people, is surely not different from that of the majority of his critics in Romania itself and abroad. His policy towards Israel, however, by not having broken off diplomatic relations while all his colleagues in the communist bloc did do so; his giving permission to the Jews of Romania to emigrate to Israel and his relatively liberal policy regarding the Jewish minority in his country; his opposition in the international area to condemnation of Zionism as a racial movement; his contribution to Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and his support of the Camp David accords; his constant striving for the establishment of peace in our region — all this and his other manifestations of friendship towards us — raised his prestige from our viewpoint. This all came at a time when the communist bloc countries, headed by the USSR together with the non-aligned nations, acted to isolate Israel in the international arena, thus playing into the hands of the Arab states that did not accept Israel's right to exist and were striving to expunge Israel from the regional map. A clear paradox existed, however, between Ceaușescu the supreme ruler known for his tyranny and the Ceaușescu who outlined an independent foreign policy within the communist bloc, a person who not only refused to follow in the footsteps of the other world leaders in their hostility to Israel, but who acted with all his energy to establish peace between Israel and its neighbours. This paradox, could perhaps explain why Israel's leaders abstained from criticizing Ceaușescu's internal policy and did not join Western leaders in condemning it, even during the last week of his rule, when the world learned of the hundreds of people killed among those demonstrating against him, who were shot at his order by the *Securitate* (the secret security services). The traditional abstention of Israel's leaders from criticizing the internal policies of foreign states deserves mention, particularly if those countries maintain friendly relations with Israel.

During all the years of my mission in Romania, Ceaușescu invested great effort in convincing Israel's prime ministers and other ministers of the need to compromise with the Palestinians, on the basis of his own impression regarding Arafat's leaning towards moderation and his readiness to accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and begin negotiations with Israel's leaders within the framework of an international conference under the aegis of two superpowers: the USSR and the USA, or by other preparatory measures aimed at jump-starting peace negotiations. The government of Israel very much respected Ceaușescu for his undertaking initiatives in both directions to advance negotiations, but at the same time was extremely suspicious of Arafat,

afraid of being trapped, on the basis of the PLO's resolutions to annihilate Israel in two stages as well as by the acts of terror accompanying those resolutions. This suspicion towards him did not melt away even when he publicly declared PLO willingness to accept Resolutions 242 and 338, implicitly recognizing Israel's existence.

Ceaușescu took the credit for his success in convincing Arafat that Israel is an existing fact with as full a right to exist as any other country in the world, and that the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel would not negate that fact. Following this success — the concrete expression of which Ceaușescu found in Arafat's declaration on the PLO's decisions to accept the relevant UN Security Council resolutions — Ceaușescu felt that conditions were ripe for beginning negotiations between Israel and the PLO. Israel's prime ministers rejected that evaluation of the situation.

Cracks appeared, however, mainly in the leadership of the Labor Party, including Shimon Peres, who tended to accept this evaluation more positively than the leaders of the Likud, who were partners in the government coalition. But at that time there was no change in the Israel government's official position. The question arises: was there indeed an opportunity missed here, at which Israel could have begun negotiations with the PLO, as early the second half of the 1980s as Ceaușescu had proposed, or at the latest in 1989, after the PNC resolution in Algiers (November 1988) and Arafat's declaration at the UN General Assembly in Geneva (December 1988) regarding the PLO's acceptance of the Security Council's resolutions? This, coming three years before the Madrid Peace Conference and five years before the Oslo Agreements.

I feel that the conditions at that time were not ripe enough for both sides of the conflict. The ultimate factor that accelerated the start of the process was the conclusion drawn by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and particularly Foreign Minister Peres that Israel had no other partner for talks towards the advancement of peace with the Palestinians besides the PLO (as Ceaușescu had asserted numerous times). Conversely, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the communist regimes (which Ceaușescu did not foresee) resulted in the loss of the PLO's sources of political, military, and economic support (that Arafat did not foresee) and no doubt constituted factors speeding up the search for a compromise.

When viewed retrospectively, Ceaușescu's statements aimed at convincing Israel's leaders of the PLO's moderation regarding its willingness to recognize Israel's right to exist and its readiness to negotiate with it towards peace seem to have passed the test of history. Hence, my conclusion, expressed at the summation of the series of talks between Ceaușescu and Israel's leaders, about Ceaușescu's contribution on both sides of the barricade toward beginning the peace process in the region, paving the way to Madrid and Oslo. Of course, the USA played a decisive role in initiating the peace process, joined at a later stage by the USSR, in close cooperation with Israel. Yet, it must be recognized that Ceaușescu had made an earlier contribution in this direction, one not sufficiently known in Israel or elsewhere.

From the December 1989 revolution in Romania until the writing of these lines, some ten years have passed. The democratic regime of Romania in the post-communist era is investing great effort towards instituting democratic life in the country, also by means of privatization, by laying the foundations for a free market aspiring to join the European Union and subsequently NATO. The transition process from a centralized economy to a free one may take a long time — and anyone well familiar with Romania might say, 'no more than could be expected'. Yet, gradual process is discernible towards achieving these ends with the help of the USA and other

Western countries, and to a certain degree with Israel's help too.

Israel—Romania relations continued to develop extensively in the post-communist era, particularly in the economic and mutual trade field, with Romania taking second place, after Russian, in 1998 in Israel's trade with East European countries, thanks to Israeli sponsors who emigrated from Romania and who have the ability and knowledge to assist in this sphere. Many Israeli enterprises operate in Romania setting up joint companies, and the volume of their investments continuously grows. Many workers from Romania have found employment in Israel (regrettably their living conditions in Israel do not reflect honourably upon us), and it seems that the Israeli economy will depend on them for a long time to come. On the state level a number of economic agreements have been signed, which will probably provide additional momentum to further development of relations between the two states.

Romania in the post-communist era abandoned the massive support of the PLO extended previously. The Jewish community enjoys full freedom in cultivating its national life and strong links to Israel and world Jewry. At the close of 1999 there were an estimated 12,000 Jews in Romania compared with 19,000 in 1989. Despite the statistical decline, owing to ageing as well as *aliya*, Jews occupy a prominent place in literature and in the cultural life of Romania, beyond their proportional number in the general population of some 23 million. The democratic process in Romania is, unfortunately, accompanied by waves of anti-Semitism, even if they are condemned by the country's leaders. Romanian historiography continues to ignore, with few exceptions, the Holocaust of the Jews under Romania's fascist regime, led by Antonescu, and more and more voices among historians, public figures, and nationalist politicians in Romania are calling for his rehabilitation by the state. No doubt if this phenomenon grows to greater dimensions it may also effect the quality of Israel—Romania relations. Some encouragement may be found in the fact that the current president, Emil Constantinescu, was the first Romanian president to condemn, in 1998, the criminal acts of the fascist regime of the country, responsible for the murder and deaths of 300,000 Jews, defining these acts as unpardonable and unforgettable. The tendency of Romanian historiography to ignore the Holocaust of the Jews in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transnistria charges Israeli historians and Israeli state authorities with the task of combating their approach with all the education, scientific, and informational means at their disposal. It is more possible to achieve this goal in Romania's democratic era than it would have been under the communists.

The future of good Israel—Romania relations — whose development and consolidation began in the Ceaușescu era — is secure as long as both states are interested in them and as long as the prevailing conditions enable them to be effected. Previous as well as current development, in volume and substance, indicate that Romania will continue to be the state friendliest to Israel from among those of East Europe, and Israel the friendliest to Romania from among the states in the Middle East, even though Romania has lost its predominance in Israel's foreign policy that it earned by never breaking relations with Israel. The friendly relations between the two states at the bilateral and international level, that passed the test of time even during the communist regime and the Cold War, are no doubt the best guarantee for the continuation of their constant development in all the possible fields that have thus far characterized their essence and style. From this point of view, Israel—Romania relations could and should set a good example for all states who believe in the advantage of respecting the principle of universality of relations between states for their benefit, for the strengthening of the international relations system, and for the sake of peace and security for all nations of the world.

# Index

Abramovici, Tricy [253](#)  
Abu Ayad [182](#)  
Abu Jihad [116](#)  
Abu Musa [151](#)  
Abu Nidal [144](#)  
Afghanistan [11](#), [13](#), [102](#), [110](#)  
Africa [19](#), [24](#), [74](#), [148](#)  
Alba [286](#)  
Albania [11](#), [64](#), [123](#)  
Alexandria [70](#)  
Algiers [5](#), [6](#), [156](#), [212](#), [213](#), [218](#), [219](#), [220](#), [226](#), [230](#), [234](#), [235](#), [336](#)  
*aliya*, see Jewish immigrants from Romania to Israel  
Allon, Yigal [138](#)  
Ancel, Jean [264](#), [270](#), [272](#), [274](#), [275](#), [276](#), [284](#), [285](#), [289](#), [291](#), [297](#) nn.18, 19  
Andrei, Stefan [19](#), [20](#), [21](#), [24](#), [99](#), [100](#) 175, 181, 207, 311, 333n.3  
anti-Semitism [1](#), [3](#), [14](#), [250](#), [252](#), [263–67](#), [269](#), [273–76](#), [284](#), [289](#), [299](#), [338](#)  
Antonescu, Ion, General Marshall [15](#), [56](#), [170](#), [260](#), [263–64](#), [267–87](#), [290](#), [293](#), [338](#)  
Apostol, Gheorge [74](#)  
Appelfeld, Aharon [73](#), [319–20](#)  
Arab leaders [3](#), [5](#)  
Arab terror [91](#), [141](#), [143](#), [144](#), [145](#), [146](#), [147](#), [148](#)  
Arab World, states of [2](#), [19](#), [100](#), [132](#), [141](#), [148](#), [153](#), [155](#), [157](#), [159](#), [164](#), [165](#), [167](#), [168](#), [176](#),  
[177](#), [179](#), [194](#), [197](#), [198](#), [199](#), [201](#), [205](#), [208](#), [212](#), [234](#), [236](#), [244](#), [301](#)  
Arabs [5](#), [136](#), [210](#), [217](#), [315](#)



Arad [249](#), [323](#)

Arad, Yitzhak [271](#), [272](#), [273](#), [285](#) [297n.18](#)

Arafat, Yasser [5](#), [13](#), [92](#), [131](#), [136](#), [138](#), [142](#), [156–60](#), [163](#), [170–83](#), [186](#), [188–89](#), [193](#), [200](#), [201](#), [208](#), [211–12](#), [214](#), [218–19](#), [221](#), [226–40](#), [241](#), [243](#), [244](#), [336](#)

Ardeleanu, Ion [285](#), [286](#)

Arens, Moshe [80](#), [230](#), [232–33](#), [241](#)

*Ariel* (Israeli MFA literary and art magazine) [319](#)

Armenia [126](#), [128](#)

Artzi, Yitzhak [171](#), [172](#), [173](#), [257](#)

Asian and African countries [10](#), [160](#), [162](#)

Association of International Law and International Relations (Romania) [317](#)

Auschwitz, concentration camp [274](#), [277](#), [294](#)

Australia [152](#)

Austria [35](#), [48](#), [132](#), [145](#), [159](#), [295n.13](#), [287](#)

Austro-Hungarian Empire [295n.13](#)

autonomy [167](#), [178–79](#), [198](#), [200](#), [205](#), [208–16](#), [234–38](#), [242](#); *see also* Judea, Samaria and Gaza

Avidan, Dov and Miriam [333n.1](#)

Avital, Colette [324–25](#)

Avramecu, Lucian [327](#), [330](#)

Azerbaijan [126](#), [128](#)

Bacău [249](#)

Balkan region [9](#), [11–12](#), [111](#), [127](#) Banat (Serbian minority) [11](#), [52](#), [53](#)

Barak, Efraim and Judith [333n.1](#)

Baram, Uzi [164–67](#), [304](#)

Barkai, Shlomo and Pola [333n.1](#)

Barnea, Yehezkiel [127](#)

Bartov, David [294](#), [295n.10](#)

el-Bassl, Hassan [229](#)

Begin, Menachem [193](#), [198](#), [204](#)

Beilin, Yossi [178](#)

Bein, Yohanan [73](#)

Beirut [141](#)

Belgium [12](#), [48](#), [68](#)  
Belgrade [12](#), [127](#)  
Belzec [297n.18](#)  
Ben-Aharon, Yossi [182](#), [191](#), [205](#)  
Bercovici, Bebe [253](#)  
Bessarabia [252](#), [269](#), [270](#), [282](#), [285–86](#); Holocaust of the Jews in [x](#), [15](#), [102](#), [114](#), [115](#), [247](#), [260](#), [264](#), [267–88](#), [292–93](#), [338](#); *see also* Moldova  
Bethlehem, mayor of [196](#), [200](#)  
Birladeanu, Alexander [74](#)  
Bituleanu, Iulian [80–81](#), [191](#), [205](#)  
Blumenfeld, Theodor [289–90](#)  
Bobu, Emil [54](#)  
Bogza, Geo [75](#)  
Bossy, Raul V. [286](#)  
Botar, Ioan [317](#)  
Botez, Mihai [54](#), [63–66](#), [67](#)  
Brăila [56](#), [323](#)  
Braşov [32](#), [56](#), [65–70](#), [81](#), [120](#)  
Brazil [159](#)  
Brezhnev, Leonid [13](#)  
'Brezhnev Doctrine' [11](#), [13](#), [87](#), [113](#), [116](#), [132](#)  
Britain [12](#), [39](#), [79](#), [152](#), [169](#), [180](#), [197](#)  
Bronfman, Edgar [295n.10](#)  
Brosh, Zvi [135](#), [280–81](#)  
Brucan, Silviu [67–71](#), [73–74](#), [78](#)  
Bucharest [1](#), [3](#), [6](#), [8](#), [12](#), [15](#), [17](#), [19](#), [21](#), [23](#), [24](#), [29](#), [31](#), [41](#), [42](#), [48](#), [51](#), [52](#), [53](#), [56](#), [58](#), [62](#), [63](#), [64](#), [65](#), [67](#), [70](#), [71](#), [72](#), [73](#), [71](#), [79](#), [80](#), [81](#), [89](#), [91](#), [92](#), [93](#), [95](#), [100](#), [103](#), [105](#), [113](#), [122](#), [125](#), [127](#), [155](#), [156](#), [157](#), [161](#), [162](#), [163](#), [164](#), [168](#), [170](#), [171](#), [172](#), [174–75](#), [182](#), [183](#), [187](#), [188](#), [204](#), [208](#), [210](#), [211](#), [214](#), [218](#), [230](#), [231](#), [232](#), [234](#), [239](#), [249](#), [251](#), [255](#), [256](#), [258–60](#), [264](#), [270](#), [273](#), [278](#), [280](#), [285](#), [290](#), [293](#), [299](#), [311](#), [315](#), [317](#), [319](#), [321](#), [322](#), [323–24](#), [325–26](#), [327–28](#); pogroms [258](#), [280](#), [283](#), [291](#), [292](#), [294](#)  
Bucovina, North [252](#), [269](#), [270](#), [285–86](#); Holocaust of the Jews in [xi](#), [15](#), [102](#), [114–16](#), [247](#), [252](#), [260](#), [264](#), [267–88](#), [292–93](#), [338](#)  
Bucovina, South [247](#), [267](#), [268](#), [274](#)  
Budapest [52](#), [121–22](#), [127](#); Holocaust Remembrance Monument [294](#)

Bug [283](#), [296n.15](#)

Buhuși [263](#), [265](#)

Bulei, Ion [297](#)

Bulgaria [11](#), [41](#), [111](#), [295n.13](#)

Bush, George [100](#), [101](#)

Bush-Gorbachev summit [115](#)

Buturan, Constantin [297n.19](#)

Buzatu, Gheorge [276](#)

Buzău [70](#)

Cajal, Nicolae [14–15](#), [253](#), [271](#)

Calafeteanu, Ion [297n.18](#), [19](#)

Camp David Agreements [4](#), [5](#), [13](#), [87](#), [102](#), [137](#), [190](#), [191](#), [198–200](#), [205](#), [233](#)

Campuchea [110](#)

Carp, Matatias [284](#)

Carpatu [307](#)

Caufman, Simion [291–92](#)

Ceaușescu, Elena [8](#), [31](#), [34](#), [37](#), [38](#), [39](#), [40](#), [41](#), [42](#), [53](#), [54](#), [55](#), [60](#), [64](#), [76](#), [77](#), [79](#), [87](#), [108](#), [119](#), [120](#), [171](#), [321](#); personality cult [36–42](#)

Ceaușescu, Nicolae [x](#), [xi](#), [1](#), [2](#), [6](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [14–15](#), [18](#), [19](#), [20](#), [21](#), [22](#), [23–29](#), [30](#), [31](#), [32](#), [35](#), [36–59](#), [62](#), [63](#), [64](#), [77](#), [78](#), [80](#), [81](#), [82](#), [135](#), [143](#), [148](#), [149](#), [150](#), [162–79](#), [183](#), [187](#), [207](#), [228](#), [230](#), [238–10](#), [256](#), [258–60](#), [269](#), [273](#), [288](#), [293](#), [300–5](#), [308–9](#), [311](#), [313](#), [314–15](#), [322](#), [335–39](#); and anti-Semitism [263–67](#); call for international conference on Middle East conflict [20](#), [26](#), [41](#), [136](#), [187](#), [188](#); criticism in West against [6](#), [10](#), [12](#), [13–14](#), [31](#), [79](#), [81](#), [187](#); hosting and paying official visits [10](#); Israel's attitude toward [12–13](#); Jewish emigration under [260–63](#); opponents in Romania [7–8](#), [13–14](#), [31–32](#), [55](#), [56](#), [62–63](#), [65–69](#), [70](#), [71–76](#), [77–78](#); personality cult [8](#), [31](#), [33–34](#), [36–42](#), [103](#), [131](#), [256](#); and Romania's foreign policy [85–133](#); in Romania's internal affairs [31–84](#); and the search for settlement of Israeli—Arab conflict [3–5](#), [25](#), [28–29](#), [136–40](#), [155–60](#), [188–204](#), [206–17](#), [232–36](#), [237](#)

Central Archive on Jewish History [321–22](#)

Central Council of the Trade Unions in Romania [308–11](#)

Centre for Research on the Jews' History in Romania [253](#)

Cernauți, *see* Czernowitz

Cetatea [286](#)

Chernobyl [197](#)

China [13](#), [19](#), [39](#), [105](#), [132](#), [136–37](#), [161](#), [165](#), [169](#), [180](#), [197](#), [207](#), [328](#)

Ciobanu, Lina [40](#), [308–9](#), [310–11](#)  
Clark, Henry [290](#)  
Cluj [52](#), [71](#), [72](#), [118–19](#), [122](#), [125](#), [126](#), [127](#), [249](#), [307](#)  
Cluj University [270](#), [277–78](#)  
CEMA (Council for Economic Mutual Assistance) [43](#), [103–5](#), [107](#), [112](#)  
Cohen, Yohanan [138](#)  
communist world [13](#), [18](#)  
Conference of Non-Aligned Nations (Herare) [172](#), [173](#), [176](#), [178](#), [182](#), [189](#), [230](#)  
Conference of Revolutionary Organizations [151](#)  
Constanța [183](#), [322](#)  
Constantinescu, Emil [15](#), [270–71](#), [338](#)  
Coral Synagogue (Bucharest) [29](#), [72](#), [251](#), [256](#), [258](#), [291](#), [292](#), [293](#), [294](#)  
Cornea, Doina [52](#), [71–72](#)  
Covaci, Ion [309–10](#)  
Craiova [323](#)  
Craxi, Betina [144](#)  
CSCE (Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe) [89](#), [103–4](#), [118](#), [124](#), [127](#), [129–32](#)  
Cumpanașu [293](#)  
Czechoslovakia [11](#), [13](#), [32](#), [45](#)  
Czernowitz [248](#), [282](#), [286](#)

Damascus [151–52](#)  
Dandara, Livia [297n.19](#)  
Dăscălescu, Constantin [33](#), [171](#), [190](#), [330](#)  
David, Sandu [320](#)  
Declaration of Principles, Israel—PLO [203](#), [244](#)  
Denmark [152](#)  
Deșliu, Dan [73](#)  
Dimcă, Ion [293](#)  
Dinescu, Mircea [73](#), [75](#)  
Dinu, Marcel [19–23](#), [141](#), [142](#), [143](#), [146](#), [147](#), [152](#), [153–54](#), [160](#), [161–62](#), [168](#), [171–74](#), [175](#), [181](#),  
[182](#), [279](#), [280](#), [299](#), [311](#), [318](#), [329](#)  
Djilas, Milovan [22](#)

Doina, Stefan Augustin [75](#)

Dorohoi [267](#), [274](#), [280](#), [282](#), [283](#), [292](#)

Doron, Eliezer [xi](#)

Dulea, Mihai [317](#)

Duma, Aurel [172](#), [219](#)

East European and communist countries, bloc [4](#), [5](#), [7](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [18](#), [19](#), [31](#), [33](#), [37](#), [43](#), [45](#), [46](#), [48](#), [49](#), [52](#), [61–62](#), [63](#), [64](#), [70](#), [76](#), [77](#), [85](#), [86](#), [87](#), [88](#), [91](#), [93](#), [101](#), [102](#), [103](#), [119](#), [128](#), [150](#), [154](#), [157](#), [166](#), [181](#), [190–91](#), [199](#), [203](#), [224](#), [242](#), [244](#), [248](#), [250](#), [254](#), [271](#), [299–300](#), [303](#), [311](#)

East—West relations [14](#)

Eban, Abba [15](#), [154](#), [229](#), [282](#)

Egypt [12](#), [19–20](#), [25](#), [135](#), [159](#), [169](#), [173](#), [180](#), [189](#), [191](#), [193](#), [194](#), [200](#), [208](#), [209](#), [212](#), [213](#), [236](#), [242](#); Egyptian ambassador in Bucharest [214](#), [221](#), [310](#)

E1 A1 3, [144](#), [151](#), [164](#), [314](#)

European Council [228](#)

European Union/community [15](#), [141](#), [337](#)

Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania (FJCR) [xi](#), [14](#), [18](#), [250–55](#), [256](#), [265](#), [291](#), [232](#)

‘Fez Doctrine’ [167](#)

Finland [48](#), [132](#)

FJCR, *see* Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania

Fortino, Nicolae [317](#)

France [12](#), [39](#), [68](#), [79](#), [100](#), [152](#), [169](#), [180](#), [197](#)

Free Trade Unions [132](#)

Front, D. [321](#)

Galati [249](#), [323](#); pogrom [283](#)

GATT 93, [96](#)

Gefen, Abba [xii](#), [256](#)

General Organizations of Workers in Israel, *see* Histadrut

Geneva, UN General Assembly 1988 [226](#), [227](#), [230](#), [234](#), [235](#), [336](#)

Genscher, Hans Dietrich [52](#)

Germany, Federal Republic of (FRG) [12](#), [22](#), [52](#), [60](#), [77](#), [79](#), [87](#), [102](#), [124](#)

Germany, Nazi [55](#), [86](#), [102](#), [109](#), [114](#), [115](#), [170](#), [171](#), [267](#), [268](#), [269](#), [275](#), [277](#), [279](#), [284](#), [285](#), [291](#)  
Gheorghe-Dej, Gheorgiu [118](#), [128](#)  
Gheorghiu, Mihnea [275–76](#)  
Gibril, Ahmad [151](#)  
Gîdea, Suzana [317](#)  
Giosan, Nicolae [165](#), [301–5](#)  
Giurescu, Constantin [297n.23](#)  
Giurescu, Dinu [258](#), [284](#), [297n.23](#)  
Giurgiu [323](#)  
Glasnot, Perestroika [14](#), [32](#), [45](#), [47](#), [49](#), [55](#), [77](#), [102](#), [111](#), [115](#), [125](#)  
Gorbachev, Mikhail [11](#), [13](#), [32](#), [41](#), [45](#), [57](#), [49](#), [53](#), [54](#), [55](#), [59](#), [64](#), [66](#), [77](#), [102](#), [103](#), [104](#), [105–10](#), [111](#), [112](#), [113](#), [116](#), [121](#), [227](#), [304](#); Bush-Gorbachev summit [115](#); Reagan—Gorbachev summit [89](#)  
Govrin, Hanna [19](#)  
Granot, Elazar [187](#)  
Great Synagogue (Bucharest) [258](#)  
Greece [11](#); chargé d'affaires in Bucharest [218](#)  
Gromyko, Andrei [23](#), [110–11](#), [112](#)  
Grosz, Karoly [124](#), [125](#), [126](#)  
Gulf War [14](#), [244](#)

Habash, George [151](#), [211](#), [212](#)  
Hacohen, Menachem [14](#)  
Haifa University [271](#)  
Hammer, Zevulun [294](#)  
Harish, Yosef [184](#)  
Hassan (King, Morocco) [167](#), [168](#), [184](#)  
al-Hassan, Khaled [228](#)  
Haulica, Dan [75](#)  
Hawatma, Na'if [211](#)  
Hebrew language and literature [250](#), [251](#), [317](#), [319–20](#)  
Hebrew University of Jerusalem [71](#), [271](#), [320](#)  
Heikis, Pinhas [297n.18](#)

Helsinki final agreement [74](#), [100](#)

Herzl, Theodor [248](#)

Herzog, Chaim [24](#), [255](#)

Hillel, Shlomo [302](#), [304](#)

Histadrut (General Organizations of Workers in Israel) [308–11](#)

Historic-Economic-Sociopolitical Institute of the RCP [270–76](#), [318](#)

historiography, Romanian [264](#), [267–71](#), [272](#), [275](#), [277–78](#), [280](#), [284–88](#), [299](#), [338](#)

Hitler, Adolf [55](#), [56](#), [115](#), [172](#), [278](#)

Holland [39](#)

Holocaust of Jews in Bessarabia and Bucovina [247](#), [260](#), [264](#), [267–88](#); disavowal [299](#), [338](#);  
memorial assemblies and services [260](#), [289](#), [291–95](#)

Holocaust research, conference of Israeli and Romanian historians on [321](#)

Horam, Yehuda [178](#), [180](#)

Horthy, Miklos [272](#)

Hungarian minority, in Transylvania [11](#), [12](#), [33](#), [53](#), [58](#), [72](#), [74](#), [75](#), [76](#), [89](#), [96](#), [98](#), [103](#), [104](#), [114](#),  
[116](#), [117](#), [118](#), [120](#), [121](#), [122](#), [123](#), [124](#), [129](#), [130](#), [131](#), [268](#)

Hungary [1](#), [11](#), [13](#), [24](#), [32](#), [42](#), [45](#), [46](#), [48](#), [53](#), [85](#), [88](#), [90](#), [93](#), [98](#), [101](#), [114](#), [117](#), [119](#), [120](#), [125](#),  
[126](#), [132](#), [268](#), [277](#); Fascist regime [247–48](#), [268](#), [277](#), [279](#), [280](#), [281–82](#), [283](#), [294](#)

Hussein (King, Jordan) [157](#), [160](#), [163](#), [198](#), [205](#)

Iași [249](#), [252](#), [259](#), [264](#), [290](#), [322](#); pogrom 1941 [260](#), [263](#), [279](#), [284](#), [289](#), [291](#), [292](#), [294](#)

Iași University [270](#), [276](#), [307](#), [317](#), [320](#)

Iliescu, Ion [53](#), [54](#), [78](#)

India [19](#), [159](#), [328](#)

Institute for Jewish Enlightenment [251](#)

International Conference for the Settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict, proposed [7](#), [20](#), [28](#),  
[135](#), [136](#), [139](#), [146](#), [155–70](#), [173](#), [176](#), [178–81](#), [185–87](#), [188–93](#), [195–97](#), [201–2](#), [204–16](#),  
[218–21](#), [223–27](#), [231–36](#), [242](#), [304](#); *see also* Israeli—Arab Conflict

International Fair (Bucharest) [312–13](#)

Inter-Parliamentarian Union (IPU) [302](#), [303](#), [304](#)

*intifada* [209](#), [227](#), [229](#), [238](#), [239](#)

Ionescu, Adrian [318](#), [326](#), [327](#)

Ionescu, Crăciun [185](#), [238](#), [318](#), [327](#)

Iran [12](#), [34](#), [80](#)

Iraq [12](#), [34](#), [36](#)

Iron Guard [258](#), [264](#), [291](#)

Israel [2](#), [3](#), [4–7](#), [12](#), [18](#), [19–21](#), [23](#), [24](#), [25](#), [28–29](#), [41](#), [61](#), [71](#), [81](#), [82](#), [91](#), [99](#), [128](#), [132](#), [141](#), [142](#), [144](#), [146](#), [148](#), [149](#), [150](#), [151–64](#), [166](#), [167](#), [168](#), [170–83](#), [204–5](#), [208–14](#), [215–16](#), [219–48](#), [251–63](#), [267](#), [271](#), [275](#), [280](#); and Jewish communities in Romania [3](#); official Romanian visits to [162](#), [167–70](#), [174–78](#), [204–14](#), [232–36](#), [300–2](#), [312](#), [315](#), [333n.2](#); Israeli—Romanian dialogue on Middle East problems [135–246](#); Israeli—Romanian political dialogue [24](#); *see also* International Conference for the Settlement of the Israeli—Arab conflict; Israeli—Arab conflict; Israeli—Romanian relations

Israel Independence Day, marked in Romania [328–30](#)

Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) [17](#), [18](#), [22](#), [31](#), [46](#), [50](#), [51](#), [55](#), [56](#), [57](#), [67](#), [69](#), [76](#), [77](#), [80](#), [82](#), [88](#), [89](#), [91](#), [95](#), [98](#), [111](#), [120](#), [122](#), [129](#), [142](#), [153](#), [186](#), [190](#), [191](#), [220–21](#), [226](#), [231](#), [237](#), [243](#), [271](#), [280](#), [293](#), [294](#), [309](#), [310](#), [327–32](#) Department of Cultural and Scientific Relations [318](#), [319](#), [322](#)

Israel United Workers Party, *see* Mapam

Israel—Romania Friendship League [329](#)

Israeli Embassy in Bucharest [18](#), [255–57](#), [260](#), [278–79](#), [288](#), [291](#), [293](#), [299](#), [305–8](#), [324](#), [328](#), [330](#)

Israeli foreign policy [1](#), [17](#), [19](#), [81](#)

Israeli Labor Party [48](#), [162](#), [164](#), [165](#), [206](#), [216](#), [232](#), [233](#), [301](#), [309](#), [336](#)

Israeli students in Romania [6](#), [305](#), [308](#)

Israeli—Arab Conflict [x](#), [xii](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [9](#), [14](#), [19](#), [20](#), [21](#), [29](#), [34](#), [41](#), [135](#), [136](#), [138](#), [139](#), [140](#), [142](#), [143](#), [144](#), [154–55](#), [157](#), [161](#), [162](#), [163–64](#), [165](#), [166](#), [176](#), [181](#), [187](#), [188](#), [190](#), [192](#), [208](#), [214](#), [217](#), [222](#), [223](#), [225](#), [226](#), [227](#), [232](#), [238](#), [242](#), [244](#), [301](#), [302](#), [303](#), [318](#), [335–36](#)

Israeli—Egyptian Agreement [87](#), [102](#), [136](#), [191](#), [192](#)

Israeli—Egyptian relations [20](#), [136](#), [161](#), [173](#), [194](#), [200](#), [204](#), [215](#), [244](#)

Israeli—Hungarian relations [117](#)

Israeli—Jordanian contacts [159](#), [191–92](#)

Israeli—Romanian relations [xi](#), [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [12](#), [14](#), [15](#), [17](#), [18](#), [19](#), [20](#), [21](#), [22](#), [23](#), [24](#), [25](#), [27](#), [29](#), [58](#), [80](#), [81](#), [86](#), [87](#), [91](#), [95](#), [96](#), [99](#), [100](#), [128](#), [135](#), [142](#), [143](#), [155](#), [163–70](#), [181–82](#), [190](#), [199](#), [201](#), [203–4](#), [205](#), [208–9](#), [211](#), [216](#), [224](#), [232–34](#), [240–42](#), [243](#), [257](#), [262](#), [274–75](#), [276–78](#), [281](#), [299–334](#), [335–39](#)

Israeli—Soviet and East European relations [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [14](#), [15](#), [17](#), [19](#), [140](#), [161](#), [164–66](#), [207](#), [210](#), [300](#)

Istanbul [161](#)

Italy [39](#), [48](#), [68](#), [133n.6](#), [145](#)

Itim [327](#)

Ivaşcu, Marin [304](#)



Ivancu, Petre [265](#)

Jackson—Vanik Amendment [88](#), [97–98](#)

Jerusalem [3](#), [6](#), [15](#), [20](#), [69](#), [95](#), [208](#), [226](#), [238](#), [239](#), [271–72](#), [294](#), [301](#), [312](#), [315](#), [316](#), [318](#), [319](#)

Jewish immigrants from Romania to Israel [3](#), [6](#), [12](#), [58](#), [60](#), [81](#), [89](#), [91](#), [95](#), [96](#), [99](#), [181](#), [234](#), [248](#), [251](#), [255](#), [257](#), [260–63](#), [266](#), [267](#), [292](#), [335](#), [338](#)

Jewish Museum (Bucharest) [252](#), [258](#)

Jewish organizations in the USA and the West [6](#), [88](#), [90–91](#), [250](#), [257](#), [259](#), [280](#), [289](#)

Jewish people [12](#), [14](#)

Jewry, world (Diaspora) [1](#), [3](#), [12](#), [17](#), [171](#), [250](#), [251–52](#), [279–80](#), [287](#), [288–89](#) [292](#), [294](#)

Jews and Jewish communities in Romania [xi](#), [3](#), [12](#), [14](#), [17](#), [32](#), [53](#), [58](#), [82](#), [88](#), [90](#), [91](#), [95](#), [99](#), [129](#), [181](#), [215](#), [233](#), [241](#), [247–60](#), [265–68](#), [271–73](#), [279–80](#), [283–84](#), [285–86](#), [287–95](#), [323](#), [338](#)

Jiu Valley [32](#), [62](#), [65](#)

Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) [251–52](#), [254–55](#), [257](#), [266](#), [308](#)

Jordan [12](#), [19](#), [20](#), [135](#), [136](#), [142](#), [159](#), [164](#), [166](#), [177](#), [180](#), [189](#), [192](#), [194](#), [195](#), [200](#), [201](#), [206–7](#), [209](#), [213](#), [216](#), [223](#)

Jordanian—Palestinian delegation [136](#), [159](#), [165](#), [170](#), [177](#), [179](#), [194–95](#), [200](#), [205](#), [206](#), [210](#)

Judaism [14](#)

Judea, Samaria and Gaza [5](#), [7](#), [138](#), [193](#), [205](#), [226](#), [236](#), [237](#), [241](#), [242](#), [305](#)

Kádár, János [59](#)

Kaddoumi, Farouk [179](#), [230](#), [232](#)

Katz, Shmuel and Naomi [333n.1](#)

Kedar, Yaacov and Mady [333n.1](#)

Kirk, Roger (US ambassador) [67](#), [71](#), [89](#), [100](#), [148–19](#), [326](#)

Kishinev [286](#)

Klein, Theodore [187](#)

Knesset [302–4](#), [309](#), [313](#)

Kol Israel, *see* *Voice of Israel*

Korn, Itzhak [257](#)

Kuwait [218](#)

Lazar, Dumitru [281](#)

League of Nations [25](#)  
Lebanon [25](#), [35](#), [180](#), [192](#), [194](#), [209](#), [217](#), [304](#)  
Lebanon War [300](#)  
Lenin, V.I. [37](#)  
Libya [36](#), [91](#), [144–46](#), [149–52](#), [159](#)  
Likud [204](#), [214](#), [216](#), [336](#)  
Lippati, Valentin [127–29](#)  
Lubit-Popescu, Ioan [317](#)  
Lustig, Oliver [283–85](#)

Machedon [307](#)  
Macovescu, Gheorghe [333](#)  
Madrid Peace Conference [x](#), [5](#), [203](#), [336](#)  
Maki [301](#)  
Mamaia [183](#)  
Manescu, Corneliu [74](#)  
Mapai, *see* Israeli Labor Party  
Mapam (Israeli United Workers Party) [141](#), [164](#), [183–87](#), [232](#), [301](#), [309](#)  
Mazel, Zvi [205](#), [224](#), [294](#), [330](#)  
Meir, Golda [198](#)  
Meirom, Shmuel [172](#), [274](#), [306](#), [307](#), [317](#), [329](#), [333n.1](#)  
Meirom, Sima [333n.1](#)  
Mekel, Arye [191](#)  
Mexico [159](#)  
Mielcioiu, Ion [180–81](#), [183](#), [205](#), [218](#), [223–24](#), [228–29](#), [239](#), [299](#), [301](#), [318](#), [325](#), [330](#)  
Mihai (King, Romania) [40](#), [170](#)  
Militam, Nicolae [78](#)  
Milo, Ronny [191](#)  
Minei, Nicolae [319](#)  
Mitea, Constantin [174–78](#), [191](#), [204](#), [211–14](#), [240–41](#)  
Mitterrand, Francois [227](#)  
Mixed Commission for Cultural Exchanges [324–26](#)  
Moldova (also Moldavian Republic) [114](#), [115](#), [252](#)

Moldoveanu [320](#)

Morocco [168](#), [169](#), [189](#)

Moscow [54](#), [55](#), [86](#), [103–5](#), [113](#), [255](#)

Moses, Alfred [90–92](#)

Most Favoured Nation (MFN) [12](#), [20](#), [60](#), [66](#), [87](#), [88](#), [89](#), [91](#), [92](#), [93](#), [94](#), [95](#), [96](#), [97](#), [98](#), [99](#), [100](#), [120](#), [125](#), [129](#), [150](#), [250](#), [262](#), [280](#)

Mubarak, Husni [204–5](#)

Munteanu, Aurel Dragoş [72](#), [73](#)

Munteanu, Romul [318](#), [319](#)

Muşat, Mircea [285](#), [286](#)

Nagy-Talavera, N.N. [286](#), [287](#)

Namir, Ora [167](#)

National Salvation Front (Romania) [63](#), [76](#), [77](#), [78](#), [79](#), [81](#), [82](#)

Nativ [257](#)

NATO 10, [15](#), [102](#), [148](#), [151](#)

Navon, Benjamin [77](#)

Nedelea, Ruse [330](#)

Neeman, Gideon and Miriam [333n.1](#)

Negucioiu, Aurel [276–77](#)

Netanyahu, Benjamin [182](#)

Nevo, Azriel [191](#)

‘new Palestinian State’ [6](#), [218–25](#), [238–40](#)

New Testament [92](#)

Nicaragua [110](#)

Non-Aligned Nations [13](#), [19](#), [59](#), [148](#), [230](#); *see also* Conference of Non-Aligned Nations

North Korea [36](#), [39](#)

Nowitz, Richard [323](#)

Nuremberg trials [268](#), [291](#)

Oancea, Gheorge [224–25](#)

Odessa [267](#)

Ofer, Gur [320](#)

Ophir, Ephraim [297n.18](#), [298n.27](#)

Oradea [249](#)

Oslo agreements [x](#), [138](#), [336](#)

Paleologu, Alexandru [75](#)

Paler, Octavian [75](#)

Palestine [228](#), [239](#), [243](#)

Palestine problem [4](#), [28](#), [138](#), [176](#), [179](#), [192](#), [195](#), [199](#), [201](#), [216](#), [240](#)

Palestinian authority [19](#)

Palestinian Covenant [138](#), [160](#), [174](#), [179](#), [224](#), [235](#), [239](#), [243](#)

Palestinian National Council (PNC) [5–6](#), [179](#), [185](#), [218–31](#), [234](#), [235](#), [336](#)

Palestinian state [4](#), [5](#), [28](#), [136](#), [138](#), [160](#), [167](#), [185](#), [188](#), [216](#), [219](#), [222](#), [223](#), [224](#), [225](#), [226](#), [227](#), [229](#), [230](#), [231](#), [232](#), [233](#), [234](#), [235](#), [236](#), [237](#), [239](#), [240](#), [241](#), [242](#), [336](#)

Palestinians/Palestinian people [5](#), [7](#), [135–36](#), [138](#), [141](#), [154–56](#), [161](#), [163](#), [165](#), [167](#), [169](#), [173](#), [179](#), [184](#), [185](#), [186](#), [192–93](#), [198](#), [199](#), [201](#), [202](#), [203](#), [206](#), [210](#), [211–12](#), [216](#), [219](#), [220](#), [231–37](#), [242](#), [244](#), [301](#); Declaration of Independence [218](#), [221](#), [222](#), [229](#), [230](#), [231](#), [237](#), [238](#), [240](#)

Pascu, Ștefan [277–78](#)

Pat, Gideon [312](#)

Pavel, Amalia [323](#)

Pazner, Avi [182](#), [191](#)

Peace for Galilee War [217](#)

Pelin, Mihai [263–64](#), [287](#), [288](#), [289–91](#)

Peres, Shimon [24](#), [25](#), [77](#), [135](#), [136](#), [137](#), [144–45](#), [161](#), [163](#), [165](#), [166](#), [167](#), [168](#), [172](#), [175](#), [176](#), [177–78](#), [182](#), [184](#), [188](#), [205–13](#), [222–23](#), [237](#), [304](#), [313](#), [314–15](#), [336](#), [337](#)

Petculescu, Constantin [297n.19](#)

Petrescu-Dimbovița, Mircea [276](#)

*Pina in Zori (Until Dawn)* [319](#)

Pirvulescu, C. [74](#)

Pitești [323–24](#)

Pleșu, Andrei [75](#)

PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [10](#), [12](#), [14](#), [20](#), [21](#), [28](#), [41](#), [86](#), [89](#), [92](#), [135–45](#), [147](#), [153–66](#), [167](#), [168](#), [169–70](#), [173–97](#), [199–203](#), [205](#), [208–30](#), [233](#), [235–36](#), [241](#), [243](#), [244](#), [245](#), [329](#), [336](#), [338](#); *see also* Palestine

PLO-Jordanian agreement [179](#)

Podul Iloaei [291](#)

Poland [11](#), [45](#), [46](#), [70](#), [101](#), [114](#), [266](#)

Politburo [7](#), [34](#), [38](#), [43–46](#), [49](#), [51](#), [54](#), [57](#), [67](#), [73](#), [76](#), [80](#), [202–3](#)

Pop, Traian [142](#), [148–49](#), [178–80](#), [184–85](#), [188–89](#), [191](#), [265](#), [272](#), [278–79](#), [280](#), [305](#), [325](#)

Popescu-Puțuri, Ion [270](#), [271](#), [272](#), [273–74](#), [275](#), [318](#), [321–22](#)

Popișteanu, Cristian [284–85](#), [286](#), [330](#)

Prut River [274](#), [282](#)

Quaddafi, Muammar [144](#), [148](#)

Rabin, Yitzhak [337](#)

Răceanu, Grigore [74](#)

Radauți [257](#)

Radu Popescu, Dumitru [318](#)

Rakah (Israeli Communist Party) [183–87](#)

Ralian, Antoinette [319](#)

Ramon, Haim [167](#)

Ravner, Zvi [178](#)

Reagan, Ronald [93](#), [145](#), [148–49](#), [255](#), [304](#)

Reagan-Gorbachev summit [89](#)

Regat [247](#), [264](#), [268](#), [274](#), [277](#), [278](#)

*Revista Cultului Mozaic* [252](#)

Ribbentrop—Molotov agreement [86](#), [102](#), [109](#), [114](#), [115](#)

Riemer, Haim [252](#)

Right of Return [226–31](#), [235](#), [238](#)

Rivlin, David [316](#)

Romania [x](#), [xi](#), [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [5](#), [6–7](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [17–19](#), [20–28](#), [29](#), [31–84](#), [140–74](#), [178–87](#); Department of Culture [252](#), [290](#); Fascist regime [x](#), [15](#), [25](#), [56](#), [188](#), [253](#), [260](#), [263](#), [267–69](#), [273–79](#), [281](#), [284](#), [286–87](#), [290–91](#), [292](#), [294](#), [338](#); Foreign Ministry (MFA) [xi](#), [21](#), [22](#), [40](#), [60](#), [81](#), [92](#), [94–95](#), [113](#), [127](#), [128](#), [143](#), [155](#), [161](#), [162](#), [168](#), [175](#), [183–84](#), [210](#), [214](#), [218](#), [221–22](#), [224](#), [233](#), [237](#), [243](#), [256](#), [258](#), [259](#), [287](#), [290](#), [299](#), [310](#), [315](#), [317](#), [318](#), [319](#), [323](#), [328–33](#); foreign policy [1](#), [2](#), [5](#), [9–14](#), [22](#), [25](#), [27](#), [28](#), [85–133](#), [139](#), [151](#), [181](#), [185](#), [188](#); internal affairs [31–84](#); internal policy [6](#), [7–9](#), [12](#), [31–84](#), [88](#), [116](#), [138](#), [151](#); and international political activity [4](#); Israeli exhibitions in [322–24](#); Israeli students in [6](#), [305–8](#); Israeli tourism to [25](#), [313](#), [314](#), [316](#); official Israeli visits to [135](#), [190–204](#), [214–18](#), [300](#), [304](#), [312](#); Parliament

session [33–35](#); post-communist regime [8](#), [14](#), [15](#); reaction to Israel's bombardment of PLO Tunis headquarters [140–44](#); reaction to Israel's interception of Libyan plane [151–54](#); recognition of 'new Palestine State' [6](#); response to US retaliation against Libya for involvement in terrorist acts [144–51](#); Romania—Israel dialogue on Middle East problems [135–246](#); Tel Aviv embassy [80](#), [81](#), [324](#), [329](#); *see also* Romania—USA relations; Romania—USSR relations; Romanian—Hungarian relations; Second World War

Romania—East European relations [ii](#), [87](#)

Romania—European Community relations [52](#), [100](#)

Romania—Hungary relations [33](#), [87](#), [111](#), [116–33](#)

Romania—USA relations [5](#), [6](#), [12](#), [87–101](#), [102](#)

Romania—USSR relations [32](#), [55](#), [56](#), [59](#), [64](#), [87](#), [95](#), [101–16](#)

Romania—Yugoslavia relations [11](#)

Romanian Academy of Sciences [320](#)

Romanian Academy of Social and Political Studies [270](#), [275](#)

Romanian Communist Party (RCP) [xi](#), [7](#), [31](#), [32](#), [34](#), [35](#), [37](#), [38](#), [39](#), [40](#), [41](#), [44](#), [46](#), [47](#), [48](#), [49](#), [51](#), [52](#), [54](#), [55](#), [56](#), [57](#), [58](#), [59](#), [60](#), [61](#), [63](#), [64](#), [66](#), [67](#), [68](#), [69](#), [70](#), [71](#), [73](#), [74](#), [76](#), [78](#), [79](#), [80](#), [105](#), [106](#), [119](#), [155](#), [156](#), [158](#), [159](#), [162](#), [164](#), [171](#), [184](#), [207](#), [224](#), [260](#), [265](#), [283](#), [293](#), [301](#); Central Committee [180](#), [285](#), [290](#)

Romanian Council for Socialist Education and Culture [253](#), [276](#), [287](#), [317](#), [322](#), [323](#); Department for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries [281](#), [322](#), [329–30](#)

Romanian Journalists' Association [327](#)

Romanian—Arab relations [7](#), [12](#), [17](#), [143](#)

Romanian—Hungarian relations [116–33](#)

Romanian—Israeli relations, *see* Israeli—Romanian relations

Rome [91](#), [144](#), [145](#), [146](#), [147](#), [151](#), [157](#), [164](#)

Rosen, David Moses (Chief Rabbi) [3](#), [14](#), [18](#), [29](#), [73](#), [88](#), [90](#), [249–60](#), [264](#), [270](#), [281](#), [288–89](#), [290](#), [291–94](#), [299](#)

Rosenne, Meir [182](#), [320](#)

Rosenthal, Milton [92](#)

Rosh Pina [248](#)

Sabra and Shatila [217](#)

Sadat, Anwar [163](#), [166](#), [173](#), [203](#), [241](#), [301](#)

Sam-Esh, Rami [333n.1](#)

Sam-Esh, Taly [333n.1](#)

Savir, Uri [205](#)

Schechter, Emil [292](#)

Schlein, Shlomo [257](#)

Schneer, Arthur [90–92](#)

Schultz, George [89](#), [90](#), [208](#)

scientists, Israel—Romania contacts [61](#)

Second World War [8](#), [86](#), [109](#), [139](#), [171](#), [248](#), [263](#), [271](#)

Security Council Resolution, *see* UN Security Council Resolution

Security Services, Romanian [290](#)

Segal, Arye [321](#)

Segev, Dove and Tova [333n.1](#)

Sephardic Synagogue (Bucharest) [258–59](#)

Shalev, Avner [325](#)

Shamir, Yitzhak [21](#), [24](#), [139](#), [145](#), [162](#), [163–64](#), [167](#), [168](#), [169](#), [170](#), [181–82](#), [183](#), [187](#), [190–208](#), [211](#), [227](#), [232–36](#), [240](#), [244](#), [262](#), [327](#), [330](#)

Shamir, Meir [327](#)

Sharansky, Natan [167](#)

Sharon, Ariel [99](#), [214–17](#), [232](#), [315](#)

Sinaia [39](#)

Six-Day War [1](#), [12](#), [13](#), [17](#), [18](#), [19](#), [28](#), [29](#), [82](#), [158](#), [159](#), [161](#), [167](#), [181](#), [192](#), [220](#), [225](#)

Snagov [242](#)

Solomonescu, Olimpia [100](#), [218](#), [222](#), [224](#), [225–26](#), [229](#), [236–37](#), [259](#), [320](#)

Șora, Mihai [75](#)

Spain [258](#)

Spitzer, Jack [91](#)

Stalin, Josef [12](#), [14](#), [31–33](#), [52](#), [74](#), [77](#)

Stănescu, Ion [278–79](#)

Steiger, Jean [322](#)

Steinberg, Arye [297n.19](#)

Sternhell, Zeev [297n.19](#)

Stockholm [230](#)

Stoian, Ion [162–64](#), [165](#), [166](#), [167–70](#), [184](#), [207](#), [208–10](#), [232–35](#)

*Struma* [292](#)

Sweden [132](#)

Switzerland [39](#), [159](#)  
Syria [12](#), [20](#), [135–36](#), [146](#), [152–53](#), [157](#), [159](#), [168](#), [169](#), [172](#), [180](#), [188](#), [192](#), [194](#), [200](#), [209](#)  
Systematisation of villages [8](#), [9](#), [12](#), [51–53](#), [72](#), [74](#), [75](#), [98](#), [117](#), [121](#), [122](#), [125](#)  
Szüts, Pal [118](#), [122–26](#), [129–31](#)  
Szüros, Mátjás [125–26](#)

Teheran [80–81](#)  
Teorianu, Ion [306](#)  
Third World [36](#), [263](#), [328](#)  
Tighina Agreement [296n.14](#)  
Timișoara [56](#), [63](#), [75–76](#), [79](#), [81](#), [129](#), [249](#), [313](#), [321](#)  
Tirgoviște [323](#)  
Tito [11](#)  
Titulescu, Nicolae [25](#), [30](#)  
Tökés, László [75](#)  
Totu, Ioan [52](#), [172](#), [181–82](#), [187](#), [188](#), [190](#), [205–8](#), [210](#), [211](#), [222](#), [223](#), [224](#), [229](#), [230–32](#), [240](#), [301](#)  
trade, Israel—Romania/Romania—Israel [20](#), [25](#), [27](#), [217](#), [311](#), [312](#), [313–31](#), [337–38](#)  
Transnistria, Holocaust of the Jews in [xi](#), [15](#), [247](#), [248](#), [256](#), [260](#), [264](#), [267–72](#), [275–76](#), [277–86](#), [292](#), [338](#); *see also* Holocaust of Jews in Bessarabia and Bucovina  
Transylvania [117](#), [118](#), [120](#), [121](#), [123](#), [126](#), [128](#), [129](#), [247](#), [260](#); North [272](#), [277](#), [279](#), [281](#), [282](#), [292](#), [294](#); South [264](#), [268](#), [274](#), [277](#), [278](#), [279](#)  
Tripoli [148–49](#), [151–52](#)  
Țuiu, Florea [327](#), [330](#)  
Tulcea [64](#)  
Tunis, Tunisia [91](#), [140–45](#)  
Turkey [11](#), [160](#)  
Tirgu Frumos [291](#)  
Tirgu Mureș [56](#)

Udroiu, Neagu [327](#)  
Ukraine [283](#)  
Ukrainian Republic [114](#), [252](#)



UN 4, [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [10](#), [37](#), [65](#), [73](#), [131](#), [132](#), [149–54](#), [179](#), [201](#), [206](#), [209](#), [210](#), [212](#), [215](#), [219](#), [227](#), [240](#); General Secretary [137](#); proposed conference on Middle East under auspices of [28](#), [139](#), [147](#), [158](#), [169](#), [176](#), [180](#), [188–89](#), [193](#), [196](#), [197](#), [201](#), [204](#), [209](#), [227](#); Security Council [4](#), [136](#), [137](#), [152–53](#), [159](#), [176](#), [180](#), [188](#), [192](#), [201](#), [202](#), [204](#), [215](#), [216](#); *see also* UN General Assembly; UN Security Council Resolution [242](#), [338](#)

UN Committee on Palestine [160–62](#)

UN General Assembly [21](#), [181](#), [201](#); 1988 [226](#), [234](#), [235](#), [336](#); Resolution 3376 [160](#); resolution equating Zionism with racism [13](#), [88](#), [169](#)

UN Security Council Resolution [242](#), [338](#) [5](#), [136](#), [159](#), [160](#), [161](#), [163](#), [165](#), [173](#), [177](#), [178](#), [179](#), [180](#), [182](#), [188–89](#), [210](#), [213](#), [216](#), [219](#), [220](#), [221](#), [222](#), [225](#), [226](#), [227](#), [228](#), [229](#), [231](#), [232](#), [233](#), [336](#)

UNESCO [259](#)

Ungur, Ioan [301](#), [312](#)

United States of America [2](#), [4](#), [6](#), [10](#), [12](#), [13](#), [20](#), [24](#), [28](#), [36](#), [60](#), [67](#), [79](#), [87](#), [88](#), [89](#), [91](#), [92](#), [93](#), [99](#), [101](#), [104](#), [116](#), [120](#), [124](#), [135](#), [136](#), [137](#), [144–55](#), [159](#), [164](#), [166](#), [167–68](#), [169](#), [180](#), [187](#), [189](#), [195–200](#), [208](#), [210](#), [212](#), [226–27](#), [231](#), [236–37](#), [247](#), [250](#), [254–59](#), [262](#), [280](#)

University of Bucharest [270](#), [272](#), [302](#), [307](#), [317](#), [320](#)

University of Tel Aviv [271](#)

University of Timișoara [317](#), [320](#)

USSR [2](#), [3](#), [12](#), [39](#), [48](#), [56](#), [63](#), [77](#), [78–79](#), [86](#), [101–16](#), [124](#), [126](#), [128](#), [135](#), [139](#), [150–53](#), [168](#), [247–48](#), [294](#), [315](#); denigration of Israel [19](#); international conference on the Middle East and [4](#), [28](#), [136](#), [147](#), [165](#), [180](#), [195–98](#), [207](#), [210](#), [336](#); invasion of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan [87](#), [100](#), [102](#), [110](#); immigrants to Israel passing through Romania [257](#), [262](#); leaders [1](#), [37](#), [48](#), [54](#), [85](#); liberalization [7](#), [11](#), [45](#), [75](#); Middle East involvement [20](#), [29](#), [136–37](#), [166](#), [195](#); neglecting Ceaușescu [13](#); relations with Israel [1](#), [19](#), [136](#), [161](#), [165](#), [166–67](#), [169](#), [225](#), [335](#); and Romania in Second World War [170](#), [247](#), [267–68](#), [269](#), [277–78](#), [284–88](#), [293](#); Stalin years [32](#), [52](#); *see also* Israeli—Soviet and East European relations; Ribbentrop—Molotov agreement; Romania—USSR relations

Văduvă, Ilia [103](#), [165](#), [167](#), [174](#), [181](#), [207](#)

Vasile, I. [320](#)

Vienna [157](#), [164](#)

*Voice of Israel* (in Romanian) [264](#), [272](#), [289](#), [328](#), [329](#)

Volovici, Leon [297n.18](#)

Wannsee Conference [269](#)

Warsaw Pact [10](#), [43](#), [47](#), [53](#), [59](#), [77](#), [85](#), [87](#), [102](#), [103](#), [104](#), [107](#), [108](#), [113](#), [116](#), [120](#), [132](#), [156](#), [293](#)

Washington DC [6](#), [244](#), [280](#)

Weizman, Ezer [135](#), [137](#)

Western countries (bloc) [2](#), [6](#), [10](#), [12](#), [13](#), [59](#), [84](#), [85](#), [87](#), [96](#), [119](#), [124](#), [129](#), [132](#), [141](#), [150](#), [151](#), [200](#), [247](#), [255](#), [258–59](#), [262](#), [281](#), [291](#), [299–300](#), [315](#), [317](#), [318](#), [337](#)

Western World [2](#), [3](#), [31](#), [85](#)

Whitehead, John [93](#), [187](#), [325](#)

Yad Vashem [271–76](#), [279](#), [283](#), [285](#)

Yiddish [251](#)

Yugoslavia [11](#), [42](#), [311](#)

Zaban, Yair [187](#)

Zhivkov [xi](#)

Zikhron Ya'akov [248](#)

Zikhrony, Amnon [185](#)

Zim [3](#), [314](#)

Zionism [5](#), [13](#), [228](#), [248](#), [251](#), [263](#), [287](#), [304](#)