

# Csaba-István Székely **THE HOLOCAUST OF MEMORIES**

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### Translated from Romanian by: Andrei Proca

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## PREFACE TO AN EXCITING DEBATE

### Thoughts of academician Răzvan Theodorescu

Sometime, somewhere, Italo Calvino noted that it is man's supreme duty to "seek and to know who and what, in this Hell, is not hell and to make it last." Anytime I stumble upon parts of mankind's most horrendous crime – the Nazi extermination of the Jews -, I keep in mind the words of this Italian writer who made his debut after the war with writings about Resistance fighters.

The Israeli acknowledgement of those who have done acts of kindness "in the middle of Hell" has always seemed to me as an honorable act of collective homage paid to individual deeds. Romania, as we all know, has had his own "Righteous Among Men" who have proven their own love of fellow humans – not just Jews, but any human beings! – and the fact that some are connected to the city of Czernowitz (such as mayor Traian Popovici or painter George Russu), brings me to the subject matter discussed here by publicist Székely Csaba-István. It is, in fact, a case of Magyar telling the incredible story of his Israeli friend who is fighting against the "candor of forgetfulness", for the acknowledgement of the merits of a Romanian who deserves not to be forgotten: Metropolitan Bishop Tit Simedrea.

As a young man, I met this great patriarch and scholar and, in my testimony in the "Simedrea case", I said what I had to say. I will just add this: seeing all these testimonies from our contemporaries, both Jewish and not, and having a living proof in the person of Meir Shai – whom I have not personally met but before whom I bow with respect for his noble obstinacy – makes me understand that the Yad Vashem is not only a deeply respectable institution but also deeply Jewish in its spirit. Because, along with its noble activity of acknowledging past heroism, it can also reach – on its own terms – a surrealism in which the absurd neighbors the unbelievable. All of which, by the way, were invented by the Jews, with genius and humor...

To me (which is, probably, less important...), bishop Tit Simedrea was a "Righteous" who deserves not to be forgotten.

Acad. Răzvan THEODORESCU

Bucharest, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010.

#### Professor Dr. Shlomo Leibovici Laish's commentaries

A French historian – not really known for his love of Jews – called the Jewish people ISTORICISIMUS, not only for their antiquity – he said – but also for the fact that they are the people that do not forget. The issue of the "Righteous Among Men", meaning the deep gratitude towards those (too few, unfortunately) who saved Jewish lives during the Fascist / Nazi oppression, only comes to support the idea. The institutionalization of this gratitude offers, on one hand, an official acknowledgement of their noble deeds, but, on the other hand, it becomes a Sodomic bed, fencing in that which belongs to the soul with rigorous bureaucratic regulations.

One of the most sensitive aspects of this issue is the attitude towards those who, even though they were known – for good reason or not – as anti-Semites, took stand against the ongoing cruelties and saved Jews. If their courageous acts endangered their social positions and their lives or not is an issue of appreciation (which is in itself relative). It is a subjective issue and cannot be otherwise.

The Talmud says: "He who saves a life saves the whole world". And who can appreciate salvation better than the one who was saved? Marcel Shai has been struggling for years to obtain the "Righteous Among Men" distinction for the now deceased bishop Tit Simedrea, head of the Bucovina Metropolitan Church during the Holocaust. Marcel and his family lived in hiding in the Metropolitan Residence's basement and were saved.

Bureaucratic issues invoked by the Yad Vashem – the institution that grants the title – do not deter Marcel Shai from his efforts to obtain acknowledgement for Tit Simedrea.

I have not had the pleasure to meet Dr. Székely Csaba-István. His book on the Dead Sea scrolls brought him closer to me as someone who has affinities with us and our country. His toil to present Marcel Shai's restless struggles to obtain acknowledgement for Tit Simedrea's saving acts honors him and brings him even closer to me. Who knows? Maybe this presentation will strike a chord with the bureaucrats in charge of the institutionalization, because Marcel's and his family's gratitude is certain.

Prof. Dr. Shlomo Leibovici LAISH
President of the World Cultural
Association of Romanian Jews

Tel Aviv, September 21st, 2010.

#### Professor Dr. Carol Iancu's reflections

#### Meir Shai's battle

Mr. Meir Shai, an Israeli citizen living in Haifa, was born in Iasi as Marcel Slacman and was saved, during the Second World War, along with his family, by "humane men in inhumane times". Refugees from Czernowitz, the Slacmans escaped deportation after George Russu, under Tit Simedrea's direction, took them out of the ghetto and hid them in the Metropolitan Residence's basement during 1941 and 1942 and looked after them.

Grateful to those who saved him, Meir Shai succeeded – after tenacious actions – to obtain the "Righteous Among Men" distinction for George Russu from Yad Vashem. In keeping with the Hebrew saying, "Ha-mathil ba-mitsva omrim lo gmor" ("To him who started a good deed, one must say: finish it!"), he continues his "battle", going to great lengths to convince those in charge to remit the same (posthumous) distinction for bishop Tit Simedrea.

His struggles must be successful: Tit Simedrea, who, together with George Russu, saved the Slacmans, also opposed the deportation of the Czernowitz Jews. This intervention was pointed out to me by the late Romanian Chief Rabbi Dr. Alexandru Şafran in our conversations during my work on the book *Alexandru Şafran*. A life of Struggle, a Ray of Light.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Meir Shai sent me a note of the Special Information Service found in the C.N.S.A.S. archives, in which Tit Simedrea's intervention in favor of the Jews is confirmed, along with the promise of his "full support" made to Chief Rabbi Alexandru Şafran during an audience. Given the importance of this document, I have reproduced it, in facsimile, in my recent book *Alexandru Şafran and the Unfinished Romanian Shoah. A collection of documents* (1940-1944)<sup>2</sup>.

The "Righteous Among Men" distinction can be awarded even to those who, although anti-Semite, have saved Jewish lives, endangering their position or even their life. Such is the case of Tit Simedrea, who was integral in the salvation of the Slacmans, despite his reputation of someone who did not particularly loved Jews, a fact that was pointed out to me by Chief Rabbi Alexandru Şafran.

There are two historiographic currents regarding the *Shoah* – the recommended Hebrew term for the extermination of Jews during the Second World War (I plead for its use in Romanian as well, where, unfortunately, the term Holocaust has become the preferred term). One of these viewpoints exposes the "final solution", the infernal machine used by the Nazis and their collaborators. The other is the story from the victims' point of view.

This book – belonging to the latter category – brings to light an illustrating case of human solidarity by means of a Romanian Shoah survivor's testimony. The story of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Hasefer publ. house, Bucharest, 2008, 384 pp., translated by Ticu Goldstein. Originally published as *Alexandre Safran. Une vie de combat, un faisceau de lumière,* Montpellier, Editions de l'Université Paul Valéry, 2007, 318 pp.;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Hasefer publ. house, Bucharest, 2010, pag. 576, pag. 539, pag. 569 for the French edition – Alexandre Safran et la Shoah inachevée en Roumanie. Recueil de documents (1940-1944), Hasefer, 2010, 607 pp.; Annex no. 29;

#### Székely Csaba-István – The Holocaust of Memories

Marcel Shai's drama and of the conditions under which he survived, the struggle to officially obtain the acknowledgement of his family's savior – passionately described by Dr. Székely Csaba-István – is important both to history and memory.

Mr. Marcel Shai is a "living witness" ("ed hai" in Hebrew and "témoin vivant" in French ) of the Shoah and what he wants is to bring a "moral reparation" of his savior's memory. But his testimony belongs to a general "duty of memory" regarding the Shoah, from which he, as a survivor, cannot break away, from a moral point of view. This is why his testimony needs to be listened to and favorably taken into account. This is not only about giving back his dignity as a witness but also about acknowledgeing that his approaches and struggles are for one of the most causes: keeping the memory of those who had the courage to say no to barbarism alive.

This is why Marcel Shai's struggle is exemplary.

This is why I am expressing my admiration for his humanism, the justness of his battle: the publishing of this book is an important first victory.

Prof. Dr. Carol IANCU Paul Valéry University – Montpellier III Head of the French Judaism High Studies School

Montpellier, October 19th, 2010

### INTRODUCTION

What bonds us are the many pleasant moments we shared over two decades.

We met by chance. Our mutual respect for the spoken word brought us closer. In time we became close friends. Our reciprocal visits (both in Israel in and in Romania) were full of what you might call lectures on culture, particularly history and classical music. Meir (Marcel) Shai's vast musical culture, as well as his distinguished wife's, Gertrude (Tuty), fascinated me. Following a conversation with Tuty, I embarked upon a vast research on the Esenians, and the fruit of this research is a book¹ I dedicated to my friends.

In all the conversations, a theme kept reoccurring - the theme of 'escaping' - Marcel and his family's escape from the torment of the Holocaust with the help of an eparchial counselor and a high ranked Orthodox prelate. I admit that the names George Russu and Tit Simedrea meant nothing to me at first, as I imagine is the case with many of my peers.

The years passed, Marcel retired, but the memories kept coming back, ever stronger. The feeling of an unfulfilled duty - that of having never expressed his gratitude for his and his family's salvation in the perilous days of the Holocaust - couldn't leave my friend.

There wasn't an evening, be it in Haifa of Miercurea Ciuc, in which this subject didn't surface, and the wrinkles of unfulfillment grew deeper or Marcel's face. I have rarely seen him nervous of agitated, but recalling the failure of his approaches affected him deeply. I really understand Marcel, who is extremely punctual, respectful and grateful for any human gesture. The fear of not being able to express his gratitude to his savior's memory makes him desperate.

He went about his way. Often being at his side, I never would have thought that to obtain acknowledgement for the indubitable merits of those righteous people he would have to walk such a long tedious path - a real irksome task.

After years of efforts, Marcel successfully got counselor George Russu the posthumous "Righteous Among Men" distinction. But the awarding ceremony (led by Yad Vashem) and the reception of the award by the Romanian Orthodox Church only marked a new beginning in Marcel Shai's struggle to prevent mankind from relapsing into the candor of oblivion.

Each day he faces another personal battle, fighting a different Holocaust: that of implemented bureaucracy. In three years, he traveled extensively, relied on research and professional expertise, wrote articles, was given audiences in various international forums, corresponded amply with Yad Vashem Commission's members, all to obtain recognition for Tit Simedrea, a former metropolitan bishop of Bucovina who saved them from the

Székely, Cs.-I., - Paleo-management enigmatic în Manuscrisele de la Marea Moartă [Enigmatic Paleo-Management in the Dead Sea Scrolls] – Alutus Publ. House, Miercurea Ciuc, 2009;

extermination camp. All his efforts were to no avail: the committee will not grant Tit Simedrea the "Righteous Among Men" title and that is that.

But as the years go by, my octogenarian friend is becoming increasingly concerned, indignant and insistent. At an age when others sit in front of the television or shop for groceries he is running incessantly, desperate for not being able to give a warm 'Thank You' to a man that is no longer with us. Just an official 'Thank You', a simple thank you, not only from himself and his family but on behalf of the people he represents. A "thank you" both individual and collective and nothing more.

In the light of these repeated refusals, Marcel asks himself over and over again: how did the utterance of a selfless thank you become such a difficult institutional burden? My friend's heroic Sisyphus struggle marks me deeply. This wonderful man's grandeur creates in me a sense of inferiority and leads me to profound meditations.

This book wishes to be a synthesis of official documents, declarations, reports and opinions, stripped from any malevolent literature. I want to emphasize the reality of the facts and the greatness of the ideal of recognizing the merits of Marcel's family's savior. But Marcel's determination made me unable to resist the temptation of annexing a section in which I rhetorically formulated several clear conclusions and findings.

The book does not wish to be a bestseller, just a clear mirror of the facts and of the purity of the human spirit that makes a Man. We try to pay a humble tribute to righteous and deserving figures, as well as saluting a man that is tireless in the struggle for the recognition of the merits of human empathy.

This book is dedicated to an extraordinary Israeli family, the Shais, in the wish that their great dream will become reality in the shortest of times. It is also the author's wish that this and all next generations will learn from the story of this tumultuous but honest life, at the center of which lies the belief that not being forgotten is the supreme reward for being kind.

For all his involvement towards this goal of never forgetting, Meir (Marcel) Shai deserves a welcome (if symbolic) "Righteous Among Men" title.

\*\*\*\*\*

The documentary material, personal correspondence and family pictures were provided by Prof. Eng. Meir (Marcel) Shai with his explicit permission to publish them in their integrity. Tit Simedrea's pictures and the permission to use them in this book were acquired thanks to the kindness of his grandson, engineer Grigore Popescu.

I wish to thank them for their support in shaping this biographical oeuvre.

Dr. Székely Csaba-István

Miercurea Ciuc, January 2011.

### **CHAPTER I**

#### A FAMILY IN THE WHIRLPOOL OF HISTORY

"The supreme reward for being kind is not being forgotten" Meir Shai

Meir Shai (originally Marcel Slacman) was born on the seventh of May in 1930 in a modest Jewish family. His parents were Ida and David and his siblings were Beatrice and Gari (photos #1 and #2).

They lived a peaceful life in "the sweet town of Iași", taking the better parts of life in that era along with the lesser ones. The children did very well in school and had remarkable grades. The family never deviated from the standards of a normal life. Things peacefully followed their course for their perfectly socially integrated family. The small day to day incidents and problems only 'spiced up' their life rather than turning into headaches. For the moment, they were sheltered from socio-political uncertainty and risks.

The real problems began with the establishment of The Legionary Movement (The Iron Guard) and its reign of terror.

The head of the family was a printing worker, and, as Marcel modestly declares, it seems that he *really was a good one*. In 1937, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu himself asked David to start a Legionary printing establishment in order to print propaganda material for him. David's firm refusal of the request immediately led to death threats that forced the family to move to Chişinău, which in turn saved them from the horrible Iaşi pogrom of June 1941. (Iaşi had been declared, on November 8<sup>th</sup> 1940, *the city of the Legionary Movement* <sup>1</sup>).

Such acts of cruelty, of slaughtering of fellow men, had begun earlier in nothern Moldavia, in Bucovina. One example that comes to mind is the Dorohoi pogrom, which took place on the first of June, 1940. The number of the victims of that particular day remains unknown. 'But there were also real Men who saved their fellow Jewish countrymen', writes a witness of the Dorohoi<sup>2</sup> pogrom, refering to the rescue of Jewish infantery officers such as Major Marino and Captain Stino. These were the background and the historical context in which the Slacmans' drama was unfolding.

The Legionary printing mill was built afterwards in Colentina by *Titi Cristescu*, a sympathiser of the Movement and it was used to print the Legionary Courier and various Legionary manifestos. It was discovered by the police on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1938<sup>3</sup>.

Palaghiță, Şt., - Istoria Mișcării Legionare [The History of the Legionary Movement] – written by a Legionaire – Ed. Roza Vânturilor, Bucharest, 1993, pp. 37, 141;

Dr. Marcel Solomon – Publicația Jurnalul Săptămânii [The Weekly Journal], Tel Aviv, no. 188, July 29th 2007;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Palaghiță, Şt., - Istoria Miscării Legionare [The History of the Legionary Movement] - written by a Legionaire - Ed. Roza Vanturilor, Bucharest, 1993, pp. 31;

After only six months of pondering, the Slacmans decided to move from Chişinău to Czernowitz, a city with a large Jewish population, in the hope that they will thus escape the vicissitudes of such agitated times. Northern Bucovina's annexation to the Soviet Union also strenghtened the Slacmans' faith in the newly appointed Russian administration.

During the Soviet domination, more than 10,000 Jews were deported under the charge of belonging to *the exploiting class*. It was the Slacmans' "luck" that, forced by their situation at the time, they had moved to Bucovina without their assets and once more avoided being persecuted by a hateful fraction of humankind. But it seems that the sigh of relief was premature. The Slacmans' "exodus" would continue along a dramatic path!

Being a very good printing worker, David was soon hired at Bucovina's Metropolitan Church's printing mill, under the direction **of His Holiness bishop Tit Simedrea**.

But a quiet life was not in store for them. Trouble followed in their footsteps, and the tragedies they feared were closing in on Marcel and his loved ones.

In July 1941, Romanian-German troops occupied Czernowitz and started the horrid program for the deportation of the Jews to Transylvania.

In this political context, Bucovina's Governor, General Corneliu Calotescu, issued October 11, 1941's Decree no. 38. This document of a blameworthy historical act stated, inter alia: the death penalty for all those sheltering strangers<sup>4</sup> and those aware of such actions going on and not reporting them would be considered accomplices and senteced to 5 to 8 years oh hard labor.<sup>5</sup>

In another horrid act, General Calotescu ordered the evacuation of all Jews to the Czernowitz ghetto<sup>6</sup>. All that was allowed were warm clothes and food. Every Jewish head of family had the obligation to make an inventory of the family assets and to hand it in along with the house key when entering the ghetto. All Jews had a 18 o'clock curfew and those outside the ghetto after that time were to be shot.

In order to understand the juridical and political juncture, which forever changed the life of the Jewish community of the area (and not only), let us point out some historical moments, without going into details and digressions.

A lot has been written about the Holocaust (but still not enough), this painful and more than regrettable period in history, so we will focus on the political decisions of the Romanian Senate that concern our subject matter directly.

The Holocaust, corroborated with the other aspects of the millenary dissolution of the Jewish people, was the greatest tragedy that could hit a population. We do not know how many nations could have surpassed such major obstacles and then still be able to reconstruct the whole from the splinters of the totally disintegrated social structure. They needed a strong binding material to reharmonize history's shattered pieces. We firmly believe that this binding material can be identified as David's and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Pt.1, letter d) of October 11, 1941's Decree Nr.38, Annex No. 1;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Pt.3 of October 11, 1941's Decree Nr.38, Annex No. 1;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Annex No. 2;

Solomon's people's faith. The past, present and future of the Jewish people were always circumscripted to the reconstruction of the Temple from the remnants of the walls of eternal suffering. The New Temple needs to be built on this millenary suffering. It is as if the word suffering has become synonymous with the word Jew – as the author noticed in another one of his books on the history of The Chosen People <sup>7</sup>.

The Holocaust's cry of pain must still be heard and acknowledged today, it must be heard and acknowledged even by those who refuse to do so!

"Holocaust" was the ancient word for the dawn and dusk offerings and sacrifices in the temple. It was the symbol of total sacrifice (*kalîl*, in Hebrew) in which the animal was completely (*holos*, in Greek), burnt (*kaios*, in Greek). The smoke from the offering raised up to God, hence the Hebrew name of the procession – 'olâ.<sup>8</sup>

It was a two thousand year leap from sacrificing animals on the temple altar to the mass slaughter of people, but it was also a painful shift in meaning, reflecting a considerable involution of mankind.

**The Holocaust - Sho'ah**, in Hebrew, was the Nazi policy of exterminating Jews, gypsies, slavs not belonging to the Jewish tradition, along with other national minorities, homosexuals, disabled people, intellectuals, communists and political adversaries.

After **the Nurnberg laws of 1935**, all Jews lost their citizenships and in 1938, the process of moving them to concentration camps or ghettos began with the pogrom known as *The Crystal Night*.

"The Final Solution", that of exterminating Jews (Die Endlossung der Judenfrage), decreed at the Wansee Conference of 1942, set upon the physical elimination of the Jewish people and encouraged other countries to join in on the process of human dissolution. By this approach, the extremist policies adopted a few years earlier were extrapolated. In the wake of these antihumanitarian actions, about six million Jews were killed or declared missing by the end of the second World War.

In order to understand the context and the realities of those times in which "Act One of Marcel's Holocaust" took place, we need to make a few references to the Romanian politics of the time, translated into applied juridical norms.

"The Future of Orthodoxy", a periodical, published a documentary which was also run by Mirel Horodi in an editorial of *Revista Revistelor*<sup>10</sup>. The documentary was called "Hierarchs and clerical figures that have helped the Jewish people during the oppression" and it analyses the antisemite legal framework of the Gigurtu Goverment in August 1940. Historian G. Vasilescu notes that: "These measures were taken by King Carol II, on one side, under the pressure of antisemite Romanian right wing forces (supporters of Cuza and Legionaries) and on the other side, in his attempt to align with The Nazi Reich's policies, in or-

<sup>7</sup> Székely, Cs.I., - Paleo-management enigmatic în Manuscrisele de la Marea Moartă [Enigmatic paleo-management in the Dead Sea Scrolls] – Alutus Publ. House, 2009, pp.9;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Dufour, X.L., - Dictionnaire du Nouveau Testament – Du Seuil publ.house, Paris, 2008. pp 278;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Edited by historian George Vasilescu, head of the Romanian Orthodox Church Holy Synod, published in no. 371-372, January 31st, 2006;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Viata noastră journal, August 17th, 2007;

der to secure Berlin's support in the context of future discussions with Budapest and Sofia, whose territorial claims were openly supported by Hitler." Also, "after the King's September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1940 abdication, the laws and discriminatory measures aimed at the Jews grew increasingly harsh. General Ion Antonescu's Government sistematically enforced and anti-Semite policy, aiming to isolate the Jews as much as possible from the country's social, economical and cultural life".

The first discriminatory measure was denying all Jewish people the right to convert to Orthodoxism, namely their baptism. This was stipulated in the **March 18**<sup>th</sup>, **1941 Decree no. 711**, a decree that was met with strong opposition from the Romanian Orthodox Church, as pointed out by columnist M. Horodi.

The legislation and jurisprudence of the time contain a vast number of profoundly anti-Semite laws. These decisions were made under the influence of international changes dominated by the overly aggressive Fascist policies that caused the Romanian State to set laws that led to regrettable situations.

This historical context was also defined by these regulations:

1. August 9th, 1940 Decree no. 265011, signed by H.M. King Carol, the President of the Minister's Council, Ion Gigurtu and the Minister of Justice, Ion V. Gruia. It proclaimed the instructions regarding the juridical situation of Romanian Jews.

The juridical norm makes a strict delimitation of the *Jewish categories*, according to their parents and their religion (art.2) and their juridical situation (art.3 and the following). The legislator decrees the limits of the possibility of employment in public office (art.7) and other professional activities (art.8). For Jews, the obligativity of military service was transfered in fiscal or labor obligations and Jews from the second category were denied the right to a military career (art.10).

They were also denied the right to acquire rural property, authorising the Ministry of Agriculture to expropriate them on grounds of public cause. Jews were allowed to sell their properties to non-Jewish Romanians and could no longer acquire industrial property. It was also not allowed for Jews to change their names into Romanian ones (art.14). Those working in the public office were to be fired and for not obeying these (and other) laws, heavy sanctions were stipulated, the offenders facing correctional imprisonment (art.21).

The tense, conflictual atmospere of the time is very obvious in **Ion V. Gruia, the Ministry of Justice's report to the Ministries' Council**, which asks for the enforcement of this project. Minister Gruia declares that "The Jewish problem represents a political, juridical and economical problem inside the Romanian authoritative and totalitary state. It can be said that, by solving this problem, the Romanian people's justice is consoldated"...." but what happened, starting with late 1918, reminds us, first of all, of the times of Mihai Vodă Sturza, when 'such great misfortune came upon us after opening Moldavia's gates to the Jewish', as one can read in the writings of the time. Secondly, it proves that healing only by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Monitorul Oficial [Official Gazette], no. 183, August 9th, 1940;

way of administrative measures is insufficient and a new legal order belonging to a system must be supported by all organic points of force and defense of the Nation."

Gruia then continues with the idea of "unitarily solving" the Jewish problem, the acknowledgement of the "starting point" and that of the "ending point", with one aim: "saving the Nation". The report makes a clear political and juridical distinction between those who are Romanian by blood and Romanian citizens, pointing out that: "Romania belongs only to Romanians... This juridical, political and economical statute of the Jews imposes by discrimination, the Charta of the Romanians' rights. This status springs from the implacable historical momentum and formulates the law of defense of the Nation. Furthermore, it represents, to those bearing the political responsibility of ruling the country, the only safe, decisive and honest starting point towards an eternal Romania. Tomorrow will see me right"

# 2. <u>August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1940 Decree no. 2651</u><sup>12</sup>, promulgated by H.M. King Carol, signed by the President of the Ministries' Council, Ion Gigurtu and the Minister of Justice, Ion V. Gruia – on Jews marrying Romanians.

Articles 1-3 stipulate discriminations which imply extremist situations. Thus: Marriages between Jews and those who are Romanian by blood are forbidden. By Jewish we mean any person belonging to the Mosaic faith and those belonging to the categories described in the second article of the 1940 Decree no. 2650. The law also applies to marriages taking place outside the borders of the country. Romanian / Jewish marriages are not recognized". According to articles 7 and 8, anyone serving as a witness to the marriage was to be sent in correctional imprisonment.

But the **Ministry of Justice's report to the Ministries' Council,** in which he demands the support of these laws also prove the xenophobe attitudes of the leaders of the time.

For example: "Romanian blood is the foundation of the Nation; ...we arrived at their idea that a Romanian bloodline is a moral and ethnic element which can be determined via legal (religious and parental) discrimination from the idea of Jewish, which now also has a political meaning. It is not without political interest for me to point out, in a few paragraphs, some great nations' enterprises regarding the subject.

- A) In Germany, if we're to talk only about juridical accomplishments, the People (Volk) are not only a juridical notion but also a political one, they are an ethnic notion based on the idea of race.
- B) The German people are, and must be, a racist group. Regarding juridical achievements, we notice two outlooks:
  - a) the idea of racial unity, implemented by the laws of 1933 and
  - b) the idea of racial plurality, implemented by the Nurnberg laws of 1935.

Biologically speaking, the idea of racial unity leads to ethnic unity. The bloodline community represents the common element, which determines racial unity. Racial unity implies the principle of racial inequality. We must avoid mixing superior and inferior races.

The northern Arian race is the purest and the most perfect race. The German people must essentially remain a majority of Arians"... "Bloodline must remain a moral criterion and a juridical

Monitorul Oficial [Official Gazette], no. 183, August 9th, 1940;

one"... "In this way, constitutional law applies organic nationalism: it promotes the nation in its organic and creational elements and it purifies it by removing parasitic and heterogenous ones."

3. <u>September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1940, Law no. 550<sup>13</sup> is the law by which the Romanian state becomes a National Legionary State – along with the implementation of a pro-actively anti-Semite military regime.</u>

It stipulates that:

- "1. The Romanian State becomes a National Legionary State.
- 2. The legionary movement is the only one recognized by the State. It aims to materially and morally develop the Romanian nation and its creative forces.
- 3. General Ion Antonescu is The Leader of the Legionary State and Head of the Legionary Regime.
- 4. Horia Sima is Head of the Legionary Movement.
- 5. As of the publishing date of this Decree, all fighting among brothers comes to an end."
- **4.** March 27<sup>th</sup> 1941, Law no. 254 <sup>14</sup> regulates the ownership of Jewish urban properties by the State and the interdiction for owning urban real estate properties or certain real rights over these properties.

The law of the times established regulations by which: "Urban real estate belonging to Jews, private owners or Jewish societies, become the full property of the State, starting with the date of this decree. Furthermore, all individual or juridical rights over urban estate become State patrimony...

...All civil and commercial societies in which an associate is Jewish or in which over 40 percent of the capital belongs to Jews shall be considered Jewish...

...Jews who have proven their devotion to the nation through extraordinary acts shall be exempt from these regulations only by special decree. The proposition will only be formulated by the Ministers' Council, based on the report of The National Center for Romanian Social Integration, the juridical section... The former Jewish owner is forced to transfer ownership of the property to the National Center for Romanian Social Integration, in a period of time agreed upon by the Center...

...Jews can obtain no title, right of property, use or habitation rights over urban real estate except if, by special law, certain perimeters or neighbourhoods would be reserved exclusively for the Jewish population, and only on basis of that law...

...At the request of the Public Ministry or anyone concerned, the court of law to which a Jewish (according to art.19) urban real estate is circumscribed to will decide the sequester and transfer of property to the National Center for Romanian Social Integration, which will become its administrator. The provisions of this decree will apply to all Jewish properties at the time of its publishing. All real or personal shares will be sequestered for a period of five years and the building will become State patrimony..."

These and other laws, provisions and decisions that, under the excuse of healthy nationalism, acquired connotations that are quite shameful for the Romanian State, were passed at the time. This was the context in which the historic events that affected the Slacmans took place.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Monitorul Oficial [Official Gazette], no. 214 bis, September 14th, 1940;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Monitorul Oficial [Official Gazette], no. 74, March 28th 1941;

We need to point out (as a short sidebar) that the same anti-Semite policy was adopted by Hungary, starting as early as March 1938 – also including Northern Transylvania after the 1940 Vienna Conference Decision.

"The Jews were victims of their times. Romanian revulsion towards the Jews was the result of their approval of the Magyar revisionism and irredentism. The Magyars, particularly the Right Wing ones, accused them of "keeping the faith" and of the enslavement of the Left", a study on the anti-Jewish pogroms notes.<sup>15</sup>

Jewish magazines, clubs and organizations were banned. With small exceptions, Jewish civil servants were fired; students were expelled from state schools and universities; "troublesome" characters were arrested and deported, later to be sent to labour camps.

The situation precipitated in the spring of 1944. The April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1944 Secret Order no. 6163 and the April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1944 Governmental Decision no. 1610<sup>16</sup>, signed by state secretaries Baky László and Endre László, stated that, at first, Jews were to be moved in smaller houses, then gathered in the ghetto and later deported.

But, as the Transylvania holocaust (or from other parts of the world) does not directly concern our subject matter, we will not investigate any further in this direction.

We must remember that, towards the end of the Second World War (and after the events of 1989), *the Romanian State started annulling the laws against Jews*, and measures were taken to correct the effects of discrimination:

# 5. December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1944 Law no. 641<sup>17</sup> explicitly annulled all anti-Jewish provisions!!

"Starting with the publishing date of this law, all legal measures taken against Jews are annulled.

As an effect of this law, all juridical decisions (either general or individual) made based on previous anti-Jewish laws are annulled.

Furthermore, all unlawful discriminatory provision is hereby annulled";

Also, juridical confirmation of the equality between nations was considered necessary. It came in form of the highly historically important

# 6. February 6th, 1945 Law no. 86, signed by H.M. King Mihai<sup>18</sup> – decreeing the statute of Romanian nationalities pertaining to minorities.

It states, among other things, that: "All Romanian citizens are equal in front of the law and have the same civil and political rights, regardless of race, nationality, language or religion.

It is forbidden to use the ethnic background of Romanian citizens in order to establish their juridical situation.

Differences in language, religion, race or nationality cannot represent an obstacle for any Romanian citizen in his effort to obtain or to use civil or political rights or to work in public services or any other field of activity.

Braham, R. I., - Az Észak-Erdélyi Holokauszt Földrajzi Enciklopédiája (The Geographic Encyclopedia of the North Transylvania Holocaust), Park Könyvkiadó publ.house, Budapest, Koinonia publ. House, Cluj-Napoca, 2008, pp.15;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> İbid., pp. 22-26;

<sup>17</sup> Promulgated by the December 18th 1944 Decree no. 2444 – Monitorul Oficial [Official Gazette] no.294, December 19th 1944.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Monitorul Oficial [Official Gazette] no 30, February 7<sup>th</sup> 1945;

Romanian citizens belonging to nationalities of a language, race or religion different from Romanian will receive the same treatment and enjoy the same privileges and guarantees as any other Romanian citizen.

Any direct or indirect limitation of the citizens' rights or any direct or indirect privilege based on race, religion or nationality, as well as the propagation of exclusivism and racial and religious hatred is punishable by law.

Each Romanian citizen is entitled to choose his language and nationality. Any interference from any authority is forbidden, and state authorities are obliged to respect all individual choices."

# 7. July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1948 Decree no. 113, issued by the Great National Assembly of the People's Republic of Romania<sup>19</sup> – decreeing the situation of former possessions of Jews who were victims of persecution and died without heirs.

Thus: "All goods left by heirless Jews who died after racial, religious or any other form of Fascist persecution are to become the property of the Jewish Communities Unions Federation, to be used to support disadvantaged Jewish communities."

8. August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1999 (updated) Decree no. 105, issued by the Romanian government<sup>20</sup> – on granting rights to individuals persecuted for ethnic reasons by Romanian regimes between September 6<sup>th</sup> 1940 and March 6<sup>th</sup> 1945. This historic decree tries to repair injustices caused by ethnic discrimination of the Jews (and not only).

It states, for good reason, that: "Benefitting from the provisions of this decree are those Romanian citizens who, between September 6th, 1940 and March 6th, 1945, was a victim of ethnic persecution, as follows:

- a) was deported to a ghetto or a concentration camp outside the country's borders;
- b) was held captive in places of detention or concentration camps;
- c) was a refugee, was expelled or forcibly moved to a different location;
- d) was part of the fatigue parties;
- e) is a survivor of the death train;
- f) is the spouse of someone assassinated or executed for ethnic reasons or during massacres aimed at minorities (except in the case of those who remarried);
- g) was evacuated from their residence."

Returning to the series of events and to the political conditions of the 1940's, we need to remember that, following measures taken by the Antonescu government, the Czernowitz Jews were dispossessed of their goods and sent, under escort, to the city ghetto with just a tiny personal luggage. From the ghetto (built at the orders of general Calotescu), the Jews were sent to the Transnistria concentration camps.

Thus began the Transnistria holocaust!

The absolutely inhuman transport conditions – in cattle carriages, without food and water and lacking the most basic hygienic facilities – brought along never before seen levels of human degradation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Monitorul Oficial [Official Gazette] no.140, June 30th 1948;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Monitorul Oficial [Official Gazette] no.426, August 31st 1999;

The process of stigmatizing a race, including the organisation of a separate census for those with Jewish blood<sup>21</sup>, as well as creating permits and special Czernowitz identification papers, pointing out Jewish descent<sup>22</sup>, only poured salt on the wounds of *a race that seems to be chosen by God only to define the expression of suffering!* 

The Jews have always carried with them the pain of a tumultuous history, written in the *Diaspora of desperation*, riddled with fear of the future. The Jews have always suffered from the lack of trust and of chronological and contextual understanding.

Each nation has certain moments that it is not proud of or it wishes it never happened. Sometimes, trying to rewrite one's history by ignoring blameworthy events or trying to present them as unavoidable, does not honour any nation. But from this to blaming Jews only for being born Jewish is a long and puzzling way.

Blaming a race for all the wrongs of a pained historic era only proves that primitivism still has active chromosomes in modern man. By setting false philosophical ideals of prosperity, human immaturity brought out the worst in men. Instead of lending a helping hand, he chose the "elevated" solution of deporting, starving, destroying and killing. He chose to use death traps instead of love. Instead of rescuing its prey from the claws of the traps, he labelled it useless, as it was meant to perish anyhow. Evil thinking turned millions of innocent souls into tragic statistic figures that served a blameworthy state structure and bureaucracy. Instead of protecting that which was still human, man chose to destroy what was left. The suffering of fellow men created no empathy in the souls of the powerful. The Jews were sent to death only to guarantee a higher status in a society that was completely adrift. Consolidating one's repulsion towards a race represented a high moral standard. Cruelty in one's acts stood for "character". Ever more sophisticated ways to kill equalled a "triumph of human intelligence". Oh, what times! And what human types as lead actors!

And to think that early humans only killed animals to feed their families and only within the boundaries established by their survival instinct! And that the hunter would apologize to the dead animal for having had to end his life! Just comparing different ages of mankind begs the question: are we dealing with evolution or hopeless involution?

**Marcel Slacman** and his lamented sister **Beatrice**, who used to be a scientific researcher, remembered those times not in anger or with hard feelings but with regret.

The historical situation would soon precipitate. Over 30, 000 Bucovina Jews were deported in 1941. A second wave of deportations from Czernowitz would follow in 1942.

On October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1941, the Czernowitz ghetto was inaugurated (annex no. 2). The Slacmans were moved to the ghetto under the threat of execution.

The deportations to Transnistria followed . Each day, Jews from 2 or 3 streets from the ghetto were gathered and taken to the train station in order to be transported in freight trains to the Dniester river. The day came in which Marcel and his family had to gather their few belongings, put them in a small cart and make their orderly way towards the train station.

<sup>22</sup> Photograph no.3;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Decree – Law no.3416, 1941, published in the Monitorul Oficial [Official Gazette], no.299, 1941;

David, the head of the family, would put his native intelligence and his will to save his family to good use. He whispered to them to gently fall behind in the marching file of people while he was looking for a way to escape. In the general confusion, they were able to break away from the file and take refuge in a passage way, walked across a waste ground and a few gardens, eventually making it to a yard that had two ways out: a small gate to the ghetto and a big wrought iron one that opened the way to the main boulevard, outside the ghetto. A kind guard, in charge of the house, took mercy on the poor family and allowed them to spend the night in the kitchen.

Next morning, David headed out to the Metropolitan Church. With no papers or identification, only with the hope of finding a solution, he made his way, exposing himself to immense risks, as his lack of documents and his unauthorised presence in the "free" zone could make him subject to the capital punishment. His hopes were based on his activity at the Metropolitan printing mill and the kindness of the orthodox institution.

At the Metropolitan residences, David contacted icon painter George Russu (photo #7, chapter II), Metropolitan Bishop Tit Simedrea's counselor, for whom he worked. He promised David to help him.

He did as he promised. G. Russu asked bishop Tit Simedrea to request a city residential authorisation from the Bucovina governor. It is a known fact that only institution leaders were authorised to request exceptions when it came to deportations, considering the economical advantages of doing so.

Tit Simedrea signed the request and George Russu took it the to the Governor's house to ask General Calotescu to get the Slacmans' their much needed authorisation. The grounds for the request was the fact that David Slacman was integral to the production process of the Metropolitan printing mill. George Russu first talked to the Governor's Chief of Cabinet, Major Stere Marinescu, who realeased the document along with his seal and his signature. But then, Calotescu refused to sign it, and angrily returned the unsigned document to Russu.

Under these conditions, preoccupied by the Slacman's future, Tit Simedrea instructed George Russu to take the Slacmans out of the ghetto and hide them in the basement of the Metropolitan Church's residences. All they had on their side was the authorisation that was signed and stamped by an official but still lacked he Governor's signature. They were taking enormous risks, as the law stipulated that *1. The death penalty would be the punishment for ...d) anyone helping strangers hide in their residences or helping them flee from their residences* (Annex. No. 1, Ordonance no. 38, 11 October 1941).

Acting with great courage, George Russu got the Slacmans their authorisation. It helped them leave their place of detention, in a more than miraculous way.

The Slacmans were in the ghetto while efforts were made to get them their authorisation. It was difficult for George Russu to locate them. He was mistaken for a Jew, which created a few difficult situations. They were basically toying with destiny. But as destiny knows no jokes, the imminence of being discovered loomed over the family.

But good luck, if we can call their great chance that, was with the Slacmans.

George Russu handed them the incomplete authorisation just moments from a constabulary inspection! Just hours after recieving the certificate, the gendarmes broke down the doors to the basement in which David's family had taken refuge.

"Hiding, ha? Out with you!", exclaimd one of the gendarmes.

Shaking, David handed them the document that was still missing the Governor's signature. The gendarmes were either drunk or dilettantes, as they didn't even ask themselves why a family that had a certificate would hide in a basement. They left.

"For the time being, we were saved", Marcel and Bea later remembered.

In the possession of the temporary certificate, the family left the ghetto and hid in the basement of the Metropolitan Residence, with Tit Simdrea's explicit permission. The Slacmans found out only later why General Calotescu had refused to sign their certificate. He had been informed about the bishop's travel to Bucharest in order to meet Chief Rabbi A. Shafran in October 1941 (as documented in the CNSAS files – annex no. 29) and dr. Filderman, the chief of the Romanian Jewish Communities Federation (annex no. 32).

With the Holocaust in full development, two great figures of the area explicitly opposed racial segregation: the mayor of the town and the Orthodox metropolitan bishop. It was well known that neither Tit Simedrea nor the mayor of Cernowitz were in good relations with General Calotescu, which made their attempts to rescue the local Jews not only difficult but also extremely risky. Despite all the risks he subjected himself to, Mayor Popovici saved about 17,000 Jews following indications from the General and about 3,000 from personal initiative and right to signature.

Historical sources confirm Traian Popovici words: "My efforts were successful, as in the afternoon of October 15<sup>th</sup> (1941, author's note), following a telephone conversation with Marshal Antonescu, o group of about 20,000 souls were excepted from deportation, number which would include the categories that I had highlighted in the administrative conference a few days before".<sup>23</sup> Among those who acknowledge his deeds is Marcel, who is integral, by way of donations and others, in building a memorial near Traian Popovici's birthplace: Fundul Moldovei, near Câmpulung Moldovenesc.

For a short period of time defined by a certain socio-political calm, Marcel's family was able to come out from hiding and move into a place on 6 Dragoş Vodă Laterală Street, in the immediate vicinity of the Metropolitan Residence. During this period of time the family had a temporary certificate signed by Mayor Popovici.

But in late June 1942, the conflict between Calotescu and Popovici escalated to new heights and the latter was defeated. All the Jews carrying certificates signed by him were to be deported to Ukraine, over the Bug River. Most of those deported there were shot. Once more, the Slacman were in danger of being deported and executed.

Three more gendarmerie raids on the Jewish establishments were organized on the nights of 13/14, 20/21 and 27/28 June 1942 (Saturday night).

Popovici, T., - *Testimony*, Foundation Dr. W. Filderman publ. house, Bucharest, pp.38;

The ordeal of hiding from the authorities had begun again for the Slacmans.

Missing a proper certificate, they were risking being shot if discovered in the street. As their apartemnt was in a building that faced the Metropolitan Residence, George Russu instructed them to jump over the fence into the garden in the evenings and in the mornings, after 10 a.m., they returned to the apartment as if coming home after buying groceries.

A third raid of the gendarmerie included their apartment. It was sealed and taken into posession by the state. As in the moment of the raid the Slacmans were already hiding on the Metropolitan grounds, they once more escaped being deported. This statu quo of the refugees was maintained until the spirits calmed down.

While they were in hiding, the metropolitan bishop and counselor Russu sent a devout deaf and dumb Ukrainean to look after the Slacmans. A particular detail of the situation is that the bishop told him he would excommunicate him should anything happen to the family, so they were never found and arrested by the authorities.

Living in the basement was unbearable. A heavy and tense silence shrouded the unwholesome cellar. One of the conditions of survival was respecting a silence that resembled that of a grave. The silence lied heavy on them but even more so did the worries for the future of each family member; so did the responsibility for their Judaic existence, their religion's history; so did the future, even the nonexistent. Everything demoralized and weighed heavily on them!

The basement walls were silver screens for a seemingly neverending horror film. The lights and the soundtrack to it were always in connection to the weather and the times outside of this "curricular cinematography". "The directors" were grotesque, the script bordered on the terrifying fantastical, and the actors' repertoire ranged from desperation to agony. Each second, minute and hour brought them closer to mental collapse. The walls seemed close in or wind apart according to the tedious moods of those caught in this holocaustic episode. The perimeter of the basement was measured by foot tens of thousands of times by each of the refugees.

Those who have not spent at least one day in similar conditions cannot imagine the spiritual and material weight of total silence. A silence that eats away at you, that grinds you away, that makes its way into your veins, circulating your body like gangrenous cells. Oh, how often they wanted to release the accumulated inner tension by screaming!

The raindrops smashed into the sills like on a giant gong in a terrifying theater and counting them had become a pastime. The fear of being discovered floated in the air and seemed to grow thicker with the passing time, with an effect similar to that of Chinese drops.

The gendarmes kept raiding, looking for Jews in hiding. Shots were heard nearer and nearer. Military boots were making the earth shake and thunder. The platoons kept marching in fromt of the silent and dim basement's tiny windows. The screams and the shrieks tormented this once peaceful town. The infernal racket of doors being smashed in felt like hammering on the heads of those in hiding. All resembled a gloomy film directed by *Fate*.

Food was becoming harder and harder to find so the Slacmans mostly ate bread and onions. Fruit or medication were out of the question. The meagre menu was supplemented by stories that would distract the attention of the starving and confused children.

The atmosphere was one of frozen pain and sighs. The whispered words had become unbearably heavy. Each syllable was so dark that uttering it immediately made the tense air of the basement vibrate. Warmth, light and feeling good were just an Utopia as they deteriorated more and more into senselessness. Some things became phantas-magorical. Summer's lightning bolts projected grotesque images on the mouldy walls. The lengthening shadows carried them along the immaterial path of time that humanity followed from Plato to Nietzsche. The wind that came in through the cracks of their shelter instantly froze everything: the air, the water, their souls, their hope.

Time simultaneously contracted and expanded. Past, present and future melted into a single seemingly neverending hour. The pressure of profound silence and the loss of any desire for communication caused Marcel to lose the sense of many notions, no matter how common in other times. But still, that basement was a shelter, one that saved their life. The real value and purpose of the place became much easier to appreciate afterwards.

Was this the expected effect of man's evolution from his initial, primitive condition to the state of "superior being"? Was this all the "generosity" that evolution could bestow on its results? The father's pensive figure, his stare lost in some nonexistent distance, left a profound image in Marcel's memory. The answer to many unspoken questions came late after these sad moments. The sense, purpose and the impact of the events became clear in time, along with our hero's way into adulthood.

The only somewhat less tense moments were those when they were visited by George Russu. The counselor explained in great detail the political and military developments. Marcel remembers the painter telling them how Bishop Tit Simedrea was asking if the children were well disciplined and wanted to know what the risks of the family being discovered were. Being a child, Marcel could not resist the temptation of climbing out the window the second day to look at the prime minister Mihai Antonescu's black car. Good fortune was on their side this time as well and the soldiers never caught a glance of them.

For the young and restless Marcel, then 12, the temptation to breathe the fresh air of freedom was unprecedented. The accumulated mental pressure determined the family to risk letting Marcel out into the street again.

Not bearing the distinctive physical properties of a Jew, he was undetected by the military and police filters. But chance had it that he met with classmates, who thought he was either dead or abroad. He revealed to them – by carelessness or juvenile spirit of adventure - the location of their hiding place. It was an immaculate child's mistake, who had not yet become fully aware of the miserable moral conditions engineered by the frustrated of the times. Luck, or even "The One Upstairs" must have been looking upon the family, as the child's foolishness had no consequences. They remained undiscovered. Even more, that meeting proved well-fated, because over a considerable arc of time, his curious classmates testified for Marcel in his attempt to secure Russu and bishop Tit Simedrea the "Righteous Among Men" distinction.

The parents' task to contain the children's energy was becoming more difficult by the day. Perhaps a well balanced education and a strong faith were what made them resist under the mental pressure that lied on them. These sinister but eventually saving times left their mark on young Marcel's psyche. The dramatic nature of the situations makes you shake just at the thought of reliving the events. Marcel and Bea remember a conversation their mother and Russu had in Bucuresti, long after the events:

"During one of his visits, George Russu asked: What came after....'. He could not finish his sentence. We were also speechless. Mother smiled and tried to help: 'After we resumed our previous life? Well, it was rather complicated, you know that... We had to teach our smallest child certain words" What words?" Words like: home, tree, sun, bread and...soap" <sup>24</sup>

This testimony, of and extraodrinary dramatic nature, was published in Marius Mincu's book *What happened to Romanian Jews during the Second World War. A different face of oppression.* 

They lived under those conditions for a long time (about 500 days), coming out in the sunlight only after the deportation policies became more relaxed and tolerant.

They were free at last! For the first time in their lives they understood the sense and the weight of freedom!

They no longer had to wear the yellow star, the Jews could return to their homes. After these events, George Russu talked to bishop Simedrea who took the proper actions in order for the Slacmans' appartment to be unsealed and rehired David. They were saved so many times from the unforgiving claws of an unforgiving destiny, a destiny that eventually opposed Fate!

But life is too complicated for someone to sigh in relief and exclaim with all his being: At last! Life is a refined psychological play in which each act is peppered with emotionally charged moments. It is a parade of vital elements which manifest themselves diffusely, entagled in sometimes incomprehensible patterns. This micro-scenario written for Marcel's family was now entering its second act, an act filled with major tension which now was of a different kind.

Who was this mysterious intermediary, full of empathy and goodwill, who did such great deeds in order to save Jewish people from certain death? A biographical sketch of George Russu will be the subject of the next chapter.

After the war was over, destiny guided the Slacmans to Bucharest. Bishop Simedrea and George Russu went the same way.

A new sudent, tall, thin, blonde and lonely, joined the seventh grade of the "Cultura" high school in Bucuresti, remembers writer and publicist Avram Croitoru, reevoking memories of his classmate. Marcel was shy, marked by his experiences but also by the fact that he had difficulties fitting in, mainly because his difficulties of speaking Romanian. Although his education started in Iasi, his conversations were mostly in Ukrainean and Russian. He had studied in Russian (1940-1941) and Ukrainean (1944-1946). But he was a hard-working student and quickly overcame the language barrier. Even today he

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Annex no.8;

is a reputable conversation partner, with an elevated vocabulary at his disposal, paying close attention to the content and sense of the notions he uses in his dialogues.

The years flew by. After finishing high school and passing his final exams, he became a student of the Food Chemistry College and of the "Maxim Gorki" Institute. After graduating he was hired to teach, according to the University policies regarding exceptional students. He taught mathematics, chemistry and food technology. He later chose practical activities, finding a job with the Food Projects Institute, then as an engineer at the "December 13th" oil factory.

But after a short calm period, marked by the absence of that fatal destiny that had once followed the Slacmans, this Holocaustical forerunner made its entrance again.

**In 1958, Marcel first asked for authorization to emigrate to Israel.** This approach proved to be ill-fated for the young engineer, who was immediately removed from his position, ending up as a *worker unloading sunflower seeds*.

According to the regrettable communist policies of the time, it was considered that even this position was too much for one who wanted to leave his country! It was believed that we would not unload the sunflower seed transports in time and the trains would not enter the location unloaded, causing thus major losses to people's state! Labeling Marcel as *a threat to the health of the communist system*, they demoted him to *factory yard sweeper*.

With help from a few friends (who in times of trouble are the ones who stay by your side), Marcel was transferred to the Chemical Farmaceutical Research Institute with the official obligation to carry ice but in fact working in research as a lab technician.

During this period of time Marcel led a creative and innovative life.

As a result of research, he started publishing articles on graphic representation of technological processes, on the ways of determining consumption in various technical processes, all in specialized chemistry and food industry magazines.<sup>25</sup>

The much appreciated "unskilled worker" was also asked to participate in the writing of a scientific work entitled *The Tehnology of Vegetal and Volatile Oils, Soap and Cosmetics.*<sup>26</sup> The work was compiled according to material approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Marcel was given the task of being the methodology controller within the research and writing team. This scientific task proved to be yet another paradox of his life: *He was fully entitled to make all the necessary and sufficient dilligences involved in the writing of a scientific work but was "not qualified" for the big task of unloading trains.* The situation could be considered a sample of tragic humor, as one of destiny's monumental jokes, if it wasn't symptomatic of the inner system of a society that worked towards creating a "New Man", forgetting all about Man himself!

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Revista de chimie [The Chemistry Journal], nr.2, 1957, Revista industriei alimentare [The Food Industry Journal], nr. 3, 1957;

Tehnologia uleiurilor vegetale şi volatile, săpunului şi produselor cosmetice [The tehnology of making vegetal and volatile oils, soap and cosmetics], The State Didactic and Pedagogic publ. house, Bucharest, 1959;

This man's exemplary willpower paid up once more. In addition to the two beforementioned colleges, he graduated from the College of Mathematics, the infrequent attendance section. And, to fulfill a lifelong dream, took clases at the People's Art School, in the Conducting department. He meanwhile became a substitute teacher, tutoring math students, this way being able to pay for his conducting, harmony and counterpoint classes with the conductors of the Bucharest State Orchestra (Sergiu Comissiona, Robert Rosensteck etc).

To his friends from Israel, Romania, Hungary, Germany, Venezuela, Canada and other corners of the world he is known as a music lover, as someone who truly appreciates and knows a great deal about classical music.

He was particularly fond of orchestral music. The head of the Romanian Opera's Archive and Library had lent him orchestral scores which he read and adapted for his accordion. Alongside Verdi's Aida, he also adapted Tchaikovsky, who still remains his favorite composer, for accordion.

The greatest present the author could ever receive from Marcel was being invited by him to a mini concert of organ music organized for the Shais at the Sumuleu Ciuc Cathedral in the summer of 2006.

# The opposition of the Romanian authorities delayed the family's emigration until 1970.

Only the mother and the three children were able to leave. Marcel's father could not fulfill his dream of emigrating to Israel, as he had died previosly. At David's funeral, which took place in the Soseaua Giurgiului cemetery, George Ressu was present, even though he was ill and in his eighties.

After leaving for Israel, he changed his name into a Hebrew one, by Alia. Marcel Slacman became Meir Shai.

But what is this *Alia* mentioned by Marcel? In Hebrew, *Aliah* means *ascension*. The term covers the content of the Jews' immigration to Israel, a process made of several phases, one of them being that of the Jews who escaped the Holocaust. It is customary to alter the subject's name, giving it a more Hebrew character. The term *Aliah* also refers to the honor the believers are given when reading verses from the Torah during the Sabbath ceremonies.

After the declaration of the "Law of Returning", in 1950, the juridical immigration background was created in Israel for any interested Jewish person. After the law was amended in 1970, the conditions of recieving citizenship (*ole hadaş*) were specified.

This way Marcel became Meir. But, as in his relationships with his friends, the author included, he is addressed as Marcel, we shall continue to do so.

After retiring from the elite Reali School of Haifa (where he taught superior mathematics for almost three decades), Marcel began his ordeal of getting his family's saviors the recognition they deserve, the "Righteous Among Men" distinction.

As George Russu had already died, the title could have been awarded posthumously to a living relative. Marcel remembered the icon painter had a daughter so he set out to find her.

After seven years of intense searching, hundreds of telephone conversations, tens of petitions and memoirs addressed to Romanian authorities (The Ministry of Internal Affairs, The Ministry of Justice, The Bucharest Mayoralty etc.), six trips to Bucarest within eighteen months, the Romanian Ministry Of External Affairs finally informed him of Russu's daughter's location: *Brazil*. But the ordeal was not over.

As Marcel has such a big heart and has helped so many people along the way, his friends, impressed by his almost superhuman efforts, helped *him*. But the information they gathered would not lead to anything certain.

But, once he returned to Romania, Father Costică Popa from the Romanian Orthodox Church in Venezuela remembered Russu's daughter. He knew that she used to be a honorary consul – her name was *Iaṣinski* – and that she lived somewhere in southern Brazil.

An entire army of friends and acquaintances were called upon in the search for further information. One of these friends' (professor Dumitru Avachian) father used to be friends with Russu. With some help from diplomat friends, it turned out that *Domniţa (photo #7, chapter II)*, Russu's daughter lived in the city of Curitiba, 450 km south of Sao Paolo. Chance (or destiny, as it seemed to be still playing with Marcel) had it that his good friend and former colleague Rică Stiubiner lived in that very geographical area. He was sent the necessary information and now all Marcel could do was wait for the outcome of the search.

Months passed. But it felt like much more than that because of the tension created by the imminence of seeing each other again and the possibility of expressing his gratitude for the personality and for the deeds of the one who was that "Great Man" – painter Russu. Seconds seemed to drag along on their heavy clay feet, covered with lead. And still, one day, he recieved a phone call. A phone call from his friend in Brazil, on May 7, the very day Marcel was turning 77!

- I found her!, he heard his friend Siubiner exclaim over the phone.

The venerable lady was 86 years old and, unfortunately, very ill. And still, that night, the phone line was ceaselessly busy with long, long hours of shared happiness. The emotions of the past, along with those of the present were the reason why many different feelings could only be expressed by their tears of joy. The magic telephone transported even those emotions that needed no words in order to be expressed over the ocean. But is there an academic vocabulary that is developd enough to convey those feelings of a rare strength and emotional depth that dominated their conversation? An actor and another actor's daughter, should we think of their story of a historical script of a dramatic nature? These elevated moments that give a distinctive note to the human greatness, born from his millenary fight against evil, are rare in life.

Marcel's undertakings were finally succesful!

Based on written documents, spoken testimonies and Marcel and Bea's request, the title was granted on April 3rd 2007<sup>27</sup>. Thus, George Russu's name joined others for eternity in the Yad Vashem garden of The Righteous!

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Annex no.3;

Over 30 years after the passing away of George Russu, the hero, on July 27th 2007, another act of great historical justice was accomplished.

# But, as life is ever restless, it reserved Marcel yet another act in the great play called "Marcel's Holocaust".

On the occasion of the ceremonies for G. Russu, someone launched a new "adventure" by asking Marcel:

- Did you know that the bishop has a grandson?

So, in the summer of 2007, he embarked on another ordeal for obtaining for Tit Simedrea the greatest title of mankind.

During this whole time, Marcel was convinced that Simedrea had no successors, since he had become a monk and could not we awarded this title by the State of Israel. He was proven wrong.

In his persistent search for information on Simedrea, Marcel arrived at the Cernica Monastery, where the bishop had retreated after the war and where he was buried. Not finding any relevant information about the bishop, the wanderer headed to the local cemetery to express his heartfelt gratitude to the one who had been his savior. But there was a surprise for him: a lit votive light on the bishop's grave.

The avalanche of questions he started asking everyone resulted in some good news: the Bishop had a grandson named Grigore Popescu. He was the one who had lit the light on the grave which he was tending to. This way, Marcel could contact the bishop's grandson and find out more details about the life and work of the ecclesiastic dignitary.

*Marcel's Odyssey* had thus started once more. He kept searching for evidence and testimonies that would help him secure the bishop the title. He had access to Simedrea's file at CNSAS, The Army's History Institute, The Pitesti Military Archives etc.

Working his way through Antonescu's Security documents, Marcel understood the reasons for Calotescu's refusal to sign the Slacman's certificate: his innate repulsion for Jews.

After gaining posession of the CNSAS documents, along with his sister's, his friends' and various cultural figures of the Jewish and international elite and his own testimonies , Marcel addressed Yad Vashem in 2007, requesting the "Righteous Among Men" distinction for bishop Tit Simedrea.

# Ever since, the restless and ever resourceful Marcel Shai has been living through his third personal Holocaust: the modern day Holocaust of bureaucracy!

After the memorable Bucharest moment, great and uplifting events were followed by scenes that led Marcel to despair.

In this new, bureaucratic Holocaust, extremely grave historical moments, roles assumed in really threatening conditions, extraordinary people and their memorable deeds and the noblest of emotions – all these are now judged in a "non-combat situation" in which some of the decision making elements have never experienced those realities first hand and know nothing about the depths of moral depravity mankind can reach.

He could not understand: how could such grave historical moments be evaluated by young, literated persons? You could have the best of intentions, but the lack of life experiences marks you, and from this to making mistakes in your evaluation of historical events is only a short way to go. How can you decide regarding an event that you cannot understand because you are more interested in following rigid rules than in respecting historical reality, even by deviating from anachronistic norms, obsolte in the post-war era? How can you ask for depositions from other eyewitnesses to those events, considering the fact that over 70 years have passed from those regrettable moments? How many had access to information regarding hiding Jews, information whose simple posession and failure to disclose were grounds for execution? These and other questions are still waiting for an answer.

Grief emanates from every phrase in my conversations with Marcel: *how could bu*reaucracy (the shape) be more important than historic reality (the content)? This is a mistery he has still failed to solve, even at 80 years of age!

After extensive searching across the country, Marcel tracked down the bishop's grandson, Grigore Popescu, now 65, who was profoundly impressed by the octogenarian's struggles. In an interview with Israeli newspaper Maariv, he notes that: "In a world in which it all comes down to money and personal interest, a world in which everything is tainted, I am amazed to discover a man like Meir. I am simply surprised when I see all of his efforts. He is no longer a young person. I think he believes he is a great emissary and I thank him for that. We became very close."

The author is another witness to Marcel's extraordinary human quality. His main purpose is expressing, with all the warmth of his soul, his gratitude towards the memories of the two peace emissaries: Simedrea and Russu. The burden of age, some small health problems, the distance between Haifa and Bucharest are not obstacles for him and cannot deter the "forever young Meir Shai". His desire to obtain recognition for the Bishop's integrity gives him overflowing energy.

In an interview with journalist Liat Shelzinger<sup>28</sup>, Marcel explains the reason for all his struggles, declaring: "I have no children, this is all I do from dawn to dusk...I am shocked I am still not successful [in his attempts to get the Bishop Yad Vashem's recognition – author's note] For me, it is an unfinished chapter. This is my life's purpose, I owe him. I don't know what to do anymore...I wouldn't be alive if it wasn't for these two people. I owe them something. I have to offer my gratitude and history must remember them. I was raised that way and that's how I educated my students. Be grateful, show respect. I want to show my respect." Reading these words, listening to his words, one remains speechless in front of the greatness of the pure thoughts of a retired professor who is now teaching us lessons in social ethics and balanced vision regarding society's values. Happy is the student who had a teacher of such high moral value!

Whenever the interviewer asks him a pecuniary question (regarding the cost of such numerous trips, conversations and searches) – his answer is firm and concise: "*It is not educational to speak about money*". We subscribe to this: in such a noble undertaking - that of recognizing human values – any talk about money would be a sacrilege, a blasphemy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Maariv Journal, April 21st, 2009;

After the reporter's last question:

- " Do you take into consideration that you might not succed in the end?", Marcel, with his thoughts above a perceptible horizon, responds in a feeble voice:
- " I don't know what I will do. I am in shock that I am still not successful. From my point of view, this is an unfinished chapter. I owe him, this is my life's purpose. I don't know what to do, I am very afraid of that moment, let's please not talk about it".

By trying to avoid the possibility of failure, he is placing himself in an optimistic frame of mind, continuing to fight, accepting hope. This Man is a Monument of Respect for Duty and Recognition. In this optimistic frame of mind are the echoes of his motto "The supreme reward for being kind is not being forgotten."

Marcel is a true *emissary of not forgetting*, an ardent and restless promoter of the obligation to reward all that is human in us all.

In his wife Gertrude (Tuty) he had a life partner and extraordinary friend who said, with good reason, that, in the over 40 years they have known each other, she never heard him say "it's difficult or it's impossible"!

Maybe his approaches would have remained fruitless without the undeniable support of his wife, who accepted the worries caused by the struggles with a system frozen in antiquated principles. Marcel's biggest ally was the warmth offered by a life partner who would also deserve a distinction for excellence in family relations.

Regardless of the outcome of Marcel's struggles to gain recognition for the Bishop's merits, the author believes that Marcel is a real "Promoter of Justice Between Nations", for all his efforts towards bringing nations and religions closer together, despite artificial borders and separations born from mankind's lack of maturity.

Marcel is a real ecumenical emissary of bringing people and nations together.

Meir (Marcel) Shai's personal example must make us stop in contemplation for a moment, it must move us and inspire us. Marcel's personality should be a model for all mankind, a living example for us all!

### **CHAPTER II**

GEORGE RUSSU (1880-1977)

> "George Russu, an example that trancends borders, remains a symbol of peace even for us, here in the Southern Hemisphere..." Adalice Maria de Araujo (Brazil)

He was born in Cetatea de Baltă (Transnistria) on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1880, descendant to seven generations of Orthodox priests.

His theological studies at the "Adreanum" Institute in Sibiu represented the foundation of his cultural personality.

He was convinced that he lacked a real religious calling, so, with future Patriarch Miron Cristea's help, in 1906 he recieved a grant at the Munchen Art College. Some of his professors were Franz von Stuck, Angelo Jank and Julius Diez. The latter became a close friend and collaborator who helped him in his cultural formation, oriented towards religious painting and engraving. He was an active member of the famous "Julius Diez Teams". They executed mural mosaic paintings at the Munchen's "Techniches Museum" in 1908 and Salzburg's "Mozarteum" in 1909.

He took part in the First World War as an Austro-Hungarian officer servicing in Vienna. In 1916 the Romanian army asked him to join and he responded. Back in Romania, in Sibiu, he designed and built the Proumbata "War Heroes' Cemetery".

During 1920 and 1921 he supervised the construction of various monuments dedicated to war heroes. His works, mostly mosaic compositions (such as the "Pacea" allegory in downtown Târgu Mureş, as well as the "Time" and "Music" studies for a chapel), indicate great artistic creativity.

Asked by Patriarch Miron Cristea, he worked on various religious oeuvres in the ancient Byzantine iconographical style. Among these, the iconostasis of the Episcopal Church of Cluj, inaugurated by King Carol II in 1933. George Russu is also the author of Toplița's St.Ilie Wooden Church's Altar. The altar was built in Muchen; it is built from linden tree and worked in filigree, giving the impression of being built from metal.

A special chapter of his activity was dedicated to researching the ancient ways of icon painting. One of his works dealing with historic issues can be seen in the Bucharest Synodical Museum.

In 1938, he became the artistic chief of the Metropolitan Liturgical Holy Books Printing Mill, period in which his graphic creation activities only intensified. He was later appointed artistic counselor of the Czernowitz, Bucovina's Metropolitan Church. In this position, he supplied the Metropolitan Church's Museum with religious paraphernalia.

As the Second World War was nearing its end, he took refuge in Transylvania in 1944. Thanks to his nationwide artistic prestige, he was apointed by the new Patriarch head and corresponding member of the Historic Monuments Commitee. He worked intensely to restore important works of religious art at the Dragomirna-Rarău Monastery (1946) as well as Tismana (1948). His work in restoration has much to do with when he discovered a very old fresco underneath a much newer one and restored it.

In 1950 he became professor at the Bucharest Byzantine Art School, Patriarch Iustinian's counselor and member of the Church Paintings Committee.

In 1958 he completed the painting of the Sibiu Cathedral.

The years that followed found him immersed in the study of religious paintings. Not even his failing eyesight kept him from his graphic projects for liturgical books.

His entire artistic career is profesionally evaluated by a major expert of the arts from a country very distant from his.

Miss Adalice Maria de Araujo - Arts History professor in ordinary at the Parana Federal university, member of The Brazilian Arts Critics Association, member of The International Arts Critics Association and of The Brazilian National Arts Researchers' Association – speaks with great respect and professional appreciation of George Russu's personality and his place in international culture.

In Parana and Curitiba's art history (Curitiba is Parana's state capital), Russu's activity left a collection of 280 original pieces. Critics describe this collection as "a case apart" and represents a precious heritage of medieval traditions still alive in Eastern Europe. When he settled in Curitiba he was 90 and his eyesight was poor, and could create very little in his new country.

G. Russu is considered one of the best researchers of the Byzantyne era who lived in Eastern Europe in the twentieth century. His entire body of work recommends him as a graphic artist, painter, professor and restoration specialist.

## George Russu's graphic oeuvre

In his book, New Romanian Woodcutting for Book Illustrations, George Racoveanu – one of the most enthusiastic researchers of Romanian graphic arts – divides Romanian wood carving into six periods. One of these periods is dedicated to George Russu's work, beginning with 1928.

Basing his graphic work on two main elements, "the icon" and "the ornament", inspired by old traditional sources, he generated a real rejuvenation of Romanian liturgical books. According to Western tradition – beginning with Quattrocento's Masaccio – God and the saints are humanized. Folowing a reverse path, Eastern artists lift Man up to God. According to Racoveanu, Russu is the one who, in the middle of the twentieth century, revives this way of seeing things, as noted also by Professor Adalice Maria de Araujo.

Russu is the one who revived an art form in which plasticity is contained within the line – this way the third dimension ceases to exist in its bodily materiality and is replaced by musicality, in ascensional, wavy rhythms. Transigurated beings move in a dematerialized space, expressing the presence of the soul, while the charaters' mimicry defines a dramatic action.

Characteristic of Russu's graphic work is "The Resurrection Frontispice", in which he revisits the old idea of "the Savior's descent into Hell to save Adam from the darkness of death", a theme so common to Romanian XVth century frescos. Here, Russu adopts the characteristics of Medieval art, such as "Nominalism" – typical of landscapes or "The Aulic Law", which, following the to ancient Eastern tradition, determines the characters' sizes according to their hierarchical and spiritual importance. This way, in the composition, the Figure of Jesus does not obey the laws of liniar or aerial perspective because of His theological importance in the Biblical tradition.

George Russu, the artist, knew how to mix Byzantine tradition with the "Einfuhlung" of his German artistic background. Not only does the composition form a spiral, that is a symbol of spirituality in itself, but the wavy lines, in their linear rhythms, translate into a Symbolist influence as well as an Art Nouveau one, notes Professor Araujo.

It can also be noted that, in a great number of liturgical books, Russu (as the author), uses ornaments that surround the central theme. These ornaments are inspired by acanthus leaves, not entirely lacking a gothic flavor, to which he added the richness of Oriental decorations and the floral versatility of Romanian popular art.

### Russu's paintings

Becoming involved in studying Romanian Medieval art, Russu also set out to revive it. Thus, he created a series of icons (on wood), such as: "Christ the Emperor", "The Virgin", "The Apostles", "The Prophets", "The Patriarchs" – in which one can not fail to sense the *cathartic force* of the best Byzantine artists. He also worked on a series of wooden iconostasies (wooden walls covered in paintings and featuring three gates that separate the believers from the altar in churches) – a notable example being the one designed and built for the Cluj Metropolitan Church. He succeded in giving the imperial icons all of the ancient Christian spirituality, along with a personal graphic musicality and an original visual energy.

With his mural paintings, portraits and church cupolas, all bearing his personal mark, he succeded, in his unmistakable style, to unite the rigid Byzantine tradition with the dynamic renewal of sacred art.

In prophane painting – allegories, portraits, historical motifs – German influence has become stronger because of him. Old academism was replaced by a vision that announces postmodernism.

## Russu's work as a professor and restoration specialist

This work is just as important as any other. G. Russu directly contributed to the preservation of some of the most important historic and artistic Romanian landmarks. Through his didactic work he passed on to future generations traditional values renewed by personal creativity.

We referred to a work by Professor Araujo – translated from Portuguese – which ends like this: "George Russu, an example that trancends borders, remains a symbol of peace even for us, here in the Southern Hemisphere..."

Although he was never involved in politics, fate had it that he was, in a period of his life, in the close proximity of openly declared anti Semite views, which never influenced him or determined him to join. Russu remained a balanced man, both in his reason and his actions.

Marcel remembers Russu very well, and is quite clear about the fact that the counselor was a very cultured man, from whom one could learn a great deal, and who represented a real purveyor of all things cultural. His frequent visits to the family's hiding place did a lot to lift their depressed spirits.

He passed away in 1977, aged 97, and is buried in the Brazilian city of Curitiba.

In Meir Shai's speech at the ceremony of granting the "Righteous Among Men" distinction, he talked about the satisfaction of fulfilling a lifelong dream – that of expressing his gratitude towards his family's savior in those moments of horrible oppression aimed at the Czernowitz Jewish community. This struggle that marked his existence – as he said in his speech – had found its rest along with the "Righteous Among Men" distinction.

In his closing arguments, Marcel addressed the audience saying: "Standing in front of you is a survivor of the Holocaust, a living proof of the survival of one of your peers due to George Russu and Tit Simedrea's abnegation and philantropy.

Romanian Patriarch Teoctist concluded at the end of the ceremony: May you, Mr. Meir Shai, who have benefited from his help [painter and counselor George Russu – author's note], live many more years to be a living proof of things that no longer happen. May the Good Lord help us in our of work of respenct and coming closer.

In the Romanian Patriarchy's Press Declaration of June 27<sup>th</sup> 2007, the day of the ceremony, much is said about Meir Shai's abnegation and restlessness in finding George Russu's heir. Priest C. Stoica was impressed by the love and devotion with which Shai paid homage to Russu's memory. In the Patriarchy's press declaration, Meir is thanked for sharing his life experiences, for a real insight on what love, human solidarity and gratefulness are, regardless of citizenship, culture or religion.

**Professor Dumitru Avakian, the music critic, praised on this occasion Russu's great personality.** Arutin Avakian, the professor's father, worked with Russu on the restoration of the Tismana frescoes and of the Sibiu Cathedral. Russu had previously painted important scenes in Antim Monastery's Synodical Council Hall. "He was a scientist, an artist, a great professor. George Russu was a Man. A Man in the true sense of the word. He took up responsibilities naturally, even when risky, all of this in periods of great threat. He lent a brotherly hand ... He remains a symbol of peace and understanding", the distinguished European scholar devoutly said at the ceremony.

Dorel Dorian, renowned writer, journalist and playwright, also attended the eremony, leaving his hospital bed. This pained man's words were full of warmth and gratefulness for Marcel's lesson, which led his steps towards finding his former cultural

friends and brothers, as well as finding the Israel of the soul. As he knew Russu very well, the distinguished scholar could not have been absent from the ceremony, where he said: "Of course, it is not a huge press event. The papers won't print columns on columns on the subject. They will discreetly mention that there was once a Geroge Russu and that Marcel Shai wanted to thank him, after all these years. These things are quickly forgotten..."

How true, how realistic and ecumenically pragmatic these simple but emotionally heavy words are spoken at the celebration of interfaith empathy.

Miss Ida Schottek, representing the Romanian Jewish Communities' Federation wanted to take the time to say that: "This moment represents yet another proof of the Romanian humane spirit... Putting your life at risk in order to save others expresses the heart of a people... The Jewish people remembers not only the painful memories of what occured during centuries of unfair suffering but also seeks the friends and those great hearted people and wants to thank them. It is an honorable duty to search for and to find the heroes who have helped their fellow men survive. This example of abnegation, of overcoming hesitations, dangerous unknown situations that might appear along the way, fills us with the hope that someday we will discover the still anonymous Romanian heroes. We cannot forget those who helped during the gruesome periods in the existence of this ever persecuted and threatened people."

Could these strikingly relevant messages have the power to reach Jerusalem and enliven the analysis of the recognition of other savior heroes?

Professor George Voicu, representing the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for Studying the Romanian Holocaust, took advantage of the ceremony to say that: "Meir Shai's admirable tenacity, spreading over many years and sustained only by his moral gratefulness, deserves all our gratitude."

We fully agree with this generous but well-deserved observation.

Not only Marcel but the entire Jewish people gratefully bowed to the memory and the deeds of George Russu, paying him a pious homage.

Man's Unconditional Merit was also acknowledged, yet another page that proves that human dignity still exists was written: the "Righteous Among Men" distinction was awarded to George Russu.

If you save a man from dying you save the entire mankind – religios writings seem to say. Even more, Russu saved not only a family but a part of the human dignity, he saved the human condition and all empathy and generosity.

Russu was a role model of human devotion, a proof of love's victory over hatred and threat. He fought a very dangerous battle and took all the risk implied by the imminent salvation of what was still human inside of Man. He played his part in rebuilding a spirit dominated by love instead of hatred. We believe that one who was Righteous Among Nations has become True Soul Among Souls beyond the border between the two planes of existence.

Representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Church, leaders of the Jewish Communities Federations, Israeli's consul in Bucharest and Marcel's friends were all present at the awarding ceremony. Miss Domniţa Iaşinski could not participate because of health problems and the award had to be handed to the representatives of the Romanian Othodox Church, and that happened to be the last public appearance of His Holiness Teoctist, the Romanian Patriarch. He passed away in July 2007.

#### **CHAPTER III**

# TIT SIMEDREA (1886-1971)

....and may those who love You be like the sun

When it rises in all its glory..."

The Bible 1

Who was this really ecumenically involved person, whose life's work has been so quickly forgotten? Who was the savior of so many Jews? What was his message to his successors? How important are we in the acknowledgement of his merits? – these are just a few of the questions that we will try to answer in this chapter.

Metropolitan bishop Tit Simedrea was born in Teleorman and his layman name was Teodor Simedrea. He was born on the  $4^{\rm th}$  of September 1886, in Naipu (now part of Ghimpați), in the province formerly known as Vlașca, Meir (Marcel) Shai would note in an autobiographical writing<sup>2</sup>.

He was always attracted by religion. As a young man he joined the "Metropolitan Bishop Nifon" Seminar and later the Bucharest Theological College.

He was ordained on the 19<sup>th</sup> of Semptember 1907 as a priest of the Prunaru parish. He volunarily joined the army and was mobilized on October 20, 1916 as part of the 37<sup>th</sup> Infantry Corps, as a lieutenant priest. He was moved to the 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Corps on March 16 1917. He was promoted to captain priest on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1918. He was then moved to the Hospital of Contagious Diesases on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1920 and then, on May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1920, he was transferred to the 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Corps – according to the Ministry of Defense's February 19, 1941 Certificate nr. 3090 – Military Clerical Inspectorate of Alba Iulia<sup>3</sup>.

For his activity during the war he received the "War Memorial Cross, 1916-1918" (April 20<sup>th</sup> 1920), "Croce al Merito di Guerra" (October 20<sup>th</sup> 1920) and the "War Cross" (Italian) – August 9<sup>th</sup> 1921<sup>4</sup>.

He was wounded in the war and was later demobilized on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1920 and transferred to the St. Nicolae Tabacu Parish, and on Sephtember 15<sup>th</sup> 1923, prime Metropolitan Bishop Miron Cristea (later Romania's Patriarch) appointed him head of the Holy Synod Council.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Book of Judges, the Bible – publ. House of the Institute for the Bible and the Orthodox Mission (printed under the blessing of Patriarch Daniel), Bucharest, 2008, pp.269;

Magazin istoric [Historical Magazine], no.2, 2010, pp.8;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Annex no. 4;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Annex no. 5, 6 and 7;

Young Teodor's life was profoundly marked by the deceptions and horrors of the First World War, in which he participated as confessor/military priest, but also the drama of becoming a widower in an extremely short time. These two moments shaped his life, leaving an indelible scar on this remarkable man's personality. Disappointed but also following an inner calling, he became a monk at the Cernica Monastery, on april 24<sup>th</sup>, 1924.

Between 1926 and 1935 we was a vicar bishop of the Bucharest Archepiscopate, under the name *Târgovișteanul*. During this time he was appointed Head of the Bucharest Religious Music Academy and elected President of the Romanian Christian Students Association.

1935 sent him down a tedious path. On December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1935 he was appointed Bishop of Hotin and later (June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1940) named Metropolitan Bishop of Bucovina, taking this position on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1941.

The period of the World Conflict left deep marks in Simedrea's soul, leaving him horrified by what man can do to his fellows.

Immediately after the Second World War, in 1944, he retreated to the Cernica Monastery and the following year to the Bucharest Darvari hermitage.

Between 1945 and 1948 he was given various responsibilities in the editing and printing departments. He was also vicepresident of the Church Painting Committee.

He retired in 1956, aged 70.

After a tumultuous but helping life, he passed away at the Cernica Monastery on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1971, aged 85, and was laid to rest on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

These are just a few milestones of an eventful life.

The high prelate was not only a great representative of Orthodoxy but also a man truly dedicated to culture. The overwhelming energy and force he radiated were directed towards permanent study and detailed research. He was a real Romanian scholar – unfortunately relatively unknown to his succesors.

The encyclopedias, dictionaries, old manuscripts as well as the works of art that surrounded and absorbed him were a measure of his extra-monastic interests.

He was a real advocate of ecumenism, as you can rarely see today. He militated strongly for the friendship among Christian faiths and he was very active in getting the Romanian Orthodox Church to join the *Ecumenical Movement* and the reconciliation between the Romanian Patriarchy and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

These ideas led him, and he took part in a series of international religious events. He was an active reviewer at the Lausanne Conferences (1927), Sofia (1928), Istanbul (1929), Vatopedi – Athos Mountain (1930), the Bucharest Romanian-Anglican Conference (1935), the Oxford Conference (1937). His trips to the Holy Land also had a pronounced scientific side to them along with the main intent of spreading the idea of building houses of worship.

His pleasant presence was due not only to his high rank within the Romanian Orthodox Church, his agreeable persona and his ease when it came to human commu-

nication but also to his qualities as a scientist. He taught himself French and perfected his studies in Paris and Montpellier. He also had command of Latin, Greek, English, Russian and Slavonic. The research and deciphering of old manuscripts, the study of history and monographs, the careful observation of complicated chronologies – these were all areas of great importance to Tit Simedrea, whose contributions to these fields of science are considerable. He was not only a bachelor of Theology but also of Juridical Sciences (Iași).

The high prelate was also an ardent researcher highly knowledgeable when it came to the civilization of Old Israel and Judeo-Christian life, reflected in its entire complexity in the Old and the New Testament.

In Czernowitz, his presence among the intellectuals was pleasant, effective and applied. Unfortunately – from a historical reality point of view – the reasons for his departure from the Bucovina Metropolitan Church are not entirely clear (or at least not publicly disseminated).

In this chapter, our purpose is not to present a few details of his religious activity. Most of the mentions will regard profane subjects, also mixed with "work matters."

In the following we will quote credible references which describe the life as well as the impeccable moral conduct of such a simple yet great man.

#### 3.1 Bea and Meir Slacman's 28th November 2004 testimony

The subjects of events of unprecedented gravity, Marcel and Bea remember how, by hiding their family, stigmatized for its Jewish origin, Simedrea and G. Russu put their very lives at stake.

Marcel and Bea's testimony<sup>5</sup> – in which a discussion between Russu and their father in the basement of the Metropolitan Residences is remembered – is a conclusive evidence of the greatness of some real human beings.

"The second day, Russu showed up earlier than ever. He was pale and restless. Yes, they broke into the apartment and sealed it with the mention <State Property>. You will have to stay here a few days until things quiet down again. If you go out into the street you will all be shot! But Mister Counselor, father said, you are risking your life. He smiled: My life? What about his? And pointed to the deaf and dumb guardian. What about His Holiness Tit Simedrea's? Now I have to go arrange something to bring you some food. It was not just a few days... Under Bishop Tit Simedrea's protection, the family remained in hiding on the premises of the Metropolitan Residences for a long, long time" - Bea and Marcel remember those troubled moments that left their marks on their hearts and souls.

### 3.2 Clerical figures' testimonies

**Bishop Antim Nica** said of him, posthumously: "Bishop Tit Simedrea was an enlightened hierarch who always gathered and processed material, expanded his library and widened his cultural horizons".<sup>6</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Annex no. 8;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Silvestri, A., - Secretul "Rugului Aprins" [The Secret of the "Burning Pyre"] – Carpathia Press publ.house, Bucharest, 2007, pp.7;

A particular occupation, one that required a lot of attention and energy, was his involvement in the printing activities. The small Czernowitz printing mill was the practical binding material that united Simedrea and the Slacmans.

The bishop's inclination towards the history of the printed word (particularly in Wallachia) became quite strong. His knowledge within the field set him apart from other scholars. As bishop Antim remembers – *his knowledge was unsurpassed*. Although this statement might seem exaggerated, we have to point out that Simedrea's research (regarding printing in Bucharest in the mid 1700s and the activity of printing worker/ hieromonk Macarie in 1508-1512) is significant and of certain value.

Books – a priceless and indispensable asset of this enlightened scholar. Simedrea was in the "Rare Books" section of the Bucharest Academy Library on a daily basis between 1958 and 1960.

**Archbishop Bartolomeu** praised Simedrea by saying: "He was the last great hierarch of our Church, a man of great culture... a conversation with him was a real delight".

According to Archbishop and Metropolitan Bishop Valeriu Anania's testimony, "he was famous for the dignity with which, in 1944, along with the Russian troops entering Romania, he had renounced his Bucovina Metropolitan Bishop position, as one who had been so outspokenly against the eventual victory of the Bolshevic front... You could see him daily in the manuscript section of the Romanian Academy's Library, alongside scholars like Panaitescu-Perpessicius and Şerban Cioculescu, examining old literary documents..." 8

A similar confession comes from **Eftimie**, **Bishop of Roman**. He was a personal acquaintance of Simedrea's and knows about his direct implication in helping his fellow men of different faiths: "while he was Bucovina's Metropolitan Bishop in Czernowitz, he helped many Jews and kept them from being deported to camps, which was mentioned at the time by representatives of the Romanian Mosaic Religion."

**Bishop Radu Gherasim** was another clergyman who knew Simedrea in person and, in his November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007 testimony, confirmed his reputation as a great scholar as well as the fact that he had never joined the Legionay Movement or any other extremist organization, being a balanced person in all respects.<sup>10</sup>

**Professor Gheorghe C. Nistoroiu**, president of the Resistance Through Religion National Institute, after a few conversations with Father **Sergiu Roșca**, brings new arguments and testimonies about Simedrea's intervention in favor of the Jews. In this intervention, the bishop was backed up by Patriarch Nicodim in his attempts to get Marshall Antonescu to *"stop the absurd and non-Christian deportations*".<sup>11</sup>

### 3.3 National personalities' testimonies

**Academician Răzvan Theodorescu** (former Romanian Senator) also knew the high prelate personally and had numerous conversations about scientific subjects with him and remembers how the bishop's articles helped him shape his Doctorate thesis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> ibid., pp. 12;

<sup>8</sup> Annex no. 9;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Annex no. 10;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Annex no. 11;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Annex no. 12;

The academician only has words of praise and gratitude for Simedrea.

"I know that this prelate-scholar of the highest human quality became close to the dense Jewish community that lived in the parish where he served as Bishop. His vast humane spirit manifested itself in his attempts to convince Marshal Antonescu to diminish the reprisals he had thought up, pleading – and taking great risks – for saving the Bucovina and Basarabia Jews" strongly affirms the well known scientist. 12

**Barbu Cioculescu** (the son of academician Şerban Cioculescu) also had the privilege of being introduced by his father to the bishop and got to familiarize himself with his work. On December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007, at Meir Shai's request, he wrote a *Declaration*<sup>13</sup> about Tit Simedrea, "a man of noble human dignity".

In this declaration, Cioculescu Jr. affirms the reality of the bishop's *efforts to save the Jews' lives* during his time in Bucovina, mentioning that the information the declaration is based upon came from "sources close to the Church, from people of good faith". At the end, Mr. Barbu Cioculescu stresses the fact that he knows of even more people who were rescued by the bishop, who hid them in the Metropolitan Residences.

#### 3.4 Grigore Popescu, Tit Simedrea's grandson's testimony

In his December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007 *Testimony* <sup>14</sup>, Grigore Popescu only has warm, praising, affectionate and respectful words for the great scholar, researcher, hierarch but also loving grandfather who was always close to the soul of a developing child.

Gr. Popescu points out that Tit Simedrea was a world class scholar, mentioning an entire cultural elite's visits to his grandfather's house; he remembers him immersed in the study of old books or guiding his grandson towards pragmatic learning.

Grigore Popescu then talks about his grandfather's involvement in saving the Jews from deportation and, implicitly, death – *by constantly asking Marshal Antonescu to put an end to the deportations.* 

He remembers how, every Easter, Rabbi Şafran used to send them unleavened bread and ritual wine along with the traditional good wishes. In some of the Rabbi's autobiographical writings, in which Simedrea's efforts to save the Jews are described, it is also mentioned that he was an anti Semite. In the eyes and the mind of the Grandson, this observation doesn't make any sense, judging from the perspective of the above mentioned humanitarian interventions. An anti Semite would never have risked his life to save those people and would not have been involved in ecumenical approaches or reached this Christian enlightenment!

The effigy sculpted on the cross of Simedrea's grave speaks for itself: a cormorant tearing off bits of his own flesh in order to feed its small ones, a symbol of supreme sacrifice. The symbol fits the bishop's life and work perfectly.

We strongly believe that the prelate's message needs to be received even by those who do not wish to see or hear!

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Annex no. 13;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Annex no. 14;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Annex no. 15;

In the author's correspondence with the bishop's grandson, Grigore Popescu was modest and reserved – maybe trying not to interfere with the objectivity of the written word. Or was his modesty hereditary?

3.5 Testimonies of national personalities living abroad

Vladimir Popescu-Deveselu – artistic consultant of the "George Enescu" Philharmonic Orchestra; Chevalier des Artes et des Lettres de la France – testifies in favor of the bishop's undeniable humanitarian merits, in the *Declaration* he sent to Meir Shai from France<sup>15</sup>.

Deveselu knew about the patriarch's cultural greatness but also the humanitarian interventions in the attempt to stop the deportation of Bucovina Jews. According to the declaration he knows about this from his father, Colonel Popescu-Deveselu, Head of the Navy in the Antonescu Government (in the second part of the War)!

V. Popescu-Deveselu is equally perplexed when he learns about Rabbi Safran contradictory writings: Simdrea, the anti Semite and Simedrea the Christian, with his attempts to save the Jews!

Academician Professor Doctor Bilici Gabriel Lazarevici – Vicepresident of the Russian National Academy; Head of the Nortwestern and Eastern European of the Psychoanalysis Institute – declares that he knows about Simedrea and Russu's efforts to save the Slacmans. 16

Henri Balter from Ottawa (Canada) wrote an Open letter about the circumstances in which he met Tit Simedrea, through the latter's nephew; he speaks about his parents' testimonies regarding the way the bishop intervened in order to save the Jews and praises the kind, calm and well-balanced scientist.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.6 Jewish people's testimonies

Miss Katz Trude from Tzfat (Israel) – In the Declaration she sent to Marcel<sup>18</sup>, this former neighbor of the Slacmans before, during and after the war and one of Marcel's former schoolmates (in 1940-1941), remembers the bishop's efforts to save the Slacmans.

Mister Oscar Katz from Caracas (Venezuela) – one of Marcel's former schoolmates (between 1940-1945) - fully aware of the Slacmans' situation, stated, on November 15th, 2007, that "Both Tit Simedrea and Geroge Russu risked their lives to save the family in a courageous humanitarian deed." 19

Writer Dorel Dorian, former member of the Parliament, F.C.E.R.<sup>20</sup> board member and editor in chief of "The Jewish Reality Journal", overviews Tit Simedrea's activity.<sup>21</sup>

Tit Simedrea, a too little known, often misunderstood and misquoted metropolitan bishop – here is an attempt to rehabilitate a man who was never condemned but is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Annex no. 16;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Annex no. 17;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Annex no. 18;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Annex no. 19;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Annex no. 20;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> F.C.E.R. – The Romanian Jewish Communities Federation;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Annex no. 21;

seemingly victimized. There are no accusations or proofs of his affiliation with the extremist movements of the time but the "rumors" have had their effect over time. The question arises — isn't this great scholar a victim of envy? Why should a figure of such value be removed from the general public's awareness? Did his superiority get in the way of false values? Was the direct way of speaking, shrouded in ecumenism and empathy, so removed from the cadence of the times? These are a few of the questions that come to mind while reading the material written by the distinguished Mr. Dorian.

Mr. Dorel Dorian, member of the F.C.E.R. board, sent Mr. Leon Volovici an "Epistle"<sup>22</sup> which confirms Marcel's arguments. It is important to remember that Mr. Leon Volovici, from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, is a member of the International Committee for the Study of the Romanian Holocaust.<sup>23</sup>

Dorel Dorian, the famous scholar, overviews his personal experience and that related to the work of Tit Simedrea and calls upon Volovici's understanding and open-mindedness. An important period in the playwright's life is closely tied to Simedrea's. His helping hand and understanding towards simple Jewish people left a mark in young Dorian's memory. Marcel's struggles to obtain acknowledgement for the high prelate's deeds determined Mr. Dorel Dorian to offer his help in *maintaining dignity in delicate times*.

Dignity must not only be acknowledged but also imposed, with creative arguments and writing force in times of hardship – notes this remarkable man, before concluding with a rhetorical question: "... How are our times, dear Leon Volovici?"

The conclusions of this man speak for themselves: "I testify, in this letter and not only, that the lamented bishop Tit Simedrea, who passed away in 1971, was a Righteous Romanian during the worst of times!"

**Mr. Liviu Beriş, head of the A.E.R.V.H.**<sup>24</sup> completes Mr. Dorel Dorian's thoughts by pointing out the bishop's close relation with the "Town's Jews" (in Czernowitz), his detachment from the Antonescu regime and his revulsion towards the Legionary Movement.<sup>25</sup>

In an address to Marcel (no.84, November 11th, 2009)<sup>26</sup>, Mr. Beriş declares his sympathy for Marcel's approach. Further more, this approach – according to the author of the letter – "springs from the desire to properly honor the memory of those who saved your family in such dark times for the Jewish people."

Mr. Beriş, a rational and wholesome man, tries to correct a Yad Vashem committe ommission by quoting one of the provisions in the "Righteous Among Men During the Holocaust" Virtual Library – with specific references to monasteries and their leaders – pointing out Simedrea's direct responsabilities.

At the end of the letter, Mr. Beriş sheds a positive light on he bishop's actions, pointing out that "He risked just as much as those who have already been granted the Righteous Among People distinction, such as Traian Popovici and Queen Mother Elena!"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Annex no. 22;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> HG no. 672, 2004 – Official Gazette no. 436, May 17th 2004;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> The Romanian Jews Holocaust Victims Association;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Annex no. 23;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Annex no. 24:

We must remember that the "Righteous Among Men During the Holocaust" Virtual Library - in the Problem Issues section – clearly states:

"Most rescue cases taken into account by the Righteous Among Men committee are not problematic but we will briefly mention some cases that were the cause of debate.

- A minor's testimony it is accepted but not sufficient in the case of the Righteous among men and it requires further depositions...
- The saviour has anti-Semite beliefs as long as he risked his life and saved people, he can still be awarded the distinction...
- Monasteries in general, the head of the monastery is acknowledged, meaning he is the one making the decision to shelter Jews and not individual monks, unless their acts are truly out of the ordinary..."

We believe these regulatory measures are eloquent in the case brought to the Yad Vashem committee's attention.

**Dr. Aurel Vainer, head of the F.C.E.R.**, countersigns Mr. Beriş and Mr. Dorian's declarations, concluding – without pathos but fully aware of the implications of the statements – that "*Tit Simedrea was, indisputably, long before he's been acknowledged as such, a true 'Righteous Among Men.*" <sup>27</sup>

In his memoirs<sup>28</sup>, **Chief Rabbi Alexandru Şafran** acknowledges Tit Simedrea's role in saving the Jews, and even though he (maybe gratuitously) mentions that "...he was a notorious anti-Semite...", he still asks this "anti-Semite" for his help to save Jews.

Tit Simedrea's anti-Semite position presented by Dr. Şafran could be the result of some articles published at the time that did not present the bishop of Hotin as a great friend of the Jews<sup>29</sup>. Malicious journalists misconstrued interviews and various statements (in the spirit of the 1930's) and created an unrealistic image. In any case, Tit Simedrea was against solving socio-political issues by violent means, rejecting them and choosing solutions that do not involve *shedding blood, breaking windows, tearing sideburns off* – and anything else that does not abide by social laws.

All institutions dealing with the study of the Holocaust have acknowledged the bishop's merits, in spite of some initially unwelcome manifestations. Thus, an important work notes that: "Some had numerous anti-Semite attitudes in their pasts, such as bishops Simedrea and Bălan, but the barbaric nature of the atrocity made them stand up in favour of the Jews." 30

Surprised by the bishop's reaction, Chief Rabbi Şafran asked Simedrea to convince Antonescu to put an end to the deportations.

It is hard not to believe the following statements: "He did it, and it worked, because the convoys departing from Czernowitz were stopped. He did even more, because he talked to the refractory authorities of his town, making sure that the governmental rules were being fol-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Annex no. 25;

Şafran, A., - Un tăciune smuls flăcărilor [A Coal From the Fire] – Hasefer publ. House, Bucharest, pp 85-86, annex no. 26;
 Curentul journal, no. 3450, September 8th 1937; Universul journal, no. 248, September 9th 1937;

The Romanian Jewish Communities Federation; The Centre For the Study of Romanian Jewish History; The "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust – Demnitate in vremuri de restriște [Dignity in troubled times] – Hasefer publ. House, Bucharest, 2008, pp. 13;

### lowed. It was unbelievable: we had stopped the deportation of the Czernowitz Jews, with the help of Tit Simedrea, the Bucovina anti-Semite metropolitan bishop!"

These are the most credible testimonies of a firsthand witness to the events - and these testimonies are ignored by the evaluation committee! Although anti-Semite, by not partaking in activities against Jews and by saving them, the evaluation of his case must be based on the provisions of the "Righteous Among Men During the Holocaust" Virtual Library regarding anti-Semitism, saviours and monasteries!

In a highly valuable historical writing, Marius Mircu also notes that the bishop is responsible for the "may the Jews who have not been deported remain where they are" order. This order did not come from the country leader's initiative! After Chief Rabbi Alexandru Şafran's intervention, Bucovina's metropolitan bishop, **Tit Simedrea**, who declared he was "shaken" after witnessing the deportations, succeeded in convincing Marshal Antonescu to stop them; Czernowitz was the last city that still had a Jewish population, the rest of the Bucovina Jews had already been deported."31

#### 3.7. C.N.S.A.S. documents about the metropolitan bishop Tit Simedrea

In the process of proving Tit Simedrea's contribution to saving his family, Marcel searched for evidence though the documents of the National Council for the Study of Security Archives (C.N.S.A.S.). In this regard, he addressed this institution a request on the 21st of November 2007 to search the documents about the military historical records of retired coronel Dumitru Stavrache, member of the Romanian Commission for Military History.

The answer from C.N.S.A.S was swift<sup>32</sup>, and on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2007 the request was fulfilled, providing access to documents of sound historical value.

The conclusions of the researcher delegated by Marcel<sup>33</sup> – excellently documented and professionally structured - are based not only on the papers from C.N.S.A.S., but also on sources from the National Archive of Romania and the National Military Archives, completed with interviews conducted with some witnesses.

These conclusions reveal:

- The metropolitan bishop's intervention in supporting Jews and his good relationship with the representatives of these communities;
- His absence from any legionary or extremist movements, rather having a condemning attitude towards the activities of these groups;
- The activity of the bishop within the National Centre for Romanianisation is unconfirmed
- Tit Simedrea had both an individual and a verification file on him open by the institutions of national security, although without containing evidence which could be considered incriminatory in this context

Mircu, M., - Ce s-a întâmplat cu evreii în și din România, vol. III. [What happened to Romanian Jews in Romania, vol. III] – Glob publ.house, Papyrus publ. house, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 84;
 Annex no. 27;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Annex no. 28;

Page 021 of the C.N.S.A.S. document<sup>34</sup> mentions: ...he spoke with disgust about the legionary regime, manifesting an attitude of disagreement with some of Antonescu's actions...Tit Simedrea, metropolitan bishop of Bucovina, is known from a note of S.S.I from October the 18th 1941 which states him granting Chief Rabbi Dr. Safran an audience, assuring him that together with the Bucovina leader Flondor they have intervened for the Jews of Bucovina, promising him full support.

Pages 107-108 of the C.N.S.A.S. document<sup>35</sup>, addressed to Antonescu, detail the festivity in which general Bengliu was declared citizen of honour of the city of Balti in the spring of 1939.

The document bears the signature of Marshal Antonescu, also mentioning: 8.XII.940/Personal file. A copy is to be sent to the Ministry of National Education. Illegible signature [Antonescu - our note] Through this document it is noted that this initiative belonged to Tit, the metropolitan bishop of Bucovina, assisted among others by the group of important Jewish industrialists of the city of Balti.

It is worth mentioning that Bengliu was the chief inspector of the Gendarmerie and had special merits in bringing down the legionary movement, respectively in arresting and suppressing its leader, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu.

In a work recording the major historical events, priest Ștefan Palaghiță, a Legionary close to the Captain (Corneliu Zelea Codreanu), notes that ....in other cities arrests are also being made, particularly in Czernowitz. Constabulary inspector Bengliu orders all Legionaries to be shot without warning...36. He also points out that: "The same year [1938] our note, on St. Andrew's Night, November 29/30th, when the wolves come out, three constabulary vehicles led by major Dinulescu from the Băneasa-Bucuersti Constabulary legion pick up and arrest the Captain, Nicadori and Decemviri from the Râmnicu Sărat prison, following the orders of Prime Minister Armand Călinescu, General Bengliu, Chief Constable and General Gabriel Marinescu, Minister of Internal Affairs.<sup>37</sup>

Ion Antonescu discharged Bengliu and other generals from the service on September 6th, 1940 and arrested them. General Bengliu was murdered by a legionary commando in the Jilava prison on the night of 26/27th of November 1940.

In the Securitate report it is shown that in the spring of 1939, Tit Simedrea, bishop of Balti and Hortin, participated in a banquet of 200 guests held in the garden of the "Popov" restaurant, where authority figures of the times participated alongside all wealthy Jewish people of the city.

The C.N.S.A.S list called "SIMEDREA TEODOR - TIT/ Persons resulting from I.T.L"38 contains a series of names of Jewish origin the metropolitan bishop has contact with, as a proof of the inexistence of a personal form of anti-Semitism.

 $<sup>\</sup>overline{34}$  Annex no. 29;

<sup>35</sup> Annex no. 30;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Palaghiță, Șt., - Istoria Mișcării Legionare – scrisă de un legionar [The History of the Legionary Movement – written by a Legionaire] – Ed. Roza Vânturilor, Bucharest, 1993, pp. 33; <sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp.110;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Annex no. 31;

There is also another **answer from C.N.S.A.S**, **no. RCG 3526/09/27.11.2009**<sup>39</sup>, with reference to a memo from S.S.I dated October 18, 1941, mentioning the support given to the Jews by the bishop.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of R.P.R, Bucharest Department, was interested in bishop Simedrea's activities. Thus, they send a request – no. 302/11523 dated September 3, 1958 for information regarding the "subversive and namely legionary activities" of the high prelate. The answer given by Department III of the communist Ministry of Internal Affairs speaks clearly: "...we communicate that we do not possess recent information which show that Tit Simedrea and Nifon Criveanu are involved in counterrevolutionary activities of legionary or any other nature" 40.

The classifying note of the trial file no. 2477 of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1962 – opened by the communist Ministry of Internal Affairs for Simedrea Teodor-Tit on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1959 – mentions that he was part of the board of "The National Centre for Romanian Social Integration". The closing of the personal file was motivated by the fact that: "...the subject of the investigation is no longer known for his anti-establishment activities and also because, aged 76, the file is of lesser relevance" <sup>41</sup>.

The "Decision to place under surveillance", issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1962 and the fact that he was a Maniu National Party member confirms the anti-Soviet stance that the bishop manifested during the war.

Between 1941 and 1944, thanks to his position as the metropolitan bishop of Bucovina, he had the influence to print religious writings that were anti-Soviet in spirit and to ask subordinated priests to read them to their congregations. <sup>42</sup>

# 3.8. Romanian Ministry of Culture expert dr. Sergiu Iosipescu's study regarding the bishop's actions toward saving the Jews

In his study<sup>43</sup>, focusing on the bishop Simedrea's life, dr. Iosipescu points out an interesting fact: Simedrea's negative take on the "Maglavit phenomenon" – Petrache Lupu's encounter with the *Old Man* (God), which had created a nationwide mystical fever. Simedrea was asked by Patriarch Miron Cristea to write a report which was not well received by a large fraction of the Holy Synod. The report was not published and, soon afterwards, vicar Simedrea was appointed, in December 1935, bishop of Hotin, which seems to have been the "reward" for having had the courage to go against the current.

The cases of butcher Moise Tejghetarul from Târgu Neamţ and that of military clerk Menachem Mendel Iancovici are further evidence of his empathy for the Jews.

Dr. Iosipescu also remembers that even the well known activist and writer Simon Wiesenthal, in his novel *Running from Destiny*<sup>44</sup>, mentions Simedrea's merits in decrea-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Annex no. 32;

<sup>40</sup> Annex no. 33;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Annex no. 34;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Annex no. 35;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Dr. S. Iosipescu's expertise, pp 6;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Flucht von dem Schlicksal – Roman nymhenburger – pp. 246; Annex no. 64;

sing the suffering of the Romanian Jews, alongside Patriarch Nicodim, metropolitan bishop Bălan and archimandrite Scriban.

Iosipescu's study concludes: "Direct testimonies and first hand documents confirm the fact that bishop Simedrea was an active opponent of the Legionary Movement and also that he saved hundreds if not thousands of Jews (by putting an end to the deportations), and furthermore, by risking his own life, saved the Slacmans, who were a Jewish family.

In 1945, the "Burning Pyre" movement was initiated at the Bucharest Antim Monastery. It was a resistance movement against the Communist regime, and its members were clerical and layman intellectuals, and, by being one of its spiritual leaders since its beginnings, Simedrea had a major contribution in its development.

The name of the movement was a reference to the passing of the Ten Commandments from God to Moses on Mount Sinai, and the observation of that pyre that was burning with such a special and otherworldly flame.

Marxism had left its mark on children's education, by steering them away from religion. This was one of the deficiencies that were to be corrected by the movement. Other goals were those also shared by Father Daniil and Oltenia's metropolitan bishop, Firmilian, namely the reorganization of the meetings of monks from all across the country in an attempt to bring a certain level of standardization in the way monasteries were run. It would have brought major changes to the Romanian Church. But it was not meant to be.

Sandu Tudor (later Father Daniil, abbot of the Rarău Monastery), along with other scholars dedicated to the "Mystical experience", were at the core of this "neo-byzantine renaissance", in the early 1940's. It was supposed to educate those interested, creating a functional programme. But in 1949, the movement was banned by the Communist regime and Tudor Sandu was sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment. He died in the Aiud penitentiary, after being beaten and mistreated.

Another version was the unusual presence of Rostov's metropolitan bishop Nicolae and that of monk Ioan Kulaghin (who could foretell the future). "One must not dwell too much on the various versions regarding this movement, be it for safety alone" — notes researcher Artur Silvestri in a work on "The Burning Pyre" <sup>45</sup>.

The same distinguished author also proposes the possibility that the bishop was rather close to marshal Antonescu, who would listen to his suggestions. Simedrea gave him wise advice, thereby saving many Czernowitz Jews and creating true "networks" in Bucovina.

He also notes that Simedrea was a very modest and humble person, asking people not to address him with pompous formal titles that are common in religious hierarchy.

He was very admired but kept mostly to himself. Long and quiet nights that were perfect for researching, writing and creating were used to do just that!

Artur Silvestri ends his short book on the bishop's life with some thoughts on what it means "to forget" or "to remember": "Regardless of anything, Tit Simedrea's "forgetting"

<sup>45</sup> Silvestri, A., - Secretul "Rugului Aprins" [The Secret of the "Burning Pyre"] - Carpathia Press publ.house, Bucharest, 2007, pp.17;

is becoming explainable. In the end, it is the **punishment of the Creole spirit** [sic!], which works systematically or perhaps only intuitively. The organizing force behind his work was against "Romanian evil", seeing that he expressed himself by "doing" (and rarely in theory) in ways he often did not approve of. Thematic recapitulation imposes and motivates... But, fundamentally, "**forgetfulness**" itself becomes a key to understanding and not, as it may seem in a superficial analysis, a cause for personal drama and a Jeremiad on the theme of universal futility. This is because, in these enigmatic levels, the "persona" or the "evanescent man" do not matter, and even if they are forgotten or stripped of their identity, the conclusions they led to, passed on through anonymous immemorial ways, like folklore, still remain. This way, "The Eternal Fire" is always present beyond mere presence." <sup>46</sup>

# 3.9. Mr. Radu Ioanid has a slightly adverse (or rather cautious) position regarding these documents and testimonies about the bishop's personality and ecumenical merits.

In a letter addressed to Marcel, dated July 21st 2009, after his eulogy at Constantin Karadjea's awarding ceremony, he points out that: "In my work as an archivist and historian, I have studied millions of pages of Romanian documents from the Second World War era and found no mention of Tit Simedrea's efforts to save the Jews. Of course, this does not mean that these efforts were not real...So now I am telling you what I would tell my colleagues in the Yad Vashem regarding the Righteous Among Men distinction: in order to avoid any controversy (as was the case with Raul Şorban), the distinction must be awarded based not only on reliable testimonies but also on irrefutable archive documents. I strongly believe that Yad Vashem will objectively evaluate these documents with or without my expertise."

It is with firm conviction that we say that making mistakes in evaluating complex realities and the granting of distinctions to "questionable" characters does not eliminate the chance of acknowledgement of other persons' merits. Mistakes were and will be made; they must be corrected – not by means of other errors, not even omissions!

Each proposal must be examined *individually*, we dot believe in either sanctions or rewards based on a collective principle. But we are partisans of in depth research applied from multi-polar perspectives. The study of reality, the reinstatement of truth and the non-biased evaluation of historical merits or faults must rule over preconceived and poorly documented ideas.

The Holocaust is such a complex and painful phenomenon that mere analysis, equidistance, reasoning and research are necessary but insufficient. What is needed is the memory of the soul. Without love and empathy, the study of an issue can be flawed, in spite of all goodwill.

We believe that a man who fought for the community and unity of the human gene, for the elimination of any form of ethnic discrimination, a man who preached the bro-

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 2007, pp. 24;

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therhood of various cultures and beliefs must not be forgotten. The marks he left (albeit insufficiently disseminated) are too deep for him to fall into anonymity. We must be aware that "**The supreme reward for being kind is not being forgotten**" - as the forever grateful Meir (Marcel) Shai once exclaimed.

We are convinced that either here, on Earth, or beyond, in the Land of the Just, the merits of this great actor on the stage of a life in which all we will ever be is visitors will finally be acknowledged.

### **CHAPTER IV**

#### THE YAD VASHEM BUREAUCRACY

"If you want to listen, you will hear, if you don't want to listen, you won't hear" The Babylonian Talmud (Brachot 40a)

Meir Shai (Marcel) has been and is still at war with the bureaucracy instituted by Yad Vashem, so as to have great man Tit Simedrea's merits officially recognised, even *post-mortem*.

Merits which are not being recognised... (period)!

In order to remain consistent with our wish of closely representing the reality of the facts; leaving it up to the reader to formulate an opinion on Marcel's endeavours and also to judge whether the situation was analysed and evaluated correctly by the members of the Yad Vashem commission, we will attempt a synthetic presentation of his actions.

We do not wish to criticize without good ground. It is very easy to be critical without effectively taking part in a construction, be it an institutional one. It is equally true, though, that it is easier to destroy and deride a certainty, than to weigh it constructively and energetically. The critical points of view in this volume only reflect Marcel's opinion – as a subject of the bureaucratic disputes -, which he has formulated during our talks.

This bureaucratic holocaust, which started in 2007, seems not to have relented at the time I am editing these thoughts. Marcel's Sisyphean work is rolling slowly into a chasm of forced amnesia, while the accumulating years weigh ever more heavily on the shoulders of this much tried fighter for recognition. Since at the date this volume was finished, the Commission had not accepted Marcel's proposal; since the analysis of the pertinence of this request and its refusal were remitted for debate in front of the highest judicial court of Israel, we will only display an itinerary of Marcel's actions, in the hope that those who are called on to analyse, will hear what should be listened to. And then: Vehaia ekev tişmeu (And it will be, if you will hear it).

Professor Shai started out on 12 August 2007, by sending his first request to have the title awarded to Tit Simedrea.<sup>1</sup> The petitioner briefly reviews the prelate's historic merit, which led to the salvation of thousands of Jews, while at the same time mentioning that he had not entered the high prelate in G. Russu's file 10810, because he was convinced that if a monk cannot have offspring, neither can he be awarded this

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Annex no. 37:

worthy title. Once it became clear that this recognition can also be received by the church he represented, he initiated his first request.

In her answer dated 20 August 2007, head of department "Righteous Among Men", Mrs. Irena Steinfeld, formulates an ambiguous answer. She refers to not understanding the reasons why Marcel had not requested the title at the same time the G. Russu file was brought in or why he had not submitted the proving documents, and "the origin of the lack of information"<sup>2</sup>. Head Steinfeld reiterates the pieces of evidence necessary in order to have the prelate's merits proven – by assuming responsibility for his actions -, both in relation to the authorities of the time and in the process of saving the Slacman family.

In January 2008, Marcel (Meir Shai) sent in his first request regarding the evaluation, analysis and approval of the nomination of the mentioned Tit Simedrea for the tile "Righteous Among Men", for his special merit in saving many Jews, including the Slacman family.

**The surviving brothers' testimony** is annexed in support of the request, together with a series of declarations, published works, the results of some research, etc. – everything proving this metropolitan's unquestionable merit.

Having analysed the submitted material, Yad Vashem communicates their first resolution to Marcel, regarding the Simedrea file, on 25 May 2008.<sup>3</sup>

It is the first time Marcel's request is denied. The Authority for the Memory of Martyrs and Heroes – through the Department "Righteous Among the Peoples" – "elegantly" disregards the testimonies of the subjects who had witnessed the event and the adjoining testimonies of other honest Jews.

What is not retained is the risk that the head of an institution, which was hiding Jews, was entering as the holocaust began and in the context of general Calotescu's orders. The risk that the metropolitan was entering is judged as superficial and assimilated to a hypothetical claim. The testimonies of the subjects of the event have the same destiny.

Yet this answer did not disarm our hero.

### Marcel came back with a new address on 18 June 2008.

In a letter to Mrs. Irena Steinfeld<sup>4</sup>, head of Department "Righteous Among Men", professor Shai makes an almost desperate attempt – sensitizing Mrs. Steinfeld into rejudging the request to have recognition awarded to metropolitan Tit Simedrea. He assembles a brief documentation providing links with pieces of evidence from the CNSAS\* archive and with memoirs of famous Jewish people who recognize the metropolitan's unquestionable merit in saving his countrymen from holocaust.

We also share Shai's logical deduction that the sheltering/hiding of the Slacman family in the cellars of the Metropolitan Church was not only possible out of George Russu's initiative, but rather with Metropolitan Tit Simedrea's concurrence!

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Annex no. 38;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Annex no. 49;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Annex no. 40;

We cannot refrain from remarking that a desperate voice addressed the Commission through Marcel. The voice of an almost octogenarian "child", who came to know the horrors of the "game" played by frustrated and inhumane grown-ups, is a voice that resounds through seven decades and urges to meditation.

The child in Shai bears in his mind the living image of a dark, unhygienic and oppressive cellar, that disallowed children's play, but allowed him to grow up fast and offered protection against a distorted history.

In a few words devoid of the pathos of memories, regrets or feelings of vendetta, Meir (Marcel) Shai only requests a pertinent, cold-blooded and all-enveloping analysis of a contextual situation long past.

Well knowing that – according to the analysis criteria for a file in awarding recognition – the deposition of a minor is accepted, but not sufficient, and requires supplementary depositions, he admits there are no more living witnesses who could complete the file of evidence for this request. What age should theses witnesses be seven decades after the events? Under those extremely dangerous conditions of the holocaust, was a family of Jews being hidden for everyone to see?

Representatives of such an important Department have to be, according to Marcel: experts in contextual analysis; objective people promoting respect towards the awarding criteria of the famous international recognition; keepers of the tradition and ethics in the relations between different ethnicities and faiths. These were the exact parameters of professional ethics that Marcel was addressing.

Point 3 of the previous address specifies that: *Proving positive behaviour towards Jews is not enough, the title is awarded on the basis of achieved salvation that implied taking a risk.*<sup>5</sup>

We're asking ourselves this rhetorical question: Could it be that a painter of churches, a mere metropolitan councilor – under belligerent conditions and in the context of pro-Hitlerist politics of general anti-Semitism particularly oriented against Jews – could have had such "pull" with the governor of Bukovina, general Calotescu, that he could ask him for an authorization that a Jewish family be exempted from deportation? Could it be that the governor's secretary, major Marinescu, had the guts to give, sign and stamp such a certificate – even if subsequently voided by the governor – only by request of a mere cultural councilor, without higher intervention?

We agree to Head Steinfeld's uncompromising stand, that the great prestige this title enjoys should not be diluted by awarding it on the basis of mere supposition-fueled requests. That is correct and perfectly true! But neither can one disregard the context of the given situation, which required the strict observance of a secret regarding at least the imminent danger threatening each of the players in this mission of salvation.

In those times of sad remembrance, the life of a metropolitan was a matter of statistics and nothing more. Can the memoirs of Great Rabi Alexandru Şafran – about Tit Simedrea's trials and success with the authorities of the time as far as stopping the deportations was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Annex no. 41;

concerned – be so blissfully ignored? Can neither the testimonies of dr. Wilhelm Filderman – president of the Jewish Community at the time – be taken into account? Why not?

Can a person who was labelled as antisemite at some point, in a certain context, but who saved thousands of Jewish brothers at the risk of his own life, not have his merits recognised? The Christian church even had the strengh and clarity to forgive Saul for all the horrors he had committed at a certain stage of his life, and canonised him for merits subsequent to the stage he regretted!

Has priest and biblical teacher Ezdra's stand been forgotten, condemning mixed marriages between Jews and people belonging to other ethnic groups?<sup>6</sup> And yet he occupies a priviliged position among the great biblical figures! Ezdra is considered to be a second Moses, defender and protector of the Jewish identity and religion.

Can an institution with such calling, like Yad Vashem, not to have the strengh to initiate a pertinent analysis, by empathising with the tense and most dangerous situations of 1940-1943? Do not the criteria created in a different reality, one subsequent to those events, determine another historical discrimination? Can forms of manifestation of distorted ideas, which never outgrew the stage of lectures/discussions and never generated a major impact on the lives of countrymen, diminish the reality and impact of a true campaign of humanitarian salvation? Can some relatively young bureaucrats, more or less learned and experienced in the problematics of the holocaust, really empathise with those situations and make the most correct decisions? – these are questions that Marcel utters inceasantly.

Or is it that the love and calling not to err makes one more easily give an adverse verdict, contrary to historical realities – thus generating another holocaust, this time bureaucratic in nature?!

Head I. Steinfeld's answer, dated 18 June 2008, places the analysis of Tit Simedrea's file under the protection of strict rules, which are given a more than rigid interpretation.<sup>7</sup> Bureaucrat Steinfeld minimises the gravity and evidence of the Slacman brothers' testimonies, while at the same time underlining the probational minimum of some complementary evidence.

In his address of 20 July 2008, Marcel answers the above Yad Vashem letter to the point. This material reiterates that Tit Simedrea risked his life in order to save the Slacman family, which results from the documents in the file. He then refers to Chief Rabbi Şafran and W. Filderman's (head of the Jewish community at the time) testimonies, who recognise the prelate's merit; he also refers to State security documents and the testimonies of Jews who survived the holocaust – these are all pieces of evidence that the institution disregards in its analysis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> I Ezdra, cap. 9-10, Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură [Chap. 9-10, the Bible or the Holy Scripture] – Ed. Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune Ortodoxă [Publishing House of the Institute for the Bible and the Orthodox Mission] (Printed under the blessing of H.H. Father Daniel), Bucharest, 2008, pp. 505-507;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Annex no. 41;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Annex no. 42;

#### Mrs. I. Steinfeld reacted to the above letter on the same day, 20 July 2008.9

Reading the answer makes one feel that once a request refused, there is no turning back on it. The analysis is placed in a sphere of "supposition", "insufficiency", "lack of evidence", etc. The end of the answer is over the top, outlining an offensive proposition like: be happy with the title awarded to G. Russu…!

Through the **Authority letter of 28 July 2008**, professor Shai was assured by Mrs. Vered Shechter that the subsequently submitted complementary material, "...will be remitted to Mrs. Irena Steinfeld so that she can process it with her entire devotion..." <sup>10</sup>

Iacov Tirkel, a judge with the Supreme Court of Israel, also remitted two letters to Marcel, on the topic of recognising Simedrea's activities.

As a consequence of his actions after turning to the Supreme Court, Marcel is assured through judge Tirkel's addresses<sup>11</sup> that the file he had submitted in the first stage (21 August 2008) would be examined; after a suspiciously short interval – given the volume of the submitted documentation – he is answered (8 September) that: ... The material you presented to the Department Righteous Among the Peoples of Yad Vashem does not contain visible proof or sufficient evidence to justify bringing the subject before the commission.

The letter of 10 November 2008 is an exquisite reaction to the mediocre decision of the institutional management. Mourning the loss of his sister Bea and disgusted by the inflexibility of Yad Vashem, Marcel emotionally underlines the purpose of his mission of honour and asks the rhetoric question: how was it that Yad Vashem analysed Simedrea's responsibility in their evaluation of the G. Russu file, when the analysis of the possibility of awarding the title had not yet been asked for? Regarding the solidity, necessity and sufficiency of the evidence, the letter maintains: In the modern society, not all historical, military, legal evidence come from primary sources. Events which took place in the more distant or recent historical past sometimes originate in literature, art, folklore. The mission of researchers, or in this case, of a commission like the one you lead, is to analyse, centralize and conjoin the data, in order to find out the truth. What I wish for and ask you is to allow the commission to judge and decide [our bold]... Maybe more than other peoples, we as Jews have an obligation to make just decisions regarding those who lent us a hand and saved us, because there were not many... There is so much truth, so much determination and empathy in these pure thoughts! How can it be that the powers to decide remain insensitive to these realities?

Mrs. I. Steinfeld's letter of 24 November 2008 is dry and scathing. <sup>13</sup> The conditions for the assembly of a convincing file are not met; she assured Marcel that far from applying some dry and dogmatic rules, they are actually observing a set of values. What values, Mrs. Steinfeld? How would you have evaluated this situation, had you been in Marcel's place? What feelings would come over you in the face of such an inflexible and limitative answer, so ruthlessly conveyed?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Annex no. 43;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Annex no. 44;

<sup>11</sup> Annexes no. 45 and 46;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Annex no. 47;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Annex no. 48;

In a short but categorical letter, Marcel requests – based on the legal provisions regulating the access to public information – the result of the experts' discussion on the topic "recognizing the leadership of monasteries". **In his letter of 16 May 2009**<sup>14</sup>, Marcel requests information about historical facts and the conveyance of the Tit Simedrea file.

On 31 May 2009, Yad Vashem answer Marcel more than evasively and equally consistent in their refusal. <sup>15</sup> Irena Steinfeld informs Meir Shair that a renowned researcher and prime expert in the study of the holocaust had been contacted on the topic of Tit Simedrea. It seems that according to professor dr. Leon Volovici, from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the bishop/metropolitan's attitude towards Jews can be evaluated as positive and there is no proof that his activity had been dangerous in itself [sic!]. We would like to study professor Volovici's conclusions, quoted by Mrs. Steinfeld, since we are aware of his reputation, his correct evaluations and balanced historical analyses! Mrs. Steinfeld's appreciation of Marcel's efforts, which, however, cannot take precedence over the observance of normative rigueur – returns as a confusing leitmotif with disarming overtones.

On 7 June 2009, the consistent Meir Shai formulates yet another letter to Irena Steinfeld. He reiterates the risk threatening anyone who hid a Jew or knew of anything like that and did not denounce it to the authorities of the time. He criticizes the evaluation made by the commission, expressing plainly: my impression is that you discuss the Tit Simedrea problem on corridors [sic!]. He goes on to state that according to Mrs. Steinfeld's actions, the testimonies of the brothers who survived the holocaust are much less valuable than the preconceived ideas of the analyst in question. And so it seems that according to the criteria of this institution, the testimonies of two survivors, completed by another four people's depositions are not enough to make the file. Marcel ends his letter by categorically inviting Mrs. Steinfeld to leave her dogmatism aside and present the bishop's case to the commission, or else he would be forced to turn to the High Court of Justice!

In a letter of 17 June 2009, Marcel brings an addition to the Tit Simedrea file. <sup>17</sup> As if it was still necessary, he adds even more testimonies confirming the claim that the metropolitan had taken concrete measures in order to save Jews, including the Slacman family.

Despairing over the inefficiency and the inflexibility of the department, Marcel formulates another, much more pragmatic, letter: **the address of 29 June 2009, which seems to be a questionnaire with three direct questions – meant to dispel the petitioner's perplexity.** <sup>18</sup> In a firm tone, Marcel required to know: what the documents were, which professor Volovici had drawn on in order to come to the conclusions from the letter of 31 May 2009; what experts the head of the department had consulted, at the same time requesting the annexation of the respective documents; he requests the paper and the minutes of the meeting, which analysed awarding the title to G. Russu.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Annex no. 49;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Annex no. 50;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Annex no. 51;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Annex no. 52;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Annex no. 53;

## Yad Vashem makes another "effort" and answer on 5 July 2009 to Marcel's last three letters.

In her answer<sup>19</sup>, Mrs. Irena Steinfeld underlines the necessity for *survivors' testimonies or archival documents* in order to have the title awarded.

It is inconceivable that in the same letter she disregards the two personal testimonies (Marcel's and his sister Bea's), while outlining the seriousness of observing some bureaucratic norms. The fact that Mrs. Bea was no longer a child, at the time the Slacman family was hidden, is also disregarded. At 23 she was a mature person and remembers well all the moments she spent in the cellar of the Metropolitan church. The documentary material, the expertise and the declarations included in the file do not prove sufficiently convincing to Head Steinfeld.

Through this action, Mrs Steinfeld undervalues the testified historical reality, minimizing the force of facts in favour of concepts changed over time.

If historical recognition depends on an archival certificate – then we are dealing with a paradox of humanity. We are dealing with something far more serious than the *super-bureaucratisation of humanity*!

# As a continuation of his efforts, Marcel turns to the State Supervisor in Jerusalem, Mr. Lindenstraus.

Marcel also tried other ways to obtain answers for Mrs. Irena Steinfeld's completely adverse attitude, which he considers superficial, devoid of professionalism and tact in such a serious and delicate issue.

Marcel's letter of 26 August 2009<sup>20</sup> proves beyond any doubt that there are bureaucrats who have nothing in common with the calling that should characterise such a demanding activity. It seems that the material evidence; the declarations; the publications; and above all the testimonies of those who lived through the events – all of these are subject to negligence translated into a painful categorisation of reality. This is how the Yad Vashem evaluators' lack of documentation prevails over the power of the Shai family members' testimony, who relived their own tragedy. A few bureaucrats prove to be too "dedicated" to formalities, nonchalantly giving up the chance to repair something of the cruelty of history.

How easily can we let ourselves be taken by the wave of indifference or even preconceived ideas – which we nevertheless detest in different contexts, closer to our interests and preoccupations. And how we apply ourselves when the problems regard our circle of interests. It seems that the truth has become more relative than Einstein's concept.

# Yad Vashem sent another letter on 18 October 2009, which was remitted to Mr. Adamit Rozentzvit, the lawyer warranted by Marcel.

The president of the Yad Vashem governing board, Mr. Avner Shelo<sup>21</sup>, reiterates in this letter the strict conditions and rules by which the title is awarded. He calls to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Annex no. 54;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Annex no. 55;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Annex no. 56:

mind the necessity of proving facts of maximum humaneness through direct witnesses or archival documents of the time – considered to be primary sources -, an exclusivist condition [our note]. Secondary sources, based on interpretation, logical deduction or reminiscing declarations or stories, do not meet the codition of sufficiency. The conclusion is that secondary sources are necessary, but not sufficient. But how can it be that – according to our judgment - the primary/direct sources (the testimonies of a grown-up and a minor) were neglected and considered insufficient?

Even further, the distinguished president A. Shalev makes unrealistic remarks when he says that: "...Dorel Dorian states that he learned of the rescue from Shai Meir and general Ionescu..." while Dorel Dorian's material<sup>22</sup> does not confirm this apparently incorrect information. Furthermore, the words "...Shai Meir and his sister... could not testify regarding bishop Tit's participation because they were not present at his meeting with Russu" border the absurd elevated to the status of law. On what reason should the Slacman siblings have been invited to the saviors' secret meetings? Is it that easy to overlook the laws that would have sent you to death by mere formality – simply for stepping outside the ghetto (see Ordinance no.38/1941)? Does the distinguished president ignore the historical context in which these events took place? And is he indifferent and careless when judging them?

Although the memoirs of Chief Rabbi Şafran were taken into consideration, according to the conclusions of the file analysis, there are no testimonies of the finalisation of the intercession attempt with marshall Antonescu for saving the Jews in Czernowitz. Neither the Elie Wiesel Institute in Bucharest, nor the Museum of the Holocaust in Washington could supply any proving documentary material to demonstrate and uphold the Metropolitan Bishop's acts. But does the lack of supplementary material represent such a persuasive evidence when drawing such important conclusions regarding the holocaust? We believe we are dealing with a case of institutional superficiality which could severely damage its reputation!

Despite these observations, however, judge Yakov Tirkel manifested a certain degree of openness and decided to bring the file back for debate. The real reason for reopening the debate: Marcel's tireless insistence.

Employing the services of a lawyer; numerous articles in the media; declarations by high-profile people (academician R. Theodorescu, Dorel Dorian, general Ionescu, Balter, the Metropolitan's grandson etc.) had only secondary importance in this context, compared to the importance of the humanitarian mission.

### On 29 October 2009, Marcel remitted a bold answer to Yad Vashem.<sup>23</sup>

The tone of the letter is oversaturated, disappointed, but also reproachful.

Marcel's letter is a true indictemnt of the unprofessionalism manifested by the members of the Yad Vashem Commission, in hastily evaluating and deciding on a historical and institutional obligation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Annex no. 21;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Annex no. 57:

In focus are the failure to analyse the declarations of witnesses contemporary to the events and the State Security documents; the unrealistic claim of no reaction on the part of another Commission member (general Ionescu); the claim of false documentation discussions, etc.

Marcel ends by asking the Commission to arrange the necessary conditions for his participation in the activities of the authority, with the aim of clarifying the facts needed for a pertinent and historically consistent evaluation.

Reading this letter, one can feel the sting of instantly outlined rhetorical questions: The formerly discriminated – discriminate today? Have we learned nothing from the most painful historical lesson that the depersonalized human gene could so degradingly give? Do we not sense the fact that evaluating the reality of fatidic history should not be done by bureaucrats, people with preconceived ideas or less pragmatically inclined? Or is it simply that the bureaucracy that persists in error, if only out of stubbornness, can be more powerful than anything else, including the truth?

The letter testifies to Marcel's fight not only with the past, but also with a present that failed the exam of synthesis and conclusion. *Denying the truth of the past in favour of an obscure interest of the present will prejudice the future* – seems to be the idea coming out of this letter.

# Represented by a main assistant to the head of the institution, Yad Vashem reacts to Marcel's letter on 5 November 2009.<sup>24</sup>

Along a dose of sarcasm (... I confirm the receipt of your last letter...), the address tells off insistent Marcel (... I come back to what Mr. ... and Mrs. ... already communicated to you...) and repeats the refusal to accept the presence of witnesses to the activities of the evaluating commission! Also, in a totally unprofessional gesture, Mr. Gvir sententiously modifies several worthy opinions regarding the documents. No comment!

# Yad Vashem makes its presence known by remitting yet another answer on 31 January 2010.

Mrs. I. Steinfeld sends Marcel a letter with the following conclusion: After some lengthy and in-depth research of the documentation, discussions and referrals to experts in the field, the commission decided that this case does not correspond to the criteria upon which the commission is based.

The decision was sent to the president of the commission, former judge with the High Court of Justice, Yacob Tirkel, who confirmed the decision." <sup>25</sup>

In the context of slowing down the procedure of granting the title, respectively in the presence of refusing to offer this prestigious acknowledgement – Meir Shai was forced to resort to jurisdictional services of the Court of Jerusalem, by opening a notice of claim and summoning the institution Yad Vashem.

By the Judgement of the Court of Jerusalem, dated 09.10.2010, passed in the File 14311-06-10, under the signature of judge Noam Solberg, – the following

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Annex no. 58;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Annex no. 59;

were mutually agreed<sup>26</sup>: the obligation of Yad Vashem to present the claimant a summary of evidence material; the possibility to resort to a court judge if the claimant is not satisfied with respect to exhaustive character and accuracy of the summary; verification at Yad Vashem of the existence of all documents deposited in the file of the cause.

The institution Yad Vashem – submitting to the disposal of the Court – remitted to the lawyer of Meir Shai, the Excerpt from the File no. 11738, dated 21.11.2010<sup>27</sup>.

The author of this volume does not launch in the analysis of inherent contradictions resulted from this material, does not return over the arguments presented previously, as much as the claimant involved in the juridical dispute with the defendant institution – does it professionally.

In the Assertions formulated to the excerpt from the file submitted to judgement, dated 22.01.2011<sup>28</sup>, - in the preparation of presenting to trial -, Mr. Meir Shai makes punctual references, under private signature, to: serious prejudices of the Commission; false presumptions; negative preconceived judgement; opinion previously formed intended to rely on a basis built during the development; absence of documents from the file of the cause; ignorance of expertises of the Institute of Victims of Holocaust of Romania and of the Ministry of Culture and Cults in Romania etc.

Although the claimant is categorical and fights punctually all institutional desertion acts – more or less professionally conceived -, however, it results as well a status of general deception generated by the refusal to be received in audience at the management of an institution, which was founded for the re-establishment of some serious, unsaid historical truths and non-appreciated on their fair value and content

The final conclusion of claimant outlines – once more if it was necessary – the insistence and consistency proved in his pertinent demarche.

We believe that the presentation of these documents proves beyond doubt that recognizing the truth is sometimes more difficult than making it happen.

And the fact that if "you don't want to listen, you will not hear" seems to also be confirmed by the Babylonian Talmud (Brachot 40a).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Annex no. 61;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Annex no. 62;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Annex no. 63;

### **CHAPTER V**

#### INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

# "History is magistra vitae (the teacher of life)" apud Pope John Paul II

Imagining the film of Marcel's life and activity; his fight for having the character strength of a real man recognised; his refusal to accept imminent failure before the indolence and lack of empathy of bureaucrats who took refuge in the shadow of superficial regulations; prioritizing personal gratitude over the inherent difficulties of age, health and geographic distance; "sacrificing" his remaining physical time for a single major (and grand) goal; having read the available documentary material, the author of this work was led to the outline of a few ideas, as lessons learned from "our eternal teacher".

Naming this chapter "instead of conclusions" also expresses hope, moderate optimism, even a determination of destiny, that maybe at the last minute the governing body of Yad Vashem will make the decision – that *final conclusion* – that can crown Marcel's entire life: content for everyone who has stood by him, supported, defended and formed his life. It will also mean content for that "merciless fate", which, rolling permanently behind him, pushed Marcel towards a target known only to it. The path of his life was strewn with numerous obstacles, seemingly unsurpassable at first, but useful in their own right, as only that "damned fate" knew.

And yet, being realistic in retrospect, those moments of great tension had their well-defined use. They shaped Marcel, turning him into someone completely dedicated to those around him, and not only. He educated entire generations of young people in the spirit of correctness, study and intense work, with a bend towards generosity. He leaves behind the model of a vertical man in all possible contexts. He remained upright, sober and principled in a world of moral dissolution. One last difficult mission is left for him: expressing his gratitude towards a single man: Tit Simedrea.

Through his colloquial, detached, consistent and elegant behaviour, the man Meir (Marcel) Shai mobilized the latent energies around him, causing us to meditate on our own life, to create intermediate surveys of what we have done and what we have left to do.

We observe that the feeling of gratitude is losing ground, we find it increasingly difficult to plainly say "thank you", and we are ashamed of being empathetic or show solidarity. We simply do not penetrate the essence of the "pure good" in our souls. We

Pope John Paul II – II János Pál megnyilatkozásai, Pápai Dokumentumok 1978-2005 [Pope John Paul II's Lectures, Papal Documents 1978-2005], Vol. III (Speeches, letters, messages), "Az Apostoli Szentszék Könyvkiadója", Budapest, 2005, p. 237 – Annex no. 65;

tend to focus on toughness, on being "very definitive", sometimes vulgar, because this is the trend – or, in "modern" parlance, "very cool". Reading a book, seeing a theatre play or listening to a symphonic concert have become signs of social weakness or petty bourgeois whims. In this confused social context, our common friend, the Man Marcel Shai is a very different character, conveying a powerful message.

# Expressing gratitude is not only the task of isolated or individual people (Marcel), it needs to be the obligation of the entire humanity towards the righteous of the peoples.

Not only the people of Israel were God's chosen; there have been and there are personalities especially chosen to save humanity. We, who have not been honoured by this choice, are left the noble task of knowing them and recognizing their merit.

#### Analyzing Marcel's life, it becomes certain that the future is in the past.

Not knowing the past can render you captive in historical time. It is only through a balanced analysis of the past that we can outline the future and avoid the "complex of captivity". The present inserts itself between the past and the future like the needle of the scales of time. Our current actions, of lucidly and pertinently evaluating the past, can determine a healthy configuration of an extrapolated future. If the arms of the scales balance unpredictably - this is not only due to the quality of the past or of future expectations, but also to our concrete option for a true temporal and factual balance.

If we mirror the past and the present, we can lose the future – thought the genius Winston Churchill! Yes, but we would add that as the future is in the past, so does the present originate from the past. The future can be irremediably lost if the evaluation of the past is made superficially, under the inherent pressures of the present. We cannot allow today to "kidnap" our past or plant "artificial masks" upon it. We cannot build the future without a balanced analysis of the past, thus enriching our own experience. The present becomes an intermediate tool in outlining the close future. If the past is falsified in the interest of the present, it will generate a fundamentally confused future. We can lose the present if we are afraid of the past and we can lose the future if we mirror a "beautified" past against a present "distorted by interests".

One of the uses of history is of mirroring forgetting against not forgetting. Accepting the reality of the differences between us can generate a chance not to forget. Accepting human models that are not based on behaviourist patterns contributes to the victory of not forgetting over the amnesia of humanity.

The "pioneers" of the path of not forgetting need to receive our present recognition, so we can have a small guarantee that the future will tend to be free of humanity's destructive thoughts. Such "pioneers" were Russu, Tit Simedrea, but also the promoter of their ideas, Meir (Marcel) Shai.

# During the Holocaust, a kind word, a piece of bread, some comforting were synonymous with manna, a gift from heaven, a chance.

A good intention must already be considered a good deed! So can the metropolitan's promises and actions be classified as good deeds, deserving at least a plain "thank you".

Unfortunately, these deeds are considered today to be insufficiently proven (?). Survivors' testimonies, together with solid secondary evidence, are evaluated merely as *advertising breaks* in a painful political and historical show!

## The weaker man's personality, the stronger his patriotism! – the times we live seem to confirm.

A weak man's wish for self-assertion becomes more rabid, if forced self-assertion is fast to happen. Politics can offer fake ways of promotion for people who have failed in other fields of social life. Fake patriotism becomes the last refuge that can offer the satisfaction of fake professional self-assertion. Sometimes, this compensating fake patriotism maintains itself by firm attachment to the artificial rules of rigid political concepts. As the obligation not to think or be rational sometimes becomes the motto of self-assertion, so does the "backward development" of human personality become a certain, irreversible and irrecoverable consequence.

Fake patriotism – promoted by the fake patriots – becomes the political mask of a drifting society. Patriotism is not declaimed, does not become the subject of political advertising, is not built on compulsion, libel, hate and the rewriting of history but on a critical, realistic, pertinent and owned-up evaluation of the past, the deeds and the human condition, however regrettable in nature.

Patriotism means understanding the *little people*; it requires lending a supporting hand and at the same time implies a lot of generosity. It is clear, though, that the *little people* should adequately position themselves as to the *big brother*'s points of reference! It is concrete facts that give the true measure of patriotism, and not empty words, thrown nonchalantly about. How deeply someone cares for his neighbour is the true measure of his human quality! So, accepting and appreciating a positive deed — one achieved by a representative of another confession or culture — beyond the narrow concepts of the present, is an unquestionable proof of openness towards real patriotism. We believe that Tit Simedrea was a true patriot, unlike other gregarious contemporaries, assimilated in the grayness of everyday life.

# What characterizes contemporary man is his possibility of becoming (very) smart when it is already (too) late.

Prophecies on the past are eloquent in this sense. The more he pulls himself away from the phenomenon under evaluation, so much more of a proficient analyst man becomes. As the arch of time opens wider, so do phenomena take on supplementary nuances and weight. The role and meaning of a historical moment grow dim under the impact of evaluation rules, structured under different conditions than the ones analyzed. *Rules often beat reality* – a context in which pure truth can be distorted, like the human body reflected in the deformed mirrors of the "haunted castle" of Disneyland.

In this line of thinking, we believe that the Yad Vashem Commission must also channel its attention on the obligation to make decisions without obscuring certain reality, under the impact of the time-factor. Concretely, evaluating the activity of a candidate to the "distinction of kindness" must be balanced in time, space, context and soul!

We tend to think Oliver Holmes was right when he convincingly stated that: **life is** a huge collection of little things.

Yes, life is a collection of interestingly small things, but posterity must also discover the great things of a modestly-lived life. *Humanity is too big to become a captive of really minor things*, with no profound significance. The quality of life also comes from the grandeur of things considered grand.

Great things indicate the true dimension of man's possibility of self-assertion! Great deeds have the most pronounced dynamic effect on evolution, while small things only become a necessary but insufficient "side dish" for living a decent life.

Life is like a mill stone: it either grinds you or it polishes you, depending on the material you are made of. A true man cannot be ground, he can only be polished, perfected. We believe that the prelate and his protégé, Marcel, were made of noble material. It resisted the destructive effect of a political mill. It became polished, perfected and taught something essential to many: what it means to be an upright man.

In a mad, mad, mad world (to paraphrase the title of a successful film), Winston Churchill's aspiration becomes all the more significant: *to find the truth as easily as I counter the fake.* 

It is an entirely realistic view, the former British prime minister's, regarding the difficulty of exposing the truth and consolidating it through unanimous acceptance. People concentrate on and position themselves differently regarding the same reality. The angle each of us looks from determines different outlines of the same truth. "The real truth" becomes difficult to identify and position.

We think that *truth is never polysemantic and very rarely simple.* So does finding out the truth about the relationship between Marcel and Tit Simedrea, under the conditions of a "normal conspiracy of the context", become a difficult, but at the same time, mandatory task. Finding out the truth is unquestionably harder than ignoring testimonies or citing the absence of a historical certificate by quoting inflexible regulations.

It is a well-known fact that today's life is dominated by the fake and the kitsch, which have invaded almost every field of human manifestation. Anyone with an upright, principled, documented and firm demeanour, who does not follow the "trend" of a society, is presently stigmatized, isolated and "stopped short" by that sick society. It is regrettable to find how much the "herd" effect of the confused citizen has become generalised. The individual has come to fear the chance of thinking on his own, with no external interference. Thoughts are expressed in a whisper, in fear and fake conviction. Future thoughts now only outlined await an *atempori* approval. When there is no courage to take on responsibility for a particular point of view, the option becomes passing the responsibility on to someone else's expertise. Ideas are immediately retracted, when they do no concur with axioms of the "herd", expressed in false rules, created by false prophets.

If thoughts characterize man, then he himself can become a product of the "herd". It is true that individuals cannot exist outside society, but this reality is not synonymous with losing personal identity. The basic dimension of human existence is cohabitation, common existence. But how much time does man need in order to openly state: this is my opinion and I stand by it?

In this context, we would like to know the "true opinion" of the decision makers in Yad Vashem – an opinion freed from the corset of collective bureaucracy – about the reality of the historical duo Meir (Marcel) Shai – Tit Simedrea. We would like to believe that the evaluation of this file has nothing to do with possible collective opinions, influenced and predated. Our hope lies in the objectivity and professionalism that must characterise all commission members.

You cannot be correct without being human – stated the genious Diderot.

Simedrea was correct in his inter-confessional and intra-communitarian relationships, because he knew how to be humane in first place, understanding the desperation and fear of his *Jewish brothers*. Being humane in evaluating "the Marcel context" is not synonymous with a wish to disregard the possible lack of material evidence, but with the option for an in-depth analysis of the existing proof, both judging from the context of the time, and examining the possibility of ensuring its character of necessity and sufficiency.

It is human to understand the obligation of taking all security measures to keep the secret of hiding the family in complete anonymity. In those times, a savior's thoughts did not envision the possibility of a subsequent institutional prize to be awarded by the grateful! Today, you cannot evaluate the situation under analysis, dominated by the danger of having the refugees discovered, without fully transposing yourself in that context. As long as this transposition is impossible, the evaluation remains difficult.

A mere rigid rule has nothing human in it. And we should remember something else: *excessive caution can be harming!* Excessive caution combined with the lack of experience can generate dissolution, self-distancing and misunderstanding the reality of the evaluated facts.

An inexperienced analyst cannot be beaten in a demanding and documented dialogue – this finding comes from the cruel reality of our days. And so we cannot hide the fact that we are worried for the future of Marcel's initiative.

Great virtues are generated by the great hindrances which had to be overcome – Marcel seems to think Chamfort is right, and does not relent in his fight against the hindrances posed by that permanently challenging and sometimes even ironic fate.

Today we would not treat a prelate's merit so arduously, if it were not manifested so empathetically in the presence of vital thresholds, strewn with major risks. The feeling of fear could only be overcome by people with solid faith and powerful personality. Fear for one's own physical existence has become a feeling to be dominated only by pure human rationality. It would be excellent if this episode of rational supremacy over physical weakness could be generalized by humanity!

The risk that the high prelate entered is an eloquent confirmation of human generosity. Thus, we also subscribe to Herodotus's cardinal observation: *great deeds are usually born of great risks*! Tit Simedrea entered *great risks* to achieve *a deed of outstanding generosity*: saving human lives.

Unconditional trust in your neighbor's empathy outlines the true measure of our spiritual kindness – here is an idea that seems to come out of Tit Simedrea's "curricular work".

The spiritual lesson that this prelate gave to posterity must be taken into account by the *biographers of humanity*. Marcel's belief that there will come a time when a "Thank You" will be launched towards eternity, even post-mortem, is illuminating and encouraging at the same time.

The belief in the supremacy of reason over analytical bureaucracy contributes to the balance of a system of thinking. Thus, hope becomes the engine of Marcel's empathy, when he states plainly that: "the supreme reward for kindness is not being forgotten". Empathy also implies understanding the other, evaluating his deeds from a contextual perspective, and from his perspective – not reading about history between two soluble coffees in the pleasant atmosphere of Jerusalem's artificial climate.

The realities of a past age can only be understood by transposing oneself into those conditions. <u>Under the current conditions</u>, <u>would any of Yad Vashem's employees</u> (even Mrs. Irena Steinfeld) dare to hide five people for a period of 500 days in the basement of the institution they represent, without the consent of their leaders? And we have not yet extrapolated the case to the specific parameters of a war situation and a context where saviors are classified as unwanted by the state system!

Think about this scenario, dear evaluators, and decide accordingly!

Think about the fact that you have agreed to award this prestigious international recognition of Yad Vashem much more easily in other cases than in the Simedrea file. As noted by the Archbishop of München-Freising *Reinhard Marx*, this recognition was awarded post-mortem for the activity of young *roman-catholic priest of Kail (Germany) – Joseph Höffner – for hiding a Jewish little girl in his parish for a couple of weeks*, beginning with March 1943. As a consequence of moving to a different parish (Trier), he later left the little girl in the care of a local family, without revealing her true origin, thus saving the girl from certain death.<sup>2</sup>

Comparing the young German priest's major and worthy risk in hiding a little girl for a few weeks to the risks threatening the Metropolitan for **hiding five Jews over a period of 500 days**, but also to his decision to intercede at a high level in favour of other thousands of Jews – we cannot permeate the Yad Vahem decision-makers' analytical logic in evaluating differently the two prelates' risks and merits. The risk was the same, but the period filled with the uncertainty of being found out – unquestionably longer in the Metropolitan's case. The consequence of being found out could have been the same in both cases – deportation to a camp/certain death – irrespective of the number of hidden people. We believe that neither did the priest of Kail make this fact known during the events, he was not thinking of ensuring witnesses for the future, but only of saving an innocent life. One more thing: the metropolitan could have had the same fate as mayor Traian Popovici, for his empathy towards Jews!

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Marx, R., - A Töke – Szent István Társulat Publishing House, Az Apostoli Szentszék Könyvkiadója, Budapest, 2009, p. 76-77;

Feelings of frustration and worries overcome us when we analyze other "Righteous Among Men" cases – such as "The Wilhelm Hosenfeld File".

W. Hosenfeld was a Wermacht captain and a Nazi party member since 1935. Towards the end of the Second World War (in January 1954) he was taken prisoner by the Soviets and sentenced to 25 years in prison. His sentence was based on his blameworthy deeds: personally interrogating prisoners of war and sending them to prison – thus ensuring the consolidation of Fascism. Hosenfeld died in a Soviet prison in 1952.

But history also remembered some of the German officer's positive actions – saving a Jew from certain death (Leon Cald's case), for which he was awarded the Righteous Among Men distinction, on November 25<sup>th</sup> 2008. *The case study and the awarding of the distinction were done while the witness (the subject) was no longer alive!* 

Simple comparative analysis, but bearing the specifics of each case, raises serious questions regarding the profundity of Yad Vashem's analyses and decisions.

We, posterity, make the fatal mistake of interpreting the events of the past through the rules of a bureaucratic present, using a sort of "Procust's bed" to frame a past situation in a present framework.

In this attempt of rebuilding the realities of the past, we cannot forget Baudelaire, who asked himself at one point: "...if a man has merits, what good would it do to distinguish him? But if a person has no merits, he can be distinguished, because that will give him stateliness".

This thought can only be applied under the conditions of a political-epistolary laboratory or in a fundamentally distorted society. We believe humanity also evolved due to genius and anonymous exceptions. Without the multitude of anonymous merits, humanity would be on a different scale of values and development today. That is why the world has the clear obligation to evidence, immortalize and worship those who, risking their own existence, contributed to the salvation of the whole humanity — be they anonymous or well-known.

By underlining their merits, we are giving a history lesson to those who will come after us. The strength of personal examples – accordingly disseminated – will make an essential contribution to the metamorphosis and perfecting of humanity. A modest distinction, awarded post-mortem, has to be the symbol of our respect towards the greatness of a personality. A subsequent distinction, awarded to a man who has passed away, is of no use or help to him, yet it marks our human maturity of being grateful to saviors.

Today, as ever, rendering reality derisive through the absence of recognition is the property of the lazy, cowardly, and the dilettantes in sense and sensibility.

# Despite the fact that history is always written by the winners, reality may and must me interpreted from the losers' perspective.

How much has reality been changed?! – the question automatically appears on analyzing the "Simedrea" case. In the case sent for the judgment of Yad Vashem, we cannot speak of winners and losers in classical terms.

The holocaust only had losers!

Humanity was defeated by the savage man, who had escaped rational control. This is why the History of the Holocaust is only written by the losers.

Or can there also be winners? – the rhetorical question appears. Maybe! But at what cost? How many steps did the human species fall down on the evolution scale? Whoever writes the history of that regrettable stage in contemporary history, all signatories have the obligation not to commit another felony by imprudence, under the impact of ossified thinking!

The true recognition of the righteous among the peoples can save the minimum human decency, that is still untainted within us, from the grotesque of the holocaustic process.

How much we need to know, in order to be able to act! – Marcel sighs like Paul Valéry. Knowing a historic date, an actor or an event is not enough. Without placing these elements in a system connected to the reality that generated them, truth can be falsified and given other meanings than the real ones! Knowledge has to be positioned on the pillar of historical contexts. It is the only way we can start. We really need a long time to attain knowledge. But first of all we need solid will, strong openness and balanced professionalism. These are the human qualities on which Marcel bases his expectations of the Yad Vashem commission members.

In the context of the first signals from the commission, we are in a position to firmly state that: *the refusal of glorification is a new invitation to glorification!* 

The feeling of rejection of the possibility of recognition disqualifies that weak entity, who has to fill the position of a "judge". Knowledge required sustained effort, giving up preconceived ideas, accepting "a different truth", which does not always identify with "my truth/your truth". Generosity must not be the key word in evaluating reality, but an obligation to study unconditionally, contextually and in-depth any detail that is considered important and decisive for the case. Action is only possible in the knowledge of reality, however contextual it may be. So then we must not be afraid of glorifying a man of merits.

Recognition is always *opus gloriae*.<sup>3</sup> Refusing a word of thanks post-mortem is slapping humanity in the face, since frustration and envy disqualify us automatically. Outdated ideas must not dominate pure reason.

One of the great ills of the current age: young people teach us so intently, that they have no time left to learn anything – Eric Hoffer rightly remarks.

We ask ourselves presently: the young people who judge a past they have not lived or studied in depth – what can they teach us? Do they know that – as Paul Valéry put it – great personalities die twice: once as people and once as great people? How many times must Tit Simedrea die again to be recognized by the ungrateful? If the young have not learned the lesson of history, how much has the older generation assimilated from that cruel historical experience? And how does that which has been learned translate into the practice of everyday life, to what use, at what targets and with how much human empathy?

Major historical events can mark our existence so we become better and more understanding. The past must teach us to know how to convincingly and plainly say: thank you for the lesson, we have learned from it!

And there is one more thing: when a Jew and a roman-catholic join efforts for having an orthodox prelate's merits recognized, which includes the present volume, I

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> the work of glorification;

think we are on the right path. But when a high orthodox prelate prays for a Jew and a roman-catholic, we will be deeply convinced we are heading in the right direction. Our present thoughts must become detached from the outdated concepts of enmity and take on the unifying path of pure human feelings. We must look for converging paths, not for roads that separate us indefinitely. Antagonistic ideas coming from a past infested by anti-Semitism cannot serve to any construction – however, they can serve false experts, false prophets and false patriots in reaching their personal goals, which have nothing higher in them.

Our attention converges towards the deep meaning of a verse: "It is yet another discrepancy occurring on earth, which is: righteous are those who are repaid after the deeds of felons, and sinners are those who are repaid after the deeds of the righteous. I have said this is yet another vanity, also!" <sup>4</sup>

Oh, and how many times have we been and still will be confronted with this dissolution of morality in life!

How will humanity repay Tit Simedrea's deeds? – professor Marcel Shai asks himself worriedly, remembering Aristotle's exclamation: "What ages quickly? Gratitude!"

Through his initiative, octogenarian Marcel wants to disprove this Aristotelian observation, pleading with boundless energy for not forgetting and eternal gratitude, enthusiastically promoting the credo that: *the greatest reward of humanity is not forgetting*". In the absence of gratitude, we think the essence and charm of life need to be reshaped!

We must not accept that gratitude grows old with us, the same as we do. Gratitude must endure, produce effects and stay – contrary to Aristotle's opinion – eternally young. The difference in the "moral dimension" of mortals is given by their merit, the content and gravity of their memories, their social and ethical impact. The more deeply and frequently a man is remembered, the more substantial his merit.

Through everything he does, Marcel comes to erase the shame of the contempt brought about by not recognizing a human virtue; that recognition could turn the "thorns" of pain and of the ghetto into flower garlands. The sting of the rose makes you remember the past – without anger, hate or passion – and accept honestly that everything has a meaning, even though we do not understand it. A super-materialistically oriented world does not create optimal conditions for getting complicated answers on the role of a troubled life. Unfortunately, many of the most anticipated answers will come only after one has passed the threshold between the two forms of human existence.

Time on earth has the tendency to swallow up memories like a black hole affected by sclerosis. There are memories and memories. Some definitely have to disappear, others are called on to endure forever. Memories have their own life and meaning. Making "good memories" eternal is a human call not to forget. Such are the memories of Marcel's family and the prelate's risky mission of salvation.

Eclesiastul, cap. 8:14, Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură [The Ecclesiast, chap. 8:14, the Bible or the Holy Scripture] – Ed. Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune Ortodoxă [Publishing House of the Institute for the Bible and the Orthodox Mission] (Printed under the blessing of H.H. Father Daniel), Bucharest, 2008, p. 670;

- What has a shorter memory than gratitude? the genious Schiller exclaimed in one of his plays (Don Carlos, III, 5), completing the Aristotelian dictum and seemingly anticipating Marcel's nightmare.
- The supreme reward for kindness is not being forgotten, gratitude Marcel answers centuries later, infinitely repeating his life credo thinking about the context where man becomes "slightly amnesiac" when he has to say "thank you".

The reward for not forgetting has a starting point: the pure truth. But speaking the truth is not always crowned by gratitude. And there is something else – the truth could not always be expressed publicly, the historical context required speaking wordless truths, only translated in hidden gestures. The truth still remains the truth, even if it has not been clamoured into the open. We believe that the truth does not need promotional and advertising campaigns to offer it a status of incontestability. Over time, paradigms undergo metamorphoses, which, however, must not influence and alter the pure truth.

Today, he who has no doubt, has no knowledge, he is an ignorant. On the other hand, it is true that a healthy doubt is the first step towards the achievement of wisdom, but too many doubts border on the limit of human incompetence.

Expecting the prelate's post-mortem award, Marcel receives the offence of the rule. Sometimes, human weakness tends to retain offenses rather than good deeds and humanitarian sacrifice! But according to the Italian saying *chi dura*, *vince* ["he who insists, will succeed"] – Marcel continues his initiative until the final words *finis coronat opus!* ["the end crowns the work"]; because relentless work can overcome all inherent hindrances, even if they are artificially created. And then Meir (Marcel) Shai's great work will be finalized and reach immortality and gratitude!

Paraphrasing Edith Newbold Wharton, who claims there are two ways of spreading light: being the candle or the mirror that reflects it – Tit Simedrea seems to have been the candle, while the role of the mirror was played by Marcel. In this philosophical construction, Marcel seems to be called on to turn the mirror onto the light from the past, and not onto the shadow of hypocrisy behind the burning light.

There is so much need for light, that we believe darkness cannot be driven away without the "reflecting effect of the light". We need a *mirror* oriented towards the pure historical truth. We do not feel the need for any *distorted mirrors*, *either concave or convex*, *which* distort the truth and lead us into the quicksand of falsified, politicized history.

We need a moulding, grateful, integrating and educating Yad Vashem. Do not let those grave historical moments ever occur again! Let people be kinder! Let the future be promising. And recognize the merits of those who have stood by you – Chosen People – in the most horrific moments of human tragedy! Raise to expectations, you people from Yad Vashem! Humanity has expectations of you and relies on you. Do not disappoint, do not hide, do not turn away pure hands outstretched without hidden interest. Become a reference of moral stature, historical critics of high esteem. Many hopes are turned in your direction – do not turn them away! Be what you need to be! You represent the entire Jewish people, not only an institution of the state of Israel.

Virtue is never hereditary. It is built individually (sometimes collectively), it becomes contextual, it is subjected to the metamorphosing condition of the human factor. We are convinced that true human virtue must continue to shine after man's physical disappearance!

Thucydides rightly remarked – in his work *The Peloponnesian War: where virtue receives the highest reward, that is where the best of citizens are found.* It is a known fact that the multitude of human conventions, rigidly built, convert man, rendering him immune to the nuances of life. There is no unique and certain recipe for evaluating human greatness. There are as many recipes as human fates unraveled. No one knows himself or his neighbor if he has not suffered in his turn. Without suffering you cannot be just, as you cannot be human.

Virtue generates merits. But sometimes it is "dangerous to have too much merit", this may be bothersome. And the frustrated are bothered first. Often it is that virtue creates more enemies than friends. In an unbalanced society, laurels tend to turn into a crown of thorns. There are more of those who hurry to tear away the laurels of gratitude, than those who are open to weave them.

Thinking of Marcel's insistent actions, we cannot forget Blaise Pascal's words, who stated powerfully: Principles are so subtle and so numerous, that it is almost impossible that some of them do not remain hidden. But omitting a principle leads to error; so we need to have a very clear sight, in order to see the principles, and then the just spirit that we do not reason in the wrong way, based on known principles.

Yes, spirit and reason have the obligation of immaterially reliving those painful moments of the holocaust, so as to outline a principled and just opinion, free of errors.

Vauvenargues completes Pascal's maxim by photographing the human option, when he retains that: shortsighted views multiply maxims and laws, because **the less vast** our spirit is, the more we are inclined to prescribe limits for all things. But nature laughs at our little rules.

There is nothing truer than that, false limits tighten like a vice, they dominate and restrict the healthy upsurge of the human spirit. "The ghetto of the soul" only inverts the process of human evolution. The more the area of the "soul ghetto" extends, the more man becomes depersonalized. The spirit in evolution must not be caged into limitative rules. This would be one of the grave human mistakes with unpredictable effects for the future.

In order to judge people, you must overlook the prejudices of their time – Marcel eloquently claims, fully agreeing with the great Montesquieu.

So in the Simedrea case, if the judge lives "teleported" among prejudices generated and kept alive by the camp-side of the spiritually weakened human factor – then the decision will be profoundly altered and devoid of the balance of reality.

Prejudice needs to be left outside the hall where the fate of a human is being evaluated. Influences on ideas, which under negativistic impulses, become ossified and preconceived, are the established enemies of rational and healthy verdicts. A real judge is someone who can decide in such a way that his own verdict displeases him, but still he is firmly convin-

ced that his solution is correct. The correctness of one's decision becomes primordial in front of other affinities or personal ideas. Facts must show the way, and not prejudice.

Every judge who tends to make an unrealistic decision causes God's spirit to draw away from Israel – it is said in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 7a/7b). Educated in the pharisaic spirit, the Jew Saul – subsequently canonized as Holy Apostle Paul – put a genious thought on paper: "For if I build again what I have demolished, I show myself as trespasser (of a commandment)" <sup>6</sup> This is an idea which should concern all the high-ranked who are called on to make major decisions.

By closing history inside a hermetic system dominated by rigid rules, elaborated inside a "laboratory", in a temporal space so far removed from events, without permeating the aspects that seem insignificant at first sight – another wall is being built, another wrongdoing is being perpetrated and nothing is learnt from the painful historical lesson of the past.

No one is called on to become the leader of someone else's conscience. Rules must not dominate the conscience, because they (the rules) are called on only as reference terms. So did the Jew Saul (The Holy Apostle Paul) militate for the supremacy of the role of faith in perfecting man, in reference to legal provisions. Prelate Simedrea's metaphysical and anthropological kindness – manifested through honest kindness (*bonus honestum*) and useful kindness (*bonus utile*) – cannot be fenced in by simple limitative rules.

Interpreting the passages referring to judges and law courts – from Bava Mecia 30b7, the generous idea comes forth, according to which law is seen as a border, which you should not come too near of. Believers did not consider the law important, because they did much more good and produced much less evil out of love, than by observing legal provisions! Love (the foundation of existence) is higher than the law (the formality of reference).

As the Romans observed the divergence of thought and reason (*quot capita*, *tot sensus – as many head*, *as many meanings*), so do we wait with interest the correlation of the commission members' opinions, so that the verdict is free of the limits imposed on human judgment. The way of accepting reality in all its complexity will prove man's genius, and not accepting the axiom: *a thing well judged it considered true*.

We cannot fail to signal, with all due respect to the members of the Yad Vashem Commission, that they can generate major injustice through a slightly undocumented or inflexible decision. The commission members' caution not to make mistakes is understandable, even praiseworthy in a different context; however, being superficial in analyzing the Simedrea file and refusing to award the title of recognition would be an error. Fearing something wrong can produce an even bigger evil!

Doman, I., - A Babilóniai Talmud (részletek, kommentárok magyarul) [The Babylonian Talmud – fragments, commentary in Hungarian] – Casa Ulpius, Budapest, 2007, pp. 98;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Epistola către Galateni a Sfântului Apostol Pavel, cap. 2: 18 - Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură [Saint Apostle Paul's letter towards the Galateans, chap. 2:18, the Bible or the Holy Scripture] – Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă [Publishing House of the Institute for the Bible and the Orthodox Mission] (Printed under the blessing of H.H. Father Daniel), Bucharest, 2008, pp. 1322;

Ooman, I., - A Babilóniai Talmud (részletek, kommentárok magyarul) [The Babylonian Talmud – fragments, commentary in Hungarian] – Casa Ulpius, Budapest, 2007, pp. 81-82;

Our pleading does not contest the work discipline of an established institution, we do not wish to exercise any pressure, because the responsibility for the accuracy of the decision lies with the invested commission alone. We only try to outline a simple and modest invitation to the practice of in-depth realism.

Tit Simedrea was a HUMAN. He was a man who did not want laurels, medals, distinctions. He did not need to be given a prize, it was the environment in which he activated that was awarded with his presence. As his entire life was a collection of trials, so does the intention of having him recognized as righteous among the peoples seem.

He was better than the reputation he enjoyed. He was more balanced than those who are called on to evaluate his activity. He was more empathetic than the clerical environment he represented. He was more attached to culture and science than many of his brethren.

How silly people are, they rise before the roll of the Tora, but not in front of a personality – the learned Rava says (Makot 22b). So did many remain insensitive to Simedrea's presence or to his being remembered – maybe out of ignorance, maybe out of conceit. The time has come that many rise up and piously hail this Man's memory!

Every age has its pain. The prelate was a bit of a balm on a huge wound of the human being. He wished for the cure of reason. He lent a saving hand, keeping silent about his own unuttered merits. The way in which he could give was more valuable than what he gave. He gave in silence, in peace, convincingly and with an open heart. He gave humanity an unforgettable lesson, even without a subsequent bureaucratic recognition. We cannot but learn from this lesson of morality.

Speech was given to man so he may hide his thoughts - Talleyrand claimed.

Contrary to our days, when there is a lot of talking without reason or pragmatic action – the prelate spoke only when it was needed. His thoughts and convictions were not hidden, but translated into concrete facts, with great spiritual content. An excellent proof is his saving Marcel's family and hundreds/thousands of his countrymen.

A good deed is unquestionably worth more than tens of lectures on honesty, empathy and civility. Words were dangerous in that context, but silent deeds were worth enormously. Comparing the ages, we find the difference in: now there is a lot of talking, back then there was more (silent) action!

On the occasion of his official visit to Yad Vashem on 23 March 2000, the late Pope John Paul II paid pious homage to the victims of the Holocaust and expressed his deep regret for the atrocities Jews had suffered at the hands of Christians along time.

In his speech<sup>9,</sup> he insisted on our obligation to remember the past, because *we don't have the right to forget!* This is the way not only towards inter-confessional and interethnical reconciliation, but also a chance that human tragedies – like the holocaust – never occur again. Pope John Paul II pushes the human hope of defeating darkness into eternity by exemplifying the sacrifice of the "Righteous Among the Peoples", to whom he expresses his gratitude.

<sup>9</sup> Annex no. 65;

<sup>8</sup> Doman, I., - A Babilóniai Talmud (részletek, kommentárok magyarul) [The Babylonian Talmud – fragments, commentary in Hungarian] – Casa Ulpius, Budapest, 2007, pp. 130;

This venerable man and Pontific Sovereign's strength of asking for forgiveness for the mistakes of the past, in the name of over 1 billion Christians; his bow before the greatness of the "Righteous Among the Peoples"; the hope for the future found in the possibility of historical reconciliation; laying the foundation for a true basilica of not forgetting – also give us inner power but awake, at the same time, a series of perplexities.

Does the plenty of the times we have lived bring us closer to these goals? Was that pilgrimage not also made for us — Christians? Do we not limit ourselves to reading these lines at ease, without holding up the challenge (the cross) that we deserve? Have we not noticed yet that on the back of the crucifix there is an empty spot awaiting us? Do we not have the necessary strength for understanding the meaning of those humanitarian signs? Do we not have the courage to be ecumenical? Why is it so hard to unite our hands across confessions? Is it easier to hate than to love? Is it more practical to strike than to caress? Does it hurt to reach a hand in support? Does it hurt to love and propagate light?

Reading the **Babylonian Talmud**, our attention veers towards passages that seem to correspond to the position of the judges, who evaluated the case. "If you want to listen, you will hear, if you don't want to listen, you won't hear" – Brachot  $40a^{10}$  affirms.

How much of the warning cry of history do these judges want to hear?

**Finally:** *suum cuique tribuere*<sup>11</sup> - we believe that due recognition must be awarded to the Man Tit Simedrea, for his attempt to remove humanity from the brink of its own abyss.

He deserves our appreciation – not out of compassion or sympathy, but because he built a small bridge between different cultures and nationalities. Because he understood that we have a single God, we have a single goal on earth, that we are people in the first place, and then Jews, Romanians, Hungarians...

We, the generation of today – do not have the right to forget!

We can lose everything, with one exception – honor.

This much regretted prelate deserves our gratitude because he understood that love is the dearest gift, but also the only instrument for real human closeness. We wish for nothing more than having mere recognition awarded. And this not only instead of final conclusions.

We are "sentenced" to love, empathy and gratitude. For lack of those, indifference, hate, quarrel and revenge wait around the corner. By loving and understanding your neighbor, you will also be rewarded by not being forgotten.

Because <u>the supreme award for kindness is not being forgotten</u> – as the eternally young fighter Meir (Marcel) Shai will always claim.

11 give everyone what is his;

Doman, I., - A Babilóniai Talmud (részletek, kommentárok magyarul) [The Babylonian Talmud – fragments, commentary in Hungarian] – Casa Ulpius, Budapest, 2007, p. 60;

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# No. 99 GOVERNOR OF BUKOVINA ORDINATION No. 38 Of the 11th of October 1941

We, General Corneliu Calotescu, Governor of Bukovina, having in view the need to maintain peace and to insure the safety of the state,

### COMMAND:

- 1. Will be punished by death:
- a) All persons who will engage in acts of disorder, or in acts of violence, or who do not immediately obey orders and summons of the military authorities;
  - b) All persons who will instigate others to engage in the acts listed above;
- c) All persons who will engage in robberies or will, in any form, take goods from the houses abandoned by their inhabitants;
- d) All persons who will hide strangers in their homes or who will facilitate the escape of persons who are not allowed to leave the region.
- 2. Buying, selling or the exchange of precious metal, jewels, gems, etc. is forbidden until further notice

Those who contravene will be punished with 10 to 20 years of forced labor.

Receiving and keeping jewels, precious metal objects, gems and other valuable objects from other persons is forbidden, under the same punishment.

- 3. Those who are informed, in any manner, of any felony as those mentioned above and will not immediately notify military authorities are guilty of complicity and will be punished to 5 to 8 years of forced labor.
- 4. The present order enters into force immediately after its posting, which will take place on the 11th of October 1941, 7 o'clock.
  - 5. Military and civil authorities carry out the present order.

Issued at Czernowitz on the 11th of October 1941. Governor of Bukovina

General (ss) C. CALOTESCU

### Nr. 99

### **GUVERNATORUL PROVINCIEI BUCOVINA**

ORDONANȚA Nr. 381) din 11 Octombrie 1941

Noi, General Corneliu Calotescu, Guvernatorul Bucovinei, având în vedere nevoia de a păstra lîniștea și a păzi siguranța Statului

#### ORDONAM:

- 1. Vor fi pedepsiţi cu moartea:
- a) Toţi acei care se vor deda la acte de desordine, de violenţă sau nu se vor supune imediat ordinelor şi somaţiilor autorităţii militare;
- b) Toţi acei care vor instiga pe alţii să facă acte ca cele arătate mai sus:
- c) Toţi acei care se vor deda la jafuri sau îşi vor însuşi, sub orice formă, bunuri din casele părăsite de locuitorii lor;
- d) Toţi acei ce vor ascunde în locuințele lor, persoane străine de locuințe, sau vor ușura fuga celor ce nu pot părăsi localitatea.
- Se interzice până la noi ordine cumpărările, vânzările sau schimbul în natură cu obiecte din metale prețioase, cu bijuterii, pietre scumpe, etc.

Cej ce vor contraveni se vor pedepsi cu 10 la 20 ani muncă silnică.

Se interzice, sub aceeași pedeapsă, primirea în păstrare dela alte persoane a bijuterillor, obiectelor din metale prețioase, pietre scumpe etc. ca și a oricăror obiecte de valoare.

- 3. Cei ce vor lua cunoștință pe orice cale de infracțiuni ca cele arătate mai sus, şi nu vor anunța imediat autoritățile militare, se iac vinovați de complicitate şi se pedepsesc cu muncă silnică dela 5 la 8 ani
- Prezenta ordonanță întră în vigoare imediat după alişarea ei, care se face în ziua de 11 Octombrie 1941 ora 7.
- Autoritățile militare şi civile sunt însărcinate cu aducerea la îndeplinire a acestei ordonanțe.

Dată la Cernăuți, la 11 Oct. 1941.

Guvernatorul Bucovinei General (ss) C. CALOTESCU

<sup>1)</sup> V. plansa V.

Annex no. 2.

### THE GHETTO

#### Annex no. 2

### **NOTICE**

The Supreme Command of the Army decided to assemble the entire Jewish population in Czernowitz in a ghetto and afterwards to evict them from town.

Therefore, the Jewish population is invited to relocate on the 11th of October 1941, until 18.00 to the district bordered by: Dacia Square (exclusively), Eminescu Street, Petre Liciu Street, Holy Trinity Street, I.C. Brateanu Street, Prutului Street until the railroad; then along the railroad, up to the intersection of the railroad with Caliceanca Street, from here a straight line up to Pocutiei Street, Anton Silvestru Street up to the intersection with Elena Doamna Street, Stefan Tomsa Street, including the Jewish Cemetery, Cemetery Steet up to Romana Street, then Romana Street up to Putnei Street, from here a straight line up to the railroad, following the railroad up to Petru Rares Street, Petru Rares Street up to the street between Wickenhauser Street and V. Mazareanu Street, then Rasboe Street, Vorobchevici Street, Marasesti Street, Maresal Foch Street, XXX, crossing Romana Street, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, General Averescu Street, Saint Nicholas Street, General Mircescu Street, Turceasca Street, a line behind the high school and the Conservatory on Street General Press, behind Diviziei district, crossing Dr. Reise Street, then King Ferdinand Street, before the market police, Morenseche and Dacia Square.

Each Jewish inhabitant may take with him:

- Thick clothes, other clothing, etc.
- Food for as many days as possible:

In total, as much as any person can carry with him, both for getting installed in the ghetto, and for eviction, knowing that no one can return to his home.

Each Jewish head of the family will write down an inventory of all the goods left in the abandoned home before leaving the premises.

On leaving, he will take the key of the house.

The inventory and the key are sealed in an envelope containing the name and the address of the inhabitant.

The envelope is handed in the ghetto, upon request.

Sick persons will be evicted in the Israelite hospital in the ghetto.

Jews found outside the ghetto after 18.00 will be shot.

Anyone resisting, engaging in acts of violence or disorder, (illegible) goods belonging to them, trying to flee town or instigating the others to deeds as those mentioned above will also be shot. Jews already living in the ghetto are forced to host newly arrived.

GOVERNOR OF BUKOVINA General C. Calotescu

### GHETTOUL.

ADDEE RUIT

### INCUROSTLIBRARE

Comandamentul Suprem el irmetel a hotdrat etrangerem intregil populații evreești din Cernauți intr'un ghetou, dapă care va urae evaquarea din localitate.

On urmere, populația esrelisad este invitată a se auta in sion do 11 Octosvrie 1941, pină le orele 18 în certierul delimitat de stracile: Piata Daciei (exclusiv), strada Baineson, str. Petre idoin, str. Mr. Treine, str. T. C. Arateanu, Str. Pruvulai pana la Cales ferată după care în lungul odii ferate pană le întretăierea s.f. ou str. Caliceance, de aci o linie dreaptă până in str. Pocutiel. str. Anton Bilvestru pana la intretaleres co strada Blene Dosmos, etrade Stefan Tompa inclusiv cinitirul evreeso, etrada Cinitirului pana la strada Romana, spoi atrada Romana pana la strada Putuei, de eci e libie dresptă până la culea ferată, urmază pe linia ferată până la strade Petru Mores, strade Petru Hares pink la strada afleta intr strasile Wickenhauser ei str. V. Mazareanu, spoi urmeasă strada Rieboo strada Vorobchevici, strada Marasett, strada Marasai Joch, tem tam streda Romana, strikeregalidismesse, parada Osneral Averesou, str. ST. Bioulas, str. General Mirosacu, str. Turceasca, o linis os marge prin spatele liceuluisi a Conservatorului de pe atrada General Press brees prin apatele cartierului Divizioi, tae atrata pr. Reies, apoi etr. Hegele Ferdinand mai jos de comenduires pietei, str. Horsusanhe ei Piata Daolei.

Fiscere locuitor evreu poste lus cu al:

- Haine grosse, imbracaminte, etc.

- Hrana pe cat mai muite ziis;
in tetal atat cat fiscare poste duce cu el, atat pentru instelara in ghattou cat el pentru evacuare, cunoscand ca mineni nu mai poste reveni la locuinta avuta.

Vicere cap de familie evreu intocmeste insinte de parinirea domiciliului actual un inventer ou toate bumurile de lass im
locuinte paranta.

La plecare is si chele locuintel.

Inventarul si chele se inchid in plic pe cere se scrie
nomels si adresa locuitorului.

Filtul se predă în ghettou, la cerere.
Bolnavil se vor evacus la spitalul izraslit din ghetcou.

Ewreii gasiti dopă ore 18 în afera ghettoului vor fi Avreit gastit dupe of the control of

GRAZINA CHARL BUCOMINSI. plotesou

### Annex no. 3.

### Translation from Hebrew

### YAD WASHEM (LOGO)

Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority

Honor. Honor.

Mrs. Bea Slacman Mr. Meir Shai 77/4 Ahronovici Street 17/4 Bicorim Street Holon 58590 Haifa 34576

Respectful greetings,

### Regarding: RUSSU GEORGE - ROMANIA (10818)

We are glad to announce you that, during its meeting on the 3rd of April 2006, the nomination Committee for Righteous among Men decided to grant Mr. RUSSU GEORGE the title Righteous among Men, including the medal and the certificate of honor, and to have his name forever written in the Garden of the Righteous in YAD VASHEM.

Respectfully,
(illegible signature)
Dr. Mordehai Feldiel
Head of the Righteous among Men Department

PS We kindly ask you to send us the address of the relatives of Mr. Russu George, for us to be able to hand them the certificates in his name, within a ceremony organized by the Israeli Embassy in proximity of their residence.

(Addressed to: Deborah Weiss, Righteous among Men department)

PO box 3477, Jerusalem 91034, phone no. 02-6443400, fax 02-6443443 www.yadwashem.org YAD VASHEM

יד ושם

The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority רשות הזיכרון לשואה ולגבורה

ירושלים, ט' בסיון תשס"ו 5 ביוני 2006

> לכבוד מר מאיר שי ביכורים 17/4 חיפה 34576

לכבוד גב' ביאה שלקמן אהרונוביץ 77/4 חולון 58590

שלום רב,

### הנדון: RUSSU GEORGE - רומניה (10818)

הננו שמחים להביא לידיעתכם, שהוועדה לציון חסידי אומות העולם החליטה בישיבתה מיום ה- 3.4.2006, להעניק למר RUSSU GEORGE, תואר חסיד אומות העולם, כולל מדליה ותעודת כבוד, ולהנציח שמו בגן חסידי אומות העולם ביד-ושם.

בתודה ובכבוד רב,

ד"ר מרדכי פלדיאל מנהל המחלקה לחסידי אומות העולם

נ.ב. אנא שלחו אלינו את כתובתם של קרובי משפחתו של מד רוסו המנוח, על מנת שנוכל למסור להם את האותות על שמו, בטקס שתארגן שגרירות ישראל סמוך למקום מגוריהם. (לשלוח אל: דבורה זיים, המחלקה לחסידי אומות העולם)

מדליה/מפ/דת

Annex no. 4.

### Ministry of National Defense

Military Clergy Inspectorate **Alba Iulia** 

### **CERTIFICATE**

No. 3090 of the 19th of February 1941

It is certified by US that the military priests control book, reserve confessors, from the Military Clergy Inspectorate in Alba Iulia, ascertains that priest SIMEDREA TEODOR from Naipu, Vlaşca district, has the following status:

- a) On the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1916, mobilized in the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment as priest with lieutenant degree, I.D. No. 2784.
- b) On the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 1917, transferred to the 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, also as priest lieutenant, decree M.C.Gl.Nr. 453/1917.
  - c) On the 1st of January 1918, promoted to priest captain I.D. No. 778
- d) On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1920, transferred to Contagious Diseases Hospital No. 3, by decree M.C.Gl. Religious Service No. 100/920
- e) On the  $22^{nd}$  of May 1920 transferred to the  $30^{th}$  Infantry Regiment by decree M.C.Gl. No. 296/920.
- f) On the  $15^{th}$  of October 1920, discharged from  $30^{th}$  Infantry Regiment by decree M.C.Gl. No. 859/920

Consequently, the present certificate was issued following the petition registered under No. 3090/941.-

BISHOP OF THE ARMY
MILITARY CLERGY INSPECTOR
BISHOP General Dr. Partenie Ciopron

CHIEF OF OFFICE Archpriest Major, Victor Păcuraru



#### Ministerul Apărării Naționale Înspectoratul Clerului Militar Alba Iuita





Nr.3090 din 19 Febr.1941.-

Se certifică de Noi că din registrul control al prec tilor militari, confesori de rezervă, dela Inspectoratul Clerului Militar din Alba Iulia, se constată că preotul SIMEDREA TEODOR din comuna Naipu jud. Vlaşca are următoarea situatie:

a)La 20 Octombrie 1916, mobilizat la Regimentul 37 Infanterie ca preot cu gradul de locotenent, I.D.Nr. 2784.

b)La 16 Martie 1917, mutat în Regimentul 36 Infanteri tot cu gradul de preot locotenent, ordinul M.C.Gl.Nr.453/ 1917.c)La 1 Ianuarie 1918, avansat la gradul de preot căpitan I.D.Nr.778.

d)La 23 Aprilie 1920, mutat la Spitalul de Contagios: Nr.3, ordinul M.C.Gl.Serv.Religios Nr.100/920.

e)La 22 Mai 1920, mutat la Regimentul 30 Infanterie ordinul M.C.Gl.Nr.296/920.

f)La 15 Octombrie 1920, demobilizat dela Regimentul 30 Infanterie ordinul M.C.Gl.Nr.859/920.

Drept care s'a eliberat prezentul certificat,în urma cererei înregistrată la Nr.3090/941.-

EPISCOP AL ARMATEI

INSPECTORUL CLERULUI MILITAR
EPISCOP General De Parlegia Clerron

SEFUL CANCELARIED
Protopop Maior, A of Victor Pacurary

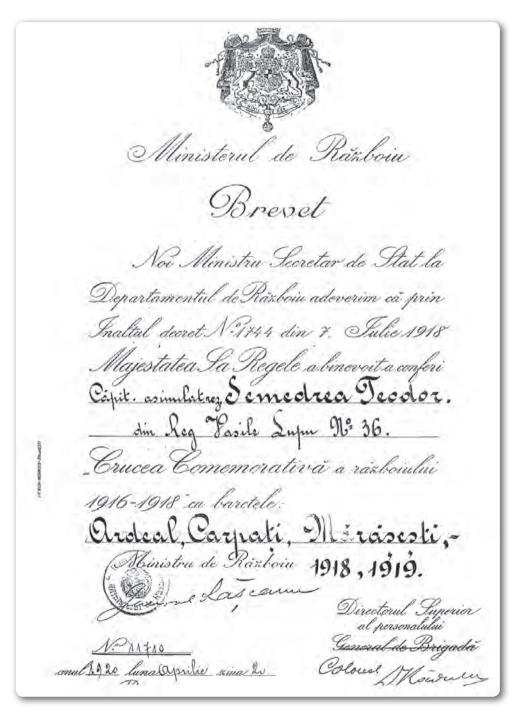
Annex no. 5.

# Ministry of War Certificate

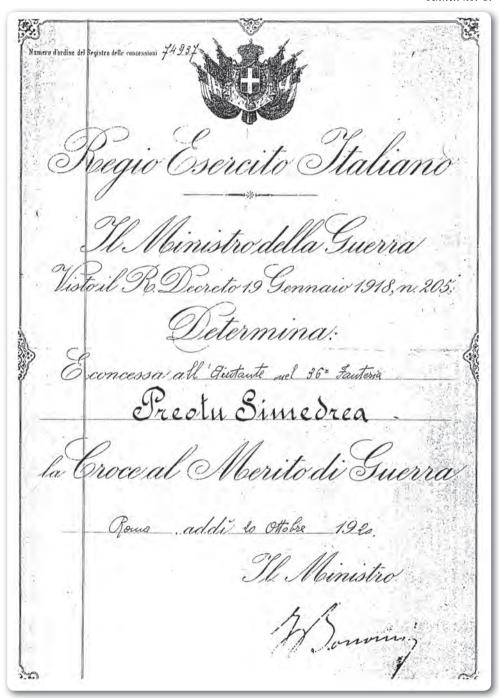
We, Minister Secretary of State at the War Department, certify that through the High decree No. 1744 from the 7th of July 1918, His Majesty the King granted Cpt. Smedrea Teodor of Regiment Vasile Lupu No. 36, the Commemorative Cross of War 1916-1918 with banderoles Ardeal, Carpati, Marasesti – 1918,1919.

Ministry of War Chief Head of Personnel Colonel

No. 11710 1920, April the 2nd



Annex no. 6.



Annex no. 7.

## Ministry of Foreign Affairs Decree Office

# Certificate

The Decree Office certifies that, under the provisions of line 3 under article 12 of the Constitution and on the basis of original certificate no. 74937 on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1920, His Highness the King authorized Mr. Lieutenant Assimilated (Priest) Simedrea Teodor, of Infantry Regiment 36 to wear the "Cross of War" Medal (Italian).

Reason for which the present certificate, bearing the seal of the Decree Office, was issued.

Issued in Bucharest, 9th of August 1921

Minister



# " Hinisterul & Ifacerilor Streine Cancelaria Ordinelor. Brown Towns

Cuncelaria (Indinesor alestà ca conform alin 3 de sub art. 12 din Constitutio si in buza brevetului original sub No F4937 din 20,0 Chombe 1920 Maiestateu La Regele a binevoit a nulcrizio pe Domnul Locotenent asimilar (Preor) simedrea Teodor, din Regimentul 38 Infanterio.

u purlà insemnele Medallei. Grucea de Rizbol" (Italiana).

Pentru eure sie dat presented brevet investit eu sigiliul Cancelariei Ordineler

Jacut in Humostille 8 August 1821



### Annex no. 8.

Form No. 2-5678-04

מספר רץ 04-5678

#### CERTIFICATION OF DECLARATION

I the undersigned, Elena Kovaleva Notary, at Ben-Yehuda str, 1, Tel-Aviv hereby certify that on 28/11/2004 there appeared before me at my office Ms. Shekelman Bea whose identity was proved to me by Passport no. 1247889 issued by Ministry of Interior at Natania on 20/03/1970

And Mr. Shai (Slacman) Meir whose identity was proved to me by Passport No. 012475828 issued by Ministry of Interior at Haifa on 11/06/1991

And being satisfied that they know the English language (the language of the declaration) and read in my presence the attached document marked A', And after I enquired and satisfied myself that the above named Ms. Shekelman Bea and Mr.Shai (Slacman) Meir understood the contents of the above-mentioned declaration, they duly confirmed by oath (declared) (declared by solemn affirmation) the truth of the above declaration.

In witness whereof I have hereto set my signature and seal today,28/11/2004.

#### אישור הצהרה

אני החתומה מטה ילנה סובליוב נוטריונית. מבן-יהודה 1, תל-אביב, מאשרת כי ביום 28/11/2004 ניצבו לפני במשרדי מרת שקלמו באה שזהותה הוכחה לי על פי דרכון מספר 1247889 שניתן מאת משרד הפנים בנתניה כיום ,20/03/1970

ומר שי מארי שזהותו חוכחה לי על פי תעודת זהות מספר 012475828 שניתנה מאת משרד הפנים בחיפה ביום 1991/30/11

ולאחר שנוכחתי שהם יודעים את השפה האנגלית (שפת ההצהרה) וקראו בנוכחותי את ההצהרה המצורפת והמסומנת באות א, ולאחר שבררתי ונוכחתי כי מרת שקלמו באה ומר שי מאיר הנייל הבינו את תוכן ההצהרה הנייל, נשבעו כחוק (הצהירו בהן צדק) על אמיתות חחצחרה חנייל.

ולראיה באתי על החתום בחתימת ידי ובחותמי, -28/11/2004 מיום

שכרי בסך 200 שייח כולל מעיים שולם.

s paid: 200 NIS including VAT.





חתימת הנוטריון Signature

מסמך זה הופק על ידי מחולל השפטים של אמקי תכנות משפטיות בע"ם 2-5879335, פקס 2-5879331

The first rescue

In October 1941 my family (parents) worker brothers and myself) were displaced in Theto of Germowitz Jews from 23 streets were daily evacuated. As our Turn had come to Join the convoy, my father caught immedially the rituation. He let run forward the little carriege with a few small bundles we had gathered in haste and advised us to slow down our steps, and to remain little by little believed the columna. Al one moment, by taking advantage of the turn terestly that reigned in the convoy, we succeeded to slip through a covider of a small building, then into the garden, a few cowily and and finally we crossed a vest ground which was founded by a wooden hedge, There was a small got in the hedge, We entered it, It was a large wurty and moide with 2-flow buildings and two exits; the little gate we just passed through and a big one leading to a main street of the town. The watchman of the countyand took pity of no (it was kaining outside) and let us spend the night on the floor of his kitchen. I only in the morning, my fathe \* The main street didn't belong to the Ghetto

(without informing anyone of us) stipped Herough big gate (without documents) and risked to one. into the free territory" in vader to reach the Metropolitan Residence of Germowitz.

If few days before the Ghetto was declared my father, expert in graphical arts was requested the artistic counsellor of the bishop Tit Simea to settle a special printing house for church foi int now after leaving our house for church foi int now after leaving our house in the town a getting into the Glutto, they were unable to freed him, anymore, We were living nowhere!

In the Residence my father contacted the counder for George Russe and exposed the situation of our far the counsellor, from in Transilvania (Romania over sixty, was a presider of scons well known in Munich where he has been liping for 34 years. He promused he will speak with the hister lit Sime and try to obtain a certificate for our family My father oright to out a second walk will he present the field in the field of the cellar we may be a second walk will he file of the cellar we want to george Russe the file of the cellar we were supposed to be hidden in.

<sup>\*)</sup> The changed places almost daily, as soon as we knew that over street is going to be looked In a .....

Ċ.

Days after days rum out ... Had so day, pand ...

Dremember that evening. He soon as the night of was coming, the gendarum started to lask Jews in hidden places. The shot, were beard warer and nearer. At one time somebody Knocked citthe door of our celbra. It was George Russe. He was breathing a heavily he could hardly find us in the dark near. The Governor of Cornowits D. Caloteven had refuse the bishop's request for our family, because they were in bad relations. But he succeeded to obtain a temporary cutificate from the Mayor of Cornow Traine Poposici.

For the time being we were regened.

Shortly after the counsellor left the caller, noin banking was heard orgain at our door. This time - "they", the gendamnes. "This lidden? Out with you"! It the light of a small candle they stammered what was written on our new received certificate.

what we were looking for by right in a callar, with a certificat in our hands.

### The second resone

Tune 1942. The conflict between the gove D. Cafoteoen and the Mayor Train Popovici came to with the defeat of the mayor. In consequence, they with Popovici-Certificates (temporary) night to be departed ever the river Bug (Ukraina). My family belonged to that eategory. The noperations were supposed to be fulfilled weekly in the rights of Jahn day to Sunday. After the evecusion of the first anopost, the remained Dews started to hide them in shelters.

George Russe required an andience after bist Till Simedrea and with the consent of Hiskeveren we were hinden in a storebuilding on the territa of The Metropolitan Residence.

The quardian of the storehouse was a deaf-mute Ukrainian. He was told to keep in secret the mater to five Jews were lichten invoide the Cesidence, other kis Reverence might excommunicate him Though he am antisemit as most Ukrainians in Exempent;

we lived in Cternovite or metimes food for us; with 18 flats, near to the Residence . The house he two exit doors: The main gate was leading to the of The Jews deported ofper Bug had been theested.

and a small door was leading into the garden. This garden was adjacent to another garden where left hedge was neighbouring the Netropolitan Residen One flat was in the "Hock Santerie". George Russy said that we sught to reach the garden from ou balcony, then jump the hedge into the second garde and after that the left hedge straight into the Territory of the church. The most sunday early in the morning George Russ said he will winspect " one That and if nothing happened we might return bac but only after 10 o'cloarly in the morning, straight through the main gate of the brilding, as if we retrained from shoffing " (With our yellow sign of Magen havid on the cheso). the went Saturday night (20-21 June) this "/rocodexe was seepes The fourth Saturday (27-28 june) rumors were hear that the "operations have ceased aft with Jewide people retrorned at home. I remember it was full moon and We besitated: thould we fump the balcony again an they the two fedges or let's remain in our bed; We decided to leave the flat, last this time with empty hands and very quickly, because the balconies In Chermoniti we were allowed to go out for shopping

of our neighbours were also facing the gooden on could see us. George Dunn appeared in the next money larlier than usual. His face was pale and disturbed. "Yes, they broke in, sealed the door of the flot: " State Property". you'll have to remain here a few days untill things will be quiet again". If you get into the street now, you will be shot all the five of you! "But Counselor, said my father you are risk; ing your life He smiled , "My life?" "What about him? and pointed out at the deaf mile grandian, And wheel about His Reverence, It Similar ? I have to leave now, to arrange that you could be provided with some food There were not a few days ... Under the protection of the bishop Tit Simedel my family remained hidden on the territory of the Metropolitan Residence a long, long time.

Epilogue\_

I haffen to meet one rescuer George Russe after the war only, in Bucharest, acidently on the street. He was already in his eighties, but hardly changed. As a member of the National Committee for 14 storical Monuments in Rosamania he used to travel from monastery to morrest ex In a manastery, he told us once, his is feeling

7

Namy of his paintings can be seen with closters Vorenet and Putne and many damaged painting (icous) have been resorted by line in the dosters of Muntenie (Roumanie).

He used to risit us often My father was already retired and we, the three brothers, young engineers. Many common memories of those gloomy years were recalled: the relies in the Ghetto, the temporary Popavici-Certificate, the food gendarmes, the jumps of the healges, the deaf-mute guardien and of cours the bishof Tit Simedree who patronized the effort of George Russe for the resure of our family.

It one of his wists George Rumu had asked a question: What happened after the... "He was not able to go on with the rest of the sentence. We remained speachless all of us, too.

Only mother smiled and tried to help:
"You mean after we went forth? Will, it was "
complicated enough, you know. We ought to 107th
again our younger son some old works I'll ELENA
"What words?"
"Words like: Home Tree, Sun, Bread and Works"

8

This testimony has been published by courtesy of the Roumanian writer Marius Mircuin the third volume of his Trilogy. What happened with the Jews in Roumania during World War II. Amother live of the oppression, Chapter: The Prishof and his Counsellor, p. 95, Schition Glub-Papirus 1994, Derael.

The book is available at YAD VASHE

Po Carkman

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BEH SLACKMAN

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(03/5-5-7230

(Daughter of DAVID SLACKMAN)

MEIR SHAI (SLACKMAN)
Jet 04- 8386032
34756 Haife, 47/ BIKURIM etc.
10. 12475828

M. Show

Annex no. 9.

### THE METROPOLITAN CHURCH OF ALBA, CRIŞANA AND MARAMUREŞ ARCHIEPISCOPATE OF VAD, FELEAC AND CLUJ

400117 Cluj-Napoca, Avram Iancu Square no 18, tel: 0264-59.39.44; fax: 0264-59.51.84 Web: www.arhiepiscopia-ort-cluj.co, email: bartolomeu@arhiepiscopia-ort-cluj.org

METROPOLITAN OFFICE

### TESTIMONY

I met Metropolitan Tit Simedrea around 1950, while I was an inspector in education at the Romanian Patriarchy, and I became a close friend of his for the rest of his life.

In the clerical public opinion he was well known for the dignity in which, in 1944, when the soviet troupes entered Romania, he gave up his position as Metropolitan of Bukovina, as a person who had personally stated his opposition to a possible victory of the Bolshevik movement.

At that time, he was known as one of the most gifted scholars of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Quiet and hardworking, after his retirement he could be seen each day in the manuscript room at the Romanian Academy, together with scholars such as Panaitescu-Perpessicius and Şerban Cioculescu, examining old literary documents and writing the articles that were later published.

He was a man of sacrifice, of character and of courage. As a Metrpolitan in Czernowitz, he had hosted and had encouraged, almost subversively, the beginnings of the spiritual movement that will later become "the Burning Bush Movement", at Antim Monastery in Bucharest, whose members would later be convicted by the communist regime to hard years in prison.

He was a close friend of Patriarch Justinian, to whom he was also a father confessor.

I am fond of the memories of many days and hours of religious and cultural conversations, from which I had a lot to learn.

Before he definitively retired to Cernica Monastery, he spent his senior years living with his only daughter (married to engineer Mitu Popescu) from when he was a married priest, living in the constant joy of being near his grandchildren, Marina and Grigore Popescu.

The 10th of November 2007

BARTOLOMEU VALERIU ANANIA Archbishop and Metropolitan

26



MITROPOLIA CLUJULUI, ALBEI, CRIŞANEI ŞI MARAMUREŞULUI ARHIEPISCOPIA VADULUI, FELEACULUI ŞI CLUJULUI

400117 Cluj-Napoca, Piaţa Avram Iancu 18, tel: 0264-59:39.44; fax: 0264-59.51.84 web: www.arhiepiscopia-ort-cluj.ro, e-mail: bartolomeu@arhiepiscopia-ort-cluj.org

CABINETUL MITROPOLITULUI

### MÄRTURIE

Pe Mitropolitul TIT SIMEDREA l-am cunoscut în jurul anului 1950, pe când eram inspector pentru învățământ la Patriarhia Română, și i-am devenit apropiat până la sfârșitul vieții Sale.

În opinia publică eclesiastică era celebru prin demnitatea cu care, în 1944, odată cu intrarea trupelor sovietice în România, renunțase la scaunul de Mitropolit al Bucovinei, ca unul care se pronunțase public împotriva unei eventuale victorii a frontului bolsevic.

La vremea sa, era cunoscut drept cel mai înzestrat cărturar al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române. Pensionar liniștit și harnic, putea fi văzut zilnic în sala de manuscrise a Bibliotecii Academiei Române, alături de savanții Panaitescu-Perpessicius și Șerban Cioculescu, cercetând documente literare vechi și redactându-și articolele destinate publicării.

Era un om al dăruirii, caracterului și curajului. Ca Mitropolit la Cernăuți, găzduise și încurajase, aproape subversiv, începuturile mișcării spirituale care va deveni "Gruparea Rugului Aprins" de la Mânăstirea Antim din București, ai cărei membri aveau să fie maî târziu condamnați de către regimul comunist la ani grei de închisoare.

A fost un apropiat al Patriarhului Justinian, căruia îi devenise duhovnic. De numele său mă leagă amintirile numeroaselor zile și ceasuri de conversație pe teme religiose și culturale, din care am avut multe de învățat.

Înainte de a se rertrage definitiv în Mânăstirea Cernica, și-a petrecut bătrânețele în casa singurei sale fiice din vremea când era preot de mir, căsătorită cu inginerul Mitu Popescu, întru bucuria de a fi laolaltă cu nepoții săi, Marina și Grigore Popescu.

10 noiembrie 2007

Bartos wen V. Moura

†BARTOLOMEU VALERIU ANANIA Arhiepiscop și Mitroplit

Annex no. 10.

### ROMANIA ARCHIEPISCOPATE OF ROMAN

Office of the Bishop

5th Alexandru cel Bun Street Roman, Neamt Phone no: 0233/744680

Date 18.12.2007 No. 3323

### TO, THE INTERNATIONAL ECUMENICAL CENTER BUCHAREST

In response to your request of sending you information regarding the life and the activity of His Holiness **TIT SIMEDREA**, former Metropolitan of Bukovina, We, EFTIMIE, Bishop of Roman, would like to inform you that we have met this high clergyman of our Church in person and have the certainty that he is an outstanding personality of the Romanian Orthodox Church, an educated hierarch, a good public speaker and a dedicated minister, who was involved with much sacrifice in both the missionary lives of the orthodox Christians whom he led, and in the philanthropic aspects of serving fellow men of other confessions.

Having this aspect in mind, I would like to underline that, while he was in Czernowitz as a Metropolitan of Bukovina, he helped many Jews escape deportation to concentration camps; fact mentioned at that time by representatives of the Mosaic Cult in Romania.

He was a generous, dignified man, devoted to his country and his people, who strongly disagreed with any extremist religious and political movement, against which he protested publicly each time he had the opportunity to do so.

We appreciate your interest in shedding light into the historical truth regarding the life, the activity and the wonderful deeds of this great hierarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

We bestow our blessing upon you, for you to succeed in fulfilling this initiative.

### **EFTIMIE**

### **BISHOP OF ROMAN**

### 22

### ROMÂNIA EPISCOPIA ROMANULUI

Cabinet episcop Str. Alex. Cel Bun, nr. 5 Roman, jud. Neamt Tel 0233/744680



Data: 18,12,2007 Nr. 3323

### CĂTRE, CENTRUL ECUMENIC INTERNAȚIONAL BUCUREȘTI

Urmare a solicitării dumneavoastră de a vă trimite date cu privire la viața și activitatea înalt Prea Sfințitului TIT SIMEDREA, fost mitropolit al Bucovinei, Noi, EFTIMIE, Episcop al Romanului, vă aducem la cunoștință că l-am cunoscut personal pe acest înalt prelat al Bisericii noastre, și am convingerea că este o personalitate marcantă a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, un ierarh foarte bine pregătit, bun orator, bun slujitor, care s-a implicat cu jertfelnicie atât în viața pastoral-misionară a creștinilor ortodocși pe care i-a păstorit, cât în latura filantropică a slujirii sale față de semenii săi de alte confesiuni.

În acest sens, scot în evidență faptul că, în perioada cât a fost la Cernăuți mitropolit al Bucovinei, a ajutat mulți evrei să nu fie încartiruiți în lagăre; fapt menționat în acel timp chiar de câtre reprezentanți ai Cultului Mozaic din România.

Era o fire generoasă, cu o ținută demnă, iubitor de țară și de neam, cu aversiune față de orice mișcare politică și religioasă extremistă, împotriva cărora s-a pronunțat în public ori de câte ori a avut ocazia.

Apreciem interesul dumneavoastră de a scoate la lumină adevărul istoric privind viața, activitatea și faptele mari ale acestui ilustru ierarh al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române.

Vă acordăm binecuvântarea noastră pentru a duce la bun sfârșit această inițiativă.

FEFTIMIE

EPISCOPUL ROMANULUI

Annex no. 11.

### 17.XI.2007

To the "International Center Bucharest"

In response to the request of Mr. Dumitru Stavrache, regarding His Holiness Tit Simedrea, I state the following:

I know His Holiness Metropolitan Tit Simedrea in person, as editor of religious books at the "Typography for Religious Books in Bucharest", within the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate.

He was a man of honor and of high clerical conduct, speaker of Greek and Latin. He was always surrounded by scholars and by honorable persons.

As far as I know, he was not part of the iron-guard, nor of any other extremist groups, because he was a balanced man in all aspects of his life.

Therefore I sign the present document Bishop Gherasim of Ramnic

anexa nr. L

21

14. XI. 2004

Cothe, Central Intermational Bereussti"

Devontre Steurener Che, cer priver les Tonat Pren Stinte Leel Tet Simedre relatez ecomentaciale:

Am eunescut personel pe Trad ful Theo Stint & Mitropold Tit Simeana Ra diensitor de contineliquese, kon 1, Tipografico Cantilor Brownti Buccerente, in cadrul Patrian Rici Onterdone Pomione.

Il fost un mare omole omenie, de inalta:

timuta bisezianca, cumo contende limbra:

greaca si latina. Todeacuna ero incon
funat de moni ocorreni de stiintai si tiunta

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moralai
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Nu a facent pente, din cirse eurose eu, den
omiscarse legionara sau alte meiscari
extremiste, fiind een om al ecfil brulei
in toale

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Annex no. 12.

### THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE RESISTANCE THROUGH RELIGION

### Interview-testimony with father Sergiu Rosca

In response to the request of Mister Shai Meir, I had a meeting with father Sergiu Roşca, one of the most famous editors of papers issued in Basarabia between 1941 and 1944: "Raza", "Basarabia", "Luminătorul", presently refugee in Romania, living in Bucharest and aged 95.

After I informed father Roşca Marcel about the efforts made by Mister Shai Meir, in order for Metropolitan Tit Simedrea to receive the title "Righteous among Men", his answer was guick:

"Metropolitan Tit Simedrea fully deserves it! We all know, during those awful times, that his holiness, together with Patriarch Nicodim, had discussed with Antonescu about stopping deportations, which were absurd and lacking any Christian sense. However, he was categorical, his involvement in this issue must not be known, either because of his humility, either to avoid triggering German oppression, because the Germans were everywhere...

Years after, I even talked to my colleague, pr. Vasile Tepordei, that there were so many unjust discussions about the mayor of Czernowitz in that period, Mister Popovici and we wanted to write about this too, but then we changed our mind and thinking we cannot ignore the metropolitan's whish of remaining anonymous...

I am glad that the truth is finally out in the open! It always is... Just that sometimes you have to be patient..."

This is the testimony of father Sergiu Roşca, written during the visit paid to him on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2007, at his residence in Bucharest.

Chancellor, Prof. drd. Gheorghe Constantin Nistoroiu

The Ecumenical Foundation Saint Apostle Andrei

Registered with the National Registry under number 3129/B/1996 – civil sentence 238/1996 Address Bucharest – 6th Abanosului Street, flat 3, 2nd district TELEPHONE: 0724902449; 0729137942, EMAIL:fnd.ecsf.apostolandrei@gmail.com



# **INSTITUTUL NATIONAL**

®

# **REZISTENTA PRIN RELIGIE**

# Interviu-mărturie cu preotul Sergiu Roșca

La rugămintea domnului Shai Meir, am avut o întâlnire cu preotul Sergiu Roşca, unul dintre cei mai cunoscuți redactori ai ziarelor ce apăreau în Basarabia şi Bucovina în perioada 1941-1944, "Raza", "Basarabia", "Luminătorul", în prezent refugiat în România, locuind în Bucureşti şi având vârsta de 95 de ani.

După ce l-am informat pe pr. Rosca Marcel în legătură cu demersurile făcute de domnul Shai Meir pentru ca Mitropolitului Tit Simedrea să i se acorde titlul de "Drept între popoare "răspunsul acestuia a fost promt:

"Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea merită din plin! Cu toții știam, în acele zile cumplite că Sfinția Sa împreună cu Patriarhul Nicodim vorbise cu Antonescu să înceteze deportările care erau absurde și lipsite de orice noimă creștinească. Fusese însă categoric, nu trebuia să se afle că se amestecase în această problemă, poate din smerenie sau poate din frica de a nu declanșa prigoana nemților, care erau peste tot ...

Peste ani chiar am vorbit cu colegul meu, pr. Vasile Tepordei, despre faptul că pe nedrept se vorbea atâta de primarul Cernăuților de atunci, domnul Popovici și am și vrut să scriem despre asta, dar apoi ne-am răzgândit la gândul că nu puteam nesocoti dorința Mitropolitului de a nu se afla despre acest fapt ...

Mă bucur ca iată, adevărul iese totuşi la suprafață ! Aşa se întâmplă întotdeauna... Uneori trebuie să ai răbdare însă ... "

Aceasta este mărturia pr. Sergiu Roşca , consemnată cu ocazia vizitei făcute la data de 22 noiembrie 2007, la domiciliul acestuia din Bucureşti.

Rector,
Prof. drd. Gheorghe Constantin Nistoroiu
Cheorghe Constantin Nistoroiu



FUNDATIA ECUMENICA SFANTUL APOSTOL ANDREI luregistrati in Registrul Najonal la numărul 31/29/81/996—sentinga civilă 238/1996 Sediol mur. BUCURESTI — str. Abannsalui ur.6., bl.3, sector I TELEFON:0724902449;0729137942-EMAIL:fnd.ecsf.apostolandrei@gmail.com

Annex no. 13.

# Parliament of Romania Senate

Tit Simedrea is one of the personalities of the clergy for which I, personally, have great respect. I met him over 50 years ago at Cernica, the place where he had become a monk in 1924. I was a fresh History graduate and I had found out that the honorable 80-year-old was the former Metropolitan of Bukovina, retired in January 1945. I had read his studies in religious magazines ("The Metropolitan Church of Oltenia" and "The Romanian Orthodox Church"). And one of these studies, regarding the beginnings of monastic life in Wallachia, was extremely helpful to me for my doctor's degree.

The discussions we had during 1962-1963 revealed a complex, accomplished and profoundly humane character. I later found out that he did not only have a PhD in Theology in Bucharest, but also one in Law at Iasi, that he had a wide ecumenical education, having studied in protestant schools in Montpellier and Paris.

In an ecclesiastical environment, where he had the possibility of talking more freely about the territories taken over by the Soviet Union, Basarabia and Bukovina, he would invoke these two regions particularly; in December1935 he was Bishop of Hotin with residence in Bălți. And in June 1940 he was Metropolitan of Bukovina, being invested in March 1941, in Suceava, in a period in when Czernowitz was under the occupation of the Red Army.

I know very well that this cultivated metropolitan of great character was, serving in an environment with a very compact Jewish population, close to this population. His humanity was reflected in his well-known attempts to convince Antonescu to diminish these retaliations, pleading – with personal risk – for saving the Jews in Bukovina and Basarabia.

What he did in this respective reminded me of the discussions we had in Cernica at the beginning of the 60s of the last century: I can vouch that this hierarch was one of the persons most familiarized with the civilization of Ancient Israel, who had a profound knowledge of Jewish-Christian life, as it was reflected in the New Testament.

Metropolitan Tit Simedrea was a bright personality in a dark period of our history. One of the most important representatives of our Church and a symbol of his scholar and humanitarian mission as well.

Acad. Răzvan Theodorescu Senator

Bucharest, the 24th of September 2007



# Parlamentul României Senat

Tit Simedrea a fost una dintre figurile ecleziastice pentru care personal, nutresc un respect deosebit. L-am întâlnit cu aproape cincizeci de ani în urmă la mânăstirea Ceruca, locul în care se călugărise în 1924. Eram un absolvent proaspăt ieșit de pe bâncile Facultății de Istorie și aflam că venerabilul octogenar era fostul mitropolit al Bucovinei retras din Scaun în ianuarie 1945. Îi citisem studule apărute în reviste bisericești ("Mitropolia Olteniei" și "Biserica Ortodoxă Română"). Iar unul dintre acestea, dedicat începuturilor vieții monastice în Țara Românească, mi-a fost extrem de util în anii doctoratului.

Discuțiile purtate prin 1962-1963 îmi arătau un personaj complex, cultivat și de o adâncă umanitate. Ulterior am aflat că era nu numai licențiat în teologie la București, ci și în științe juridice la Iași, că avea o largă educație ecumenică studiind în școli protestante, la Montpellier și Paris.

Într-un cadru ecleziastic unde se putea vorbi cu mai multă ușurință de teritoriile răpite de Uniunea Sovietică, Basarabia și Bucovina, Mitropolitul Tit îmi evoca exact aceste două provincii românești; în decembrie 1935 era episcop de Hotin cu reședința la Bălți. Iar în iunie 1940 era ales mitropolit al Bucovinei, investit fiind în martie 1941 intronizat fiind la Suceava într-o vreme în care Cernăuții erau ocupați de Armata Roșie.

Știu bine că acest mitropolit-cărturar de cea mai bună factură a fost, păstoriud într-un mediu unde se găsea o populație evreească foarte compactă, un apropiat al acesteia. Larga sa umanitate s-a reflectat în bine știutele sale încercări pe lângă Antonescu pentru a diminua represaliile gândite de acesta, pledând – cu riscuri personale - pentru salvarea evreilor din spațiul bucovineano-basarabean.

Ceea ce a făcut el pe acel plan mi-a reamintit de discuțiile de la Cernica de la începutul anilor '60 ai veacului trecut: pot depune mărturie că acest înalt ierarh a fost unul dintre cei mult familiarizați cu civilizația vechiului Israel, un adânc cunoscător al vieții iudeo-creștine așa cum era reflectată în Noul Testament.

Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea a fost o figură luminoasă într-o perioadă întunecată a istoriei noastre. O figură de primă mărime a Bisericii noastre și o emblemă a misiunii sale cărturărești și umanitare, deopotrivă.

Acad. Razvah Theodorescu

București - 24 septembrie 2007

Annex no. 14.

# Statement

Through the intervention of my history of Romanian literature teacher, the literary critic and academician Şerban Cioculescu, I had the great opportunity of spending some time with His Holiness Tit Simedrea, Metropolitan of Bukovina during the Second World War.

I personally knew this high prelate of the Romanian Orthodox Church, a devout, learned man, who welcomed us with warmth and friendliness at his Cernica retreat, sharing his knowledge in the Bible, but also in History, Archeology, etc. His face revealed kindness, but also the determination of one who shepherded souls.

That is why I was not surprised to find out from persons close to the Church, from people of good faith, that, while he was a bishop in newly recovered Bukovina, he had managed to dismiss a decision according to which 40.000 Jews were to be deported – deported and, in all likelihood, exterminated. Metropolitan Tit Simedrea had personally and insistently asked Antonescu to dismiss this order. And he had been heard. It seems that at least 20.000 Jews were saved.

I am also acquainted with many individual rescues of persons whom the metropolitan hid in the basement of the metropolitan palace. I cherish the memory of a kind, righteous and deeply noble man.

> Barbu Cioculescu 20.12.2007

Declaratio

Prin mylogres printelin men, pedernul de istain literation renerse, eist al literation and aut ace de micional Sulan Gouverne aux aut fusate ocepic de a fi in mai unto windure in pelagua / fintis fele Vit himelies, mi tryphet al messeuli in ami celui de al Inter esto.

und'al.

The compact in parries auter fuelt slepton al listeries orthorze ensite fe me one cucini, endit, cal we private in retiguele node la Ceruice and desdictue of pertatue, me triudu-me din intimale rate acceptant libblie, des of istorie, auteurle rate acceptant libblie, des of istorie, auteurle pet althe. I se ater fe fet alle sutes, des of the faction unui foroto de suflet.

he area we are fort wiret it affer, Liv ceraris apapirte lisericii, de le persone de hour aelna; 4, fe and father in bucones a pune recent reacutta, ighitize to inlettre orleaps suprie nest usurous a fi defortat. La prosincie 40.000 de ener- deputet or, in tretz fortallitie, lichthit! Net of dital Tet Simelies intolocuise fermed to trymanyabil put mesa, de do hu-i cu enlept amelien deaport of purse ascult. Seface a cel purph 20.000 de enci au fort wefit relat. An amptale of do was will relieve ind's ideals, de vitue je cue mit oprlitul le-a asuns in chilire welt Holdene. Pasty awinter wan ou la miers , deft, de work de mutate en our Berten Goucles 20 XII 2007

# DECLARATIE

Prin mijlocirea părintelui meu, profesorul de istoria literaturii române, criticul literar și academicianul Șerban Cioculescu, am avut fericita ocazie de a fi în mai multe rânduri în preajma Sfinției sale Tit Simedrea, mitropolit al Bucovinei în anii celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial.

Am cunoscut în persoana acestui înalt slujitor al bisericii ortodoxe române pe un om cucernic, erudit, care ne primea în retragerea de la Cernica cu deschidere și prietenie, nutrindu-ne din întinsele sale cunoștințe biblice, dar și istorie, arheologie și altele. I se citea pe față blândețea, dar și hotărârea unui păstor de suflete.

De aceea, nu am fost mirat să aflu, din cercuri apropiate bisericii, de la persoane de bună credință că, pe când păstorea în Bucovina ce fusese recuperată, izbutise să înlăture o decizie conform căreia urmau a fi deportați din provincie 40.000 de evrei – deportați și, cu toată probabilitatea lichidați. Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea intervenise personal pe lângă mareșalul Antonescu, cerându-i cu tărie anularea ordinului. Și fusese ascultat. Se pare că cel puțin 20.000 de evrei au fost salvați.

Am cunoștință și de mai multe salvări individuale de victime pe care mitropolitul le-a ascunș în clădirile metropolitane. Păstrez amintirea unui om luminos, drept, de o nobilă demnitate umană.

Barbu Cioculescu

20.12.207

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Annex no. 15.

# Testimony,

It is difficult for me to talk about my grandfather. In any case, not anywhere and anytime. Because it is as difficult for me to enter the universe he left behind, which is always present with me. I don't even know how to start, maybe by describing the effigy carved in stone, on the cross on his grave, at Cernica: the story of the cormorant tearing his own flesh to feed his children, of paternal sacrifice, of passing from one to the others, to descendants, to those who would follow in order to finish what he had begun.

Peasant from Vlaşca, he grew through studies, he rose towards the light, he gained redemption through learning, through his love of God, but he never forgot where he started from and helped his fellow men many times in their attempt to follow the right path in life. Military priest during the first world war, he lived the entire ordeal of war in the first line, and granted the peace of last communion to many heroes fallen at duty. When, with the ardent unconsciousness of the child, I was later on playing with the medals grandpa had received, I could not realize how many tragic events lay behind them, and grandfather, in order to spear me the aggressions of life, avoided telling them to me.

Then I remember the long hours of distress when, after my father was arrested, he was the only support of the family, and what a support he was. He was vigorous like an oak and imposed respect upon any investigator who tried to intimidate or to threaten us, because he was powerful in himself, powerful in his faith, powerful in his love of God.

He always pushed me towards learning, not to gather information, but to know what I have to do with my life. I remember that one night, waking up very late, I saw him bent over his books, over old documents, deep in his study. During the day he took care of us, and at night, after prayer, he would immerge in the world of books, only to come back at morning, never tired, never complaining of tiredness.

He was often visited by the intellectuals of the time, who came to listen to him, Ion Marin Sadoveanu, Alexandru Elian, Vladimir Străinu, Perpessicius, P.P. Panaitescu, C.C. Giurescu, Şerban Cioculescu, G.M. Cantacuzino, the painter Marius Bunescu and others. The poor people could hardly make ends meet, but they fed with the sparks of these discussions, which often ended deep into the night.

At that time, it was more difficult for me to understand his confinement at the Darvari Hermitage. I was a child and I could not understand why grandfather spent less time with us, but he made me understand that he had chosen a path that required more sacrifices, the monastic life. Then, later on, when he settled at Cernica, I visited him as often as I could, in his house by the lake, in which he was a hermit, surrounded by books.

This is how I like to remember him, surrounded by books, by icons, wrapped in the scent of mirth and basil that drenched his clothes and that entranced me every time he gave me a warm embrace. He rarely spoke of the period when he was a metropolitan in Czernowitz. I later found out that in those harsh times of war he helped Jews escape deportation and death. I know and I can just see grandfather going to Antonescu and rightfully asking him to cease the deportations towards death. This is no legend, because I know how determined and how just he was when he knew he was right and I know that's what

he did. And there was no other way, because he had reached the depths of faith, he was enlightened, he believed in a world in which mankind was united by a faith in one God, he believed in Christian love, not in the hatred that, pitifully, was the law of those times.

Each Easter, rabbi Şafran, who has taken many possible interpretations of recent history to his grave, and then his successor, sent us a pack with wafers and ritual wine, together with traditional greetings. I never understood why rabbi Şafran, in his writings when he mentioned my grandfather's intervention in favor of the Jews in Basarabia, insisted on adding he was an anti-Semite. I don't think an anti-Semite would have acted like my grandfather did, and I never heard him discrediting Jews or other people of different faiths.

He was a pioneer of ecumenism, of enlightened orthodoxy and this is how he remained until the end of his life.

At Cernica, regardless of the weather, he crossed the forest on a path as an exercise of diving into nature and in his own self. This is how he left, in a December as cold as this one, to a place full of light, where there is no pain and no sorrow.

We, his descendants, are left to bear him in our prayers in church, but also in the priceless chambers of our souls.

If there is one thing that I painfully regret most of the time it is that, being caught in the whirlwind of time, life and the mundane, I did not spend more time with my grandfather, in any case as much as I would have liked to. This is why, when by accident a survivor talks about him, like it was the case when we launched the Bible on CD-ROM, made by the Institute that I managed, in Cluj, his Holiness Anania said:

"He was the last hierarch, and scholar of our church, extremely cultivated, and I was one of his few young friends, because almost every week he would come over to my place and it was a real pleasure to talk to me for one, two or three hours. I am very fond of his memory" – I am very touched.

I think grandfather has done many good things in his life, since his memory is so present in people's minds, and this is undoubtedly the measure of these, the universe that survives after him, for many years to come.

Grigore Popescu Bucharest

18th of December 2007

## Mărturie.

Îmi este greu să vorbesc despre bunicul. În orice caz nu oricând și nici oricum. Pentru că mi-e la fel de greu să pătrund în universul lăsat de el și care stăruie mereu prezent în mine. Nici nu stiu cum să încep, poate descriind efigia care e săpată în piatră pe crucea ce îi stă la căpătâi, la Cernica: povestea cormoranului care își smulge din propria sa carne pentru a-și hrăni puii, al sacrificiului patern, al trecerii din unul în alții, în urmasi, în cei ce vor să vină pentru a-i continua ceea ce începuse. Tăran din Vlașca, s-a luminat prin studii, s-a ridicat spre lumină, s-a mântuit prin carte.

prin dragoste față de Dumnezeu, dar nu a uitat de unde a plecat și și-a ajutat de multe ori semenii să o ia pe calea cea dreaptă. Preot militar în timpul primului război mondial a trăit întregul calvar al războiului în prima linie și a dat împăcarea împărtăsaniei ultimului eas multor eroi ai neamului căzuți la datorie. Când cu inconștiența febrilă a copilului. ult mai târziu mă jucam cu medaliile primite de bunicul nu îmi dădeam seama câte tâmplări tragice puteau să ascundă ele, lar bunicul, pentru a mă feri de agresiunile ieții, nu se grăbea să mi le povestească.

poi îmi aduc aminte de lungile ceasuri de restriste când, după arestarea tatei, era ingurul sprijin al familiei și ce sprijin. Era viguros ca un stejar și impunea oricărui nchetator care încerca să ne intimideze și să ne amenințe, pentru că era puternic în sine, outernic în credință, puternic în dragostea către Dumnezeu.

Mă împingea la carte, mă îndemna să învăț nu pentru ca să știu, ci să știu ce să fac cu viata mea. Îmi aduc aminte că trezindu-mă într-o noapte într-un ceaș târziu, l-am surpins aplecat peste cărți, peste hrisoave vechi studiind cu osârdie. Ziua vedea de noi, iar nosptea după rugăciune se cobora în lumea cărților, revenind din nou dimineața, parcă niciodată atins de oboseală, de care nu s-a plâns niciodată.

Îl vizitau ades intelectualii vremii, care veneau să îl asculte, Ion Marin Sadoveanu, Alexandru Elian, Vladimir Străinu, Perpessicius, P.P. Panaitescu, C.C. Giurescu, Şerban Cioculescu, G.M. Cantacuzino, pictorul Marius Bunescu și alții. Trăiau săracii din punct de vedere material de pe o zi pe alta, dar se aprindeau din scanteile discutiilor ce se întindeau până la ore târzii din noapte.

I-am înțeles mai greu atunci recluziunea de la Schitul Darvari. Eram copil și nu înțelegeam de ce bunicul stă mai puțin cu noi, dar el mă făcea să înțeleg că își alesese o cale care presupune sacrificii, calea monastică. Apoi, mai târziu, când s-a așezat la Cernica, îl vizitam cât puteam de des în casa dinspre lac în care "sihastrea" înconjurat de

Așa îmi place să îl țin în amintire, înconjurat de cărți, de icoane, în parfum de sniimă și busuioc care îi persista în haine și care mă îmbăta de câte ori mă îmbrățișa cu căldură. Vorbea rareori despre perioada în care a fost mitropolit la Cernăuți. Am aflat mai târziu că sub vremurile grele ale războiului a ajutat evrei să scape de la deportare și moarte. Stiu și parcă îl văd pe bunicul ducându-se la Antonescu și cerându-i drept să renunte la deportările către moarte. Nu e o legendă căci îl știu ce dârz și ce drept era când credea că are dreptate și știu că așa a făcut. Si nici nu se putea altfel căci ajunsese aproape de izvoarele credinței, era luminat și iluminat, credea într-o lume a oamenilor uniți într-un singur Dumnezeu, credea în iubire creștină, nu în ura care, din păcate, devenise atunci lege.

2:

De fiecare Paște, rabinul Şafran, cel care a dus în mormânt multe posibile dezlegări ale istoriei recente și apoi succesorul său, ne trimitea un pachet cu azima și cu vinul ritual, însoțit de urări tradiționale. N-am înțeles niciodată de ce rabinul Şafran, în scrierile sale ulterioare când a pomenit de intervenția bunicului în favoarea evreilor din Basarabia a ținut să adauge că era antisemit. Nu cred că un antisemit ar fi procedat așa cum a făcut bunicul și eu nu l-am auzit niciodată vorbind urât despre evrei și nici despre alții de altă credintă.

A fost un pionier al ecumenismului, al ortodoxismului luminat și așa a rămas fot restul victil.

La Cernica, pe orice vreme, traversa pădurea pe un drum îngălbenit ca un exercițiu de cufundare în natură și în sine. Așa a plecat într-un decembrie rece ca acesta către un loc luminat, unde nu este nici durere, nici suspin.

Am rămas noi, urmașii, să îl pomenim în lăcașuri de închinăciune dar mai ales în lăcașurile fără de pret ale sufletului.

Dacă este un lucru pe care îl resimt cu durere descori este faptul că luat de timp, de viață și de cotidian nu am petrecut mai mult timp cu bunicul, în orice caz nu atât cât mi-aș fi dorit. De aceea când întâmplarea face ca vreun supraviețuitor să pomenească despre el, așa cum a fost când am lansat Biblia pe CD-ROM, elaborată de Institutul al cărui director eram, la Clui, când Prea Sfințitul Bartolomeu Anania a spus:

"A fost ultimul ierarh, mare cărturar al bisericii noastre, de o vastă cultură și m-am numărat printre puținii săi tineri prieteni, pentru că aproape săptămânal venea la mine în casă, și cra o adevarată încântare să stai de vorbă cu el, un ceas două trei. Îi port o amintire scumpă ", mă simt foarte mișcat.

Mă găndesc că bunicul a făcut multe lucruri bune la viața sa de vreme ce amintirea lui e atût de prezentă în conștiința oamenilor, iar aceasta este neîndoielnic măsura acestora, universul care îi supraviețulește peste vremuri.

> Grigore Popescu Bucuresti

18 decembrie 2007



Annex no. 16.

From: vladimir deveselu [mailto: vladimirdeveselu@yahoo.fr

Sent: 18th of December 2007 16:33

### **STATEMENT**

# Metropolitan Tit Simedrea

My memories about Metropolitan Tit Simedrea are family memories. As a child, during the first years of the war, I often met him at the house if engineer Mitu Popescu, his son-in-law and relative with my father. From the very beginning, I was drawn to this imposing character, with very kind eyes that I cannot forget. He knew how to treat children, showing them a lot of attention, and I then learned many wise things from him, said with grace and modesty. The advice of "Father Priest", as I called him, has always been useful to me, advice on how to treat your fellow man, stories in which culture always prevailed. In those difficult times, Metropolitan Tit Simedrea was a dignified servant of God, when he had to react against the persecution of Jews in Bukovina. As the Bishop of Bukovina, he decidedly opposed deportation, even confronting Marshal Antonescu. I found out about this later from my father, commander Popescu-Deveselu, who was in charge of navy issues within the Office of the state leader during the second part of the war. My father was always close to Metropolitan Tit Simedrea. Passionate about history, after the war he took part in real symposiums held by this high prelate at his house and attended, besides my father, by Şerban Cioculescu, the researcher in byzantine history dr. Elian, Ion Marin Sadoveanu, current Metropolitan Anania, painter Marius Bunescu and many others.

Reading the impressive book of the great scholar Rabi Alexandru Şafran, I was surprised to read a statement that, if I may admit, hurt me: "The Metropolitan of Bukovina, Tit Simedrea... was a well-known anti-Semite..." (A Coal From the Fire, Memoirs, EH, p.85). And it hurt me even more because dr. Şafran still presents the servant of God, he who, as a true Christian, was fully involved in stopping deportation convoys. It is hard to believe that such a contradiction could exist!

Vladimir Popescu-Deveselu Artistic consultant for the "George Enescu" Philharmonics Chevalier de Arts et des Lettres de la France

From: vladimir deveselu [mailto:vladimirdeveselu@yahoo.fv] Sent: 18 decembrie 2007 16:33

#### DECLARATIE

## Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea

Amintirile mele despre Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea sunt amintiri de familie. Copil fiind, în anii de început ai războiului, îl întâlneam adesea în casa inginerului Mitu Popescu, ginerele său rudă cu tatăl meu. Am fost de la început atras de acest personai impunător, cu niste ochi plini de bunătate, pe care nu îi uit. Stia cum să-i trateze pe copii. acordându-le atenție și multe lucruri înțelepte le-am aflat pe-atunci de la el. spuse cu har si simplitate. Mi-au folosit mereu sfaturile lui "Tata Popule" cum îi spuneam, sfaturi despre cum să te porti cu semenii tăi. povești în care cultura era întotdeauna la loc de cinste. În acele vremuri grele Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea a avut purtarea demnă a slujitoruluj luj Dumnezeu, când a trebuit să ja atitudine împotriva persecutiilor suferite de evreii din Bucovina. Ca Prim Prelat al Bucovinei, s-a opus cu hotărâre deportărilor, înfruntându-l chiar pe Maresalul Antonescu. Am aflat acest lucru mai târziu de la tatăl meu. comandorul Popescu-Deveselu, care a răspuns de problemele marinei la Cabinetul conducătorului statului în a doua parte a războjului. Tatăl meu i-a fost mereu apropiat Mitropolitului Tit. Simedrea. Pasionat de istorie, participa după război la adevărate simpozioane pe care acest mare prelat le găzduia în casa sa si unde veneau printre alții, în afara tatălui meu Serban Cioculescu, bizantinologul dr. Elian, Ion Marin Sadoveanu, actualul mitropolit Anania, pictorul Marius Bunescu si multi altii. Citind cartea impresionantă a marelui erudit rabinul Alexandru Şafran, am fost surprins să găsesc o afirmație care, îmi permit să spun, m-a durut: "Mitropolitul Bucovinei, Tit Simedrea... era un antisemit notoriu..." (Un tăciune smuls flăcărilor, Memorii, EH, p.85). Si m-a durut cu atât mai mult cu cât în continuare dr. Safran îl prezintă pe slujitorul lui Dumnezeu, cel care ca un adevărat creștin sa implicat întru totul pentru oprirea convoaielor deportării. E greu de crezut că ar putea funcționa o asemenea contradicție!

Vladimir Popescu-Deveselu Consultant artistic la Filarmonica "George Enescu" Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres de la France

Annex no. 17.

Vice-president of the Russian National Academy International Academy of Science

PhD in Medical Science **Bilici Gabriel Lazarevici** Head of the North-West and Eastern Europe branch of the Psychoanalysis Institute

Phone/fax: 0074957518418 Email: haigalen@mail.ru

### Statement

- I, the undersigned Prof. Bilici G.L. state that the Şlacman family, made of:
  - 1. Slacman David
  - 2. Slacman Ida
  - 3. Slacman Bea
  - 4. Slacman Gari
  - 5. Slacman (Shai) Meir

have been saved from deportation to a concentration camp, during the second world war, by:

- George Russu, icon painter within the Metropolitan Church of Bukovina
- Metropolitan of Bukovina, Tit Simedrea

Putting their own lives at risk, they hid them (in the basement of the Metropolitan Palace in Czernowitz) and provided them with living conditions.

Professor G. Bilici October 2007

Stamp of the institute

Personal stamp of the professor

13 Академик Российской Академии Естественных Наук Вице-президент Российской Национальной Академии Ювенологии, Академик Международной Академии Hayк (IAS) Доктор медицинских наук, профессор БИЛИЧ Габриэль Лазаревич Директор Северо-Западного филиала Восточно-Европейского Института Психоанализа тел./факс (8-816-2) 66-12-94, (8-812) 245-20-71 +749.5 75/84/8 E-mail: haigalen & mail. 24 Chugemens cm 60 Center Unakness Bulle T. S. coods aw, Emo Center Unakness Dabug, 1. Unakness Dabug, 2. Unakness Uge, 3. Ulsakness Ber. 4. 111 1010 1000 1000 JULIUK leat Paris, Meng Sund Constant on genermanin & KOHB. - xygosiatilka- UKOHOMUCISA GEORGE RUSSY - Mumponomire Synobulackow Koniophie upsmaill ux lo grelles Xo ilonocra u chadrea ill been HEDDXOGULIBUU, PUCKIFI CBORIS Heustow Tipopsecent Thulles

Annex no. 18.

# Open letter

Fumbling about in my father's library when I was about 12, among the many law, philosophy and literature books, I found three volumes with black covers, well hidden behind the others, since it was the '50s. It was the black book of Jewish suffering in Romania between 1940 and 1944, written by Matatias Carp, a good friend of my parents. Reading about the horrors and the baseness committed in that period, I could not, at that age, help myself from looking around fearing that those with whom I played football on the street might end up like that or that some of their parents were among those who oppressed the Jews. About the same time, I was lucky enough to make friends in school whom I could never imagined doing such a thing, but there were still some suspicions. One of them, who was my life-long friend, Grigore Popescu, also lived near me, so I asked my parents if they knew his parents. To my great surprise, not only did they know them, but they knew about the history of their family, and especially about Grigore's grandfather, Metropolitan Tit Simedrea. They told me that, during the war, there were rumors in the Jewish community about this high servant of the clergy who really helped Jews in Bukovina and Transnistria when he was a metropolitan. During the troubled years after the war, they had even met him at the Popescu's and he confirmed that, indeed, he had helped Jews in Bukovina, his help being extremely important – he saved them from certain death. Intrigued, and still having the doubts of the easily impressionable teenager, I asked Grigore if I could meet his grandfather. Very proud of himself, he called me over to his house on the first occasion and we kids spoke with a gentle, friendly man, eager to share his multilateral knowledge. At that time, I was fascinated by his byzantine knowledge and the setting and the atmosphere of that discussion are still alive in my mind. More meetings followed and then, together with Grigore, I visited him several times at Cernica. In my memory, he still is that kind man, smiling when he saw us with our entire lives ahead of us, with a sense of humor but also thoughtful, wise but not pedagogical.

Slowly, the shock I had while reading the black book faded, and I realized that, in fact, not all people are mean, brutal or senseless; most of them are not anti-Semites and would not be capable of committing such crimes, but certain people illustrate precisely the opposite of evil and are capable of fighting it and throughout their lives they chose to reveal and correct it.

Metropolitan Tit Simedrea was one of the people chosen to fulfill this noble mission.

Henri Balter 160 George Str. No.1804 Ottawa, ON CANADA

Email: henri.balter@sympatico.ca

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#### Scrisoare deschisa

In biblioteca tatalui meu printre multe carti multele carti juridice, filosofice si de literature cotrobaind eu pe la varsta de 12 am dat de 3 volume cu coperti negre, bine ascunse in spatele celorlalte, doar erau anii cincizeci . Era cartea neagra a suferintelor evreilor in Romania in perioada 1940-1944 scrisa de Matatias Carp un bun prieten al parintilor. Citind ororile si miseliile ce s-au comis nu puteam la acea varsta sa nu ma uit in jur si sa ma tem ca si cei cu care bateam mingea pe strada nu o sa ajunga sa fie la fel ori ca unii din parintii lor au si facut parte din cei ce au oprimat pe evrei. Tot cam in acea perioada am avut norocul sa ma imprietenesc la scoala cu multi colegi pe care nu-mi inchipuiam ca ar face asa ceva , dar totusi unele suspiciuni mai ramaneau. Unul din ei cu care am ramas prieten de o viata Grigore Popescu statea si aproape de mine, asa ca i-am intrebat pe parinti mei daca nu-i cunosc pe parintii lui. Spre marea mea surpriza nu numai ca ii cunosteau dar stiau si despre istoria famillilei lor si in special de bunicul lui Grigore, Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea. Mi-au povestit ca in timpul razbojului in comunitatea evreiasca erau zvonuri despre acest inalt slujitor al bisericii care ar fi ajutat real pe evreii din Bucovina si Transnistria pe timpul cand era mitropolit. In decursul anilor tulburi de dupa razboi se si intalnisera cu el in casa familiei Popescu si el le-a confirmat ca intradevar a ajutat pe evreii din Bucovina, ajutorul fiind major- i-a scapat de la o moarte sigura. Intrigat si inca avand dubiile tanarului adolescent usor influentabil, I-am intrebat pe Grigore daca il pot cunoaste pe bunicul lui. Foarte mandru cu prima ocazie m-a chemat la el si noi pustii am vorbit cu un om bland, prietenos, dornic sa impartaseasca din cunostiintele lui multilatera Pe vremea aceea am fost fascinat de cunostiintele lui bizantologice si mai am inca in minte cadrul si ambianta acelei discutii. Au urmat si altele , pe urma impreuna cu Grigore l-am vizitat de cateva ori la Cernica. A ramas in amintirea mea acelasi om de suflet zambind cand ii vedea pe cei ca noi la inceputul vietii, plin de umor dar si sfatos, intelept dar nu didactic.

Incet incet socul avut la citirea Cartii negru s-a estompat iar eu mi-am dat seama ca de fapt oamenii nu sunt toti rai, brutali ori fara minte ; majoritatea nu sunt asa nu sunt antisemiti si nu ar fi in stare sa comita astfel de crime, dar anumite persoane exemplifica exact contrariul raului sunt capabili sa-l combata si in timpul vietii au ales calea de al demasca si al corecta.

Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea a fost unul din cei alesi sa indeplineasca aceasta

nobila misiune

Henri Balter

CANADA
email: henri be Her O Sympetics, ca

Annex no. 19.

# Statement

I, the undersigned, Katz Trude, declare I know the Şlacman family, who lived together with my family in Czernowitz before, during and after the second world war.

The Şlacman family was made of: the Father, Şlacman David, the Mother, Şlacman Ida, and the three children: Bea, Gari and Marcel.

The last one, who, leaving to Israel, changed his name to Shai Meir, was my schoolmate between 1941-1941.

At the beginning of the second world war, when the Romanian and the German armies came to town, the Jews in the city (nearly 40000) were sent to the ghetto in order to be deported to Transnistria.

The Governor of Bukovina, general Calotescu, issued several hundred authorizations of releasing the Jews from the ghetto, and our family received one of them.

Metropolitan Tit Simedrea of Bukovina asked the governor to also grant an authorization to the Şlacman family, but general Calotescu refused, because he was in conflict with the metropolitan. These being the circumstances, the metropolitan asked his counselor, painter George Russu, to free them from the ghetto without the governor's approval. Fulfilling this request, painter Rusu got them out of the ghetto and, with the consent of the metropolitan, hid them in the basement of the Metropolitan Palace, thus saving them from deportation.

I knew Traian Popovici, the mayor of Czernowitz, who was friends with my father and often visited us. He told us about his deeds of saving other families of Jews, over the limit of 20000 later approved by the authorities.

I remember that, on one of these visits, the Mayor Traian Popovici said: "I am also an anti-Semite, but, as a Romanian orthodox I cannot accept the suffering and the extermination of Jews".

I also know that the mayor of the town was in Czernowitz during this entire period.

Katz Trude ID number 673989115 Tfat, Israel, 10/13 Histadrut Street Phone number: 04-6921138 SENTE SOLD AND SPLANDER.

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Caracas, the 20th of November 2007

To whom it may concern, I declare

I, the undersigned, Oscar Katz, born in 19-10-1930, Czernowitz, Bukovina, ID number 6.060.007

With residence in Caracas-Venezuela, 2da Transv. De las Delicias residencia Silvana.

Know the Slacman family, made of Mr. Slacman David – Mrs. Slacman Ida the wife and their children Bea Slacman the daughter – Gari Slacman the elder son and Slacman Meer – Marcel the younger son.

The last was my schoolmate before and after the war between 1940 and 1945.

My parents Katz Julius and Katz Fanni were in mutually friendly relations with this family.

During the war, we had the privilege of being able to stay in Czernowitz, because my father was an Industrial Electrician and he was useful for the Romanian and German authorities.

Our family spoke both Romanian and German.

But the Slacman family was not granted the same rights of staying in town, because the request forwarded by metropolitan Tit Simedrea was rejected because of a quarrel (personal disagreement) with the Governor at that time.

Mister Slacman David worked at the Metropolitan Typography then.

Through the intervention of the metropolitan counselor, Mr. George Ruso, they were allowed to hide in the basement of the Metropolitan Palace in Czernowitz, and with the help of the above-mentioned counselor, they were supplied with everything they needed in order to survive until they were free to leave.

Both personalities, Mister Tit Sumetrea and Mr. Counselor George Ruso, risked their lives in order to accomplish this courageous and humanitarian (gesture).

The surname of my friend Slacman Marcel was changed to Shai Meir in Israel.

ROM : HOTEL BROADWAY

PHONE NO. : 005829516939

Dec. 09 2007 11:24AM P1

Caracas 15 noembrie 2007

Declarat in atentia celor interesali

Subsemnatul Oscar Katz. Născut în 19-10-1930, Cernăuți - Bucovina purtator de documentul de identitate numero 6.060.007

Domiciliat în Caracas - Venezuela 2da, Transv. De las Delicias residencia Silvana.

Cunosc familia Slacman compusă de D-nul Slacman David – D-na Slacman Ida soția și fli lor: Bea Slacman fiica – Gari Slacman ful major și Slacman Meer – Marcel flul menor.

Cu acesta din urma am fost colegi de scoala inainte și după război în ani 1940-1945.

Parintii mei Katz Julius si Katz Fanni au fost în relatii de prietenie reciproca cu aceasta famille.

In timpul, războiului noi am fost beneficiați de dreptul de permanență în orașul Cernăuți fiind profesiunea de Electrician Industrial a tatălui meu era de utilitate publică pentru autoritațile Române și Germane

In familia noastrá am fost cunoscátori de limba Română cât si germană.

Insa familia Slacman nu au obținut această autorizație de ramânere pe loc, deoarece cererea Mitropolitului Tit Simerea a fost respinsă pentru o discordie (cearta personală) cu Guvernatorul – în acea epocă -

Domnul Slacman David lucra în tipografia Mitropoliei în acel timp.

Prin mijlocirea consillerului de la Mitropolie, D-nul George Ruso a dispus să li se permită să fie ascunși, în beciurile Palatului Mitropoliei din orasul Cernauţi, și cu ajutorul consilierului înainte indicat aut fost aprovizionați cu toate cele necesare pentru a putea supraviețui pâna la eliberare.

Amandouă personalitațile Domnul Tit Sumetrea și D-l Consilier George Ruso și-au riscat viata pentru infăptulrea acestui gest (fapt) curajos și umanitar.

Kather

Pronumele prietenului meu Slacman Marcel a fost schimbat pe Shai Meir în Israel.

Annex no. 21.

# Tit Simedrea, a little known, little understood Bishop and so arbitrarily distorted in the memory of the generations to come

A recent talk with General Mihai Ionescu, the director of the National Holocaust Institute in Romania – E.W. made us remember the man who was, for several years until 1944, the Bishop of Czernowitz and Bukovina. I remembered Tit Simedrea and some essential elements of his biography talking to my colleague and friend from Israel, Marcel Şai, during the period in which the latter strived (years in a row!) to discover the potential offsprings of the church paintor Gheorghe Russu, the one who contributed decisively in saving the Şai family during the awful period of the deportation of Jews from Czernowitz. During this time, the Şai family was sheltered, until being released, in the basement of the Metropolitan Church in Czernowitz.

As I remember things: after Romania entered the Second World War, as an ally of fascist Germany, while we had not been yet introduced to anyone in the Şai family and at a time when we could not have known that Tit Simedrea would be installed as Bishop of Czernowitz and Bukovina after the war started, I was a witness of some discussions that took place in our family about the situation and the events that were already taking place (back then we were living in Piatra Neamt and my parents were in quite a danger, like all the Jews, actually, on both the left and the right side of the river Prut). My dad thought that Bishop Tit Simedrea would be the only one capable of stopping Antonescu in his initial program of killing all the Jews in Moldavia, as it was foretold by the 29th of June 1941 genocide in Iași and as it was foreshadowed by his declarations about the war, on the other side, at the liberation of Basarabia and Bukovina by the Soviets, that "It was not a war against the Slaves, but against the Jews" - declarations to be confirmed tragically and relatively soon, ever since the fall and winter of 1941. Life and history confirmed his theory only partially – Antonescu could not be stopped from his diabolical enjoyment, even though, from different sources, my family had learned that Tit Simedrea had openly talked to Antonescu, telling him that persecuting the civilians and killing the Jews, of which he had heard, would discredit us as a country and as a people. Weren't they by any chance rumors? Weren't they simple hopes of some Jews that were afraid that they could have the same fate as some Jews in Dorohoi, Herta, or so many other places from the right side of the Prut?

When the mayor of Czernowitz, Traian Popovici, had the courage to ask the governor of Bukovina to stop deporting the Jews from Czernowitz, which the economy

of Bukovina could have benefitted from, the one who supported the mayor in his effort was Tit Simedrea. He was brave enough to ask for an audience at Antonescu, in order to support the cease of deportations. It was only after the war, when Tit Simedrea was long dead, that I learned he had this courage and that the approval received by Popovici, was, in fact, due to him. Immediately after the war, when Tit Simedrea was removed for good from the Bishop See, the well-calculated justification of the communist regime started to go about that he was, in fact, an iron-guardist...

If in fact, he had been one – as it was never proven – would Antonescu, the man who, after the 1941 rebellion of the iron-guardists, had abolished the National Iron-Guardist State and preferred to install his own personal dictatorship, even removing the king, in a moment when he was greedy for power and for consolidating his personal regime – have supported the installation at Czernowitz, as a Bishop of the recently liberated Bukovina, of an ex iron-guardist?! Antonescu was aware of Simedrea's reservations towards the deportation and the killing of the Jews. Would he have tolerated a prelate well-known for his essential democratic views as a Bishop and, moreover, an "ex iron-guardist" prelate, who, supposedly, had been on Zelea Codreanu's side in the past? No declaration was found in the press at that time that the communist regime could use as an evidence of a previous iron-guardist position... I must specify that, as my father declared, Simedrea never accompanied Antonescu in his highly praised "victory tours" in the south of Ukraine, before the defeat at the Don. Simedrea never urged his subordinate prelates to glorify the death of the innocent, be it as retaliation, as it had happened in the Odessa genocide.

Tit Simedrea was consistent in his mission of protecting the Orthodox soul that was against the spilling of innocent blood. After he was removed as Bishop, Tit Simedrea successively closed in a reclusion that was not based on any conviction, ends up at Cernica Monastery, where he must obey as a monk...There weren't any public accusations against him. Isn't that odd? He was never accused, not even of Anti-Sovietism... And who was not accused at that time? He was left to die in the deepest ecclesiastic anonymity. So who could be surprised by the fact that he constantly stated that only God could judge the guilty. Simedrea's relatives, although there were no compromising declarations, had to suffer, as so many other offspring of prelates, but managed to be received in colleges and to pursue rightfully spectacular careers.

Occasional talks, held along the years with the eminent professor and cultural figure Răzvan Theodorescu, would confirm – without this being an intent purpose of our discussions – that Tit Semedrea was only guilty of having some ill luck conjunctures in his life and of occupying the function of Bishop in a land that had become "rightfully" Sovietic after the war. So many petty office prose-

cutors did not dare to accuse him neither of iron-guardism, nor of pro-Antonescu attitudes during 1941-1944. And, another small proof, somewhat awkward: not even after 1989 did the iron-guardists ever mention him as one of their own. Tit Simedrea fell, crushed by history and the awful post-war evolution, but his descendants, who are still alive, some of them prestigious names in the Romanian culture, have no reason to blame their Bishop ancestor. Marcel Şai's gesture, to stubbornly search for evidence that Simedrea was innocent, honors the upright, clean relationships, for which both honest Romanians and Jews have militated for. Even if with a small delay. Even if with late successes, after over 60 years.

Dorel Dorian, writer, ex-deputy in Romania's Parliament between 1996 and 2004, member of the leading council of FCER, editor-inchief of the "Jewish Reality" magazine, from 1995 up to present.

24th of September 2007

# Tit Simedrea, un mitropolit prea puțin cunoscut, prea puțin înțeles și atât de arbitrar răstălmăcit în memoria posterității.

O discuție recentă cu generalul Mihai Ionescu, directorul Institutului National al Holocaustului din România - E.W ne-a pus în situația de a-l rememora pe cel ce-a fost, timp de câțiva ani până în 1944, Mitropolitul Cemăuțiului și al Bucovinei. Mi l-am reamintit pe Tit Simedrea și câteva elemente esentiale din biografia lui discutând cu colegul și prietenul meu din Israel, Marcel Sai, în perioada în care, acesta s-a străduit (ani la rând!) să-i descopere pe eventualii descendenți ai pictorului de biserici Gheorghe Russu, cel ce contribuise decisiv la salvarea familiei Şai, în perioada tragicelor deportări ale evreilor din Cernăuti perioadă în care ,familia Şai, a fost adăpostită, până la eliberare, în subsolurile Mitropoliei Cernăuțene. În ordinea rememorărilor: după intrarea României în ultimul război mondial, ca aliată a Germaniei fasciste, pe atunci când încă nu cunosteam pe nimeni din familia Sai si într-un moment în care n-aveam cum să ştim că Tit Simedrea va fi instalat ca mitropolit al Cernăutiului și al Basarabiei după începerea războiului, am fost martor în familia mea la diferite discutii despre situatia creata si despre evenimentele care deja se desfasurau (locuiam pe atunci în Piatra Neamt și părinții îmi erau destul de primejduiți. ca toți evreii, de altfel, din stânga dar și din dreapta Prutului). Tata era de părere că Tit Simedrea Mitropolitul ar fi fost singurul în stare să-l oprească pe Antonescu în programul lui inițial de lichidare a evreilor din Moldova, așa cum o anunțase deja genocidul ieșean din 29 iunie 1941 și așa cum o prevesteau declarațiile sale privind războiul în care se implicase, dincolo, la eliberarea Basarabiei și Bucovinei de sovietici că " nu era atât un război împotriva slavilor cât împotriva evreilor" - declarații confirmate tragic și relativ curând încă în toamna și iarna lui 1941. Viața și istoria nu l-au confirmat decât parțial, Antonescu n-a putut fi oprit din diabolicele sale distracții, chiar dacă, din diferite surse , familia mea aflase că Tit Simedrea s-ar fi pronunțat deschis în fața lui Antonescu, anume spunând că prigonirea civililor și omorârea evreilor , despre care auzise , vor sfârși prin a ne compromite ca tară și ca neam. Nu erau cumva zvonuri ? Nu erau cumva simple speranțe ale unor evrei care se temeau că ar putea avea soarta evreilor din Dorohoi, ca și din Herța ca și din atâtea alte localități din dreapta Prutului ?

Atunci când primarul Cernăuțiului , Traian Popovici a avut curajul de a-i cere guvernatorului Bucovinei oprirea deportării evreilor din Cernăuți, de

care economia Bucovinei ar fi avut nevoie, cel care l-a susținut pe primar în demersul său, a fost Tit Simedrea. A fost și un om de curaj până la a cere audiență la Antonescu pentru a sprijini oprirea deportărilor. După razboi, târziu, atunci când Tit Simedrea nu mai era, aveam să aflu că a avut acest curaj și că aprobarea primită de Popovici i se datorează în mare măsură. În perioada imediat postbelică atunci când a fost îndepărtat, definity, din funcția de mitropolit a circulat și justificarea binecalculată de noul regim

comunist, că Tit Simedrea ar fi fost, în tinerețea sa, legionar...

Dar, dacă ar fi fost - cum nu s-a putut dovedi niciodată - Antonescu. cel care după rebeliunea din 1941 a legionarilor, a desființat Statul National Legionar și a preferat să instaureze dictatura sa personală, îndepărtându-l și pe rege, într-un moment în care era avid de putere și de consolidare a regimului său personal, ar fi susținut instalarea la Cernăuti, ca mitropolit al Bucovinei abia eliberate, un fost legionar?! Antonescu știa rezervele lui Simedrea față de deportarea și omorârea evreilor. L-ar fi tolerat ca mitropolit pe un prelat cunoscut pentru ideile sale funciar democratice și încă pe un prelat "fost legionar", fost cândva de partea lui Zelea Codreanu? În presa vremii n-a existat nici o declarație pe care noul regim comunist s-o fi putut aduce ca demonstrație a unei poziții anterioare legionare.... Să precizăm că, asa cum declara părintele meu, Simedrea nu l-a însoțit niciodată pe Antonescu în turneele sale "victorioase" prin sudul Ucrainei, din cele atât de lăudate, înainte de înfrengerea de la Cotul Donului. Simedrea nu și-a îndemnat niciodată prelații subalterni să glorifice moartea nevinovaților, fie si ca represalii, așa cum s-a întâmplat în cadrul genocidului de la Odessa.

Tit Simederea a fost consecvent în menirea sa de păstor al sufletului ortodox, care respingea vărsarea de sânge nevinovat. După demiterea sa din funcția de mitropolit, Tit Simedrea, în afara oricărei publicități compromițătoare, închis succesiv într-o recluziune care nu se întemeia pe nici o condamnare ajunge la Mănăstirea Cernica, de care trebuia să dea ascultare în calitate de călugăr... N-au existat acuzații publice împotriva lui. Nu e ciudat? N-a fost niciodată acuzat nici măcar de antisovietism... Câți n-au fost acuzați! Că a fost lăsat să moară în cel mai adânc anonimat ecleziastic, pe cine va surprinde atunci când Tit Simedrea afirma, cu îndârjire, că numai Dunnezeu se cuvine să-i Judece pe cei cu adevărat vinovați. Rudele lui Simedrea, neexistând afirmații compromițătoare, neîndoielnice, au avut de suferit ca atâți descendenți de prelați dar au reușit să fie primite în facultăți și să izbutească în viață carierea spectaculoase, pe merit.

Discuții ocazionale, avute de-a lungul anilor, cu eminentul profesor și om de cultură Răzvan Theodorescu aveau să-mi confirme - fără ca acesta să fie vreun scop special al discuțiilor noastre — că Tit Simedrea n-a avut în viață

decât ghinionul unor conjuncturi nefavorabile și a funcției sale de mitropolit într-un tărâm devenit, după război, "îndreptățit" sovietic. Atâția acuzatori mărunți, de serviciu n-au îndrăznit să-l învinuiască nici de legionarism și nici de atitudini pro-antonesciene în timpul anilor 1941-1944. Și, încă o mică dovadă, întrucâtva penibilă: nici legionarii, măcar, după 1989, nu și l-au asumat vreodat. Tit Simedrea a căzut, strivit de istorie și de evoluțiile cumplite post-belice, dar descendenții din familia sa, care există, unii cu nume prestigioase în cultura română n-au de ce să-și blameze părintele mitropolit din care au descins ca spiritualitate. Gestul lui Marcel Șai de a căuta cu înverșunare dovezi întru nevionovăția lui Simedrea onorează relațiile oneste, curate pentru care evreii și românii de o reală condiție umană au militat. Fie și cu întârziere.

Fie si cu reuşite târzii, după peste şaizeci de ani.

Dorel Dorian, scriitor fost deputat în Parlamentul României între 1996-2004, membru în Consiliul de conducere al FCER., redactor șef al revistei "Realitatea evreiască" din 1995 până în prezent.

24 rept. 2007

Annex no. 22.

### Much esteemed Mr. Leon Volovici,

You are being addressed by, surprisingly, probably, a writer whom you have heard of, I hope, but you know little about: Dorel Dorian. Maybe too little. I have been, beyond my literary activity (playwright, essayist, Science Fiction writer, when I had the time), also a publisher, with at least two series each week, for 22 years, but also editor-in-chief, for the last 15 years, of the "Jewish Reality". I tried my best for the well-deserved success of the "Leon Volovici" special edition that honored us, both through your approval and through the number of readers. So we know enough of each other that you would read my letter, before you consider it, maybe subjective (and it is!) and boring. I hope, at least, it is not... (it also depends on the reader). Dear Mr. Volovici, I enthusiastically read through your "Dialogues with Norman Manea" (they are fascinating in matters of hidden history), as well as your volume "From Iaşi to Bucharest and back".

I encountered a good friend of mine, Mr. Marcel Şai, an ex-colleague at the "Culture" in Bucharest (the "Jewish Culture", that is), in 1998, at the 50 years anniversary since this dwelling of culture was cancelled, when both of us reached the joys and sorrows inherent to septuagenarians. You have reached the age of 70, too, and will understand what I'm talking about, I'm sure...

Marcel Şai, elite mathematician and his sister, who was a distinguished Germanic scholar, of an exceptional professional conduct and moral condition, and who, unfortunately passed away, have been my friends and will be so, I assure you, even beyond our brief lives. My best friend, academician Constantin Maximilian, a world-renown genetics doctor, one of the creators of Bioethics, as an universal science, once asked me: "What if death doesn't exist, Dorel?" I remembered this question in order to ask you, in my turn, "Can you see, Mister Volovici, how much infinite time we could have, to correspond even after the last letter we will leave to posterity, before we will be definitively buried – the only real death, actually – in oblivion...?

Marcel Şai is the one who, through hard labor and an excellently Judaic dedication, was determined enough and managed to prove to posterity, even to those who warrant at the respectable "Yad Vaşem", that the church painter Ghorghe Rusu, of a delicate and generous nobility, would deserve to be declared "Righteous among Men", during the years of the Holocaust.

"But what was his fundamental merit?" the venerable ambassador Govrin, ex-ambassador in Romania, who is today part of the well-known "Yad Vaşem", would ask Marcel Şai.

After the occupation of Czernowitz, in 1941, during the Second World War, painter Gheorghe Rusu worked as a church interior restorer for the Metropolitan Church of Czernowitz, the Bishop of Bukovina being at that time, too little known back then, the prelate and kind-hearted man, the renowned and hard to forget for those who ever met him, Bishop Tit Simedrea. The painter had asked for the Bishop to approve the sheltering in the basements of the Bishop Church of a Jewish family, that of the typographer Şai, his sister, mother and other members of the family.

"It goes without saying", the Bishop answered. "Shelter them all in our basements and make sure they don't show themselves or the children, so that the Germans don't find out and take them". "Besides", added the Bishop, "I also asked Traian Popovici, the mayor of Czernowitz to ask for the interruption of the deportation of Czernowitz Jews too, because the 40.000 Jews were absolutely necessary for the economy and life of our Czernowitz."

I'll be brief. Şai's family was sheltered. Two or three times, seeing the Şai children playing outside the monastery's walls, the Bishop called them by his side and asked them: "Children, I beg of you, stay as hidden as possible, so that the Germans don't see you. They could kill you and kill us all." And the children listened to him, without forgetting his call and their chance to stay alive.

Ambassador Govrin asked Marcel Şai, with good reason: "Why didn't you ask from the very beginning that Bishop Tit Simedrea be given the title of « Righteous among Men»"?

Marcel Şai had understood that he was wrong and had asked me, I remember, what to do in order to make things right just on the day when the before mentioned church painter was give the title of "Righteous among Men".

What should I have answered Şai, when we all thought it was too late? Carry on, Marcel! It's your duty as a Jew and as a human being living in this world and in this European era, that is still dangerous and barbarian enough. Persevere! You will succeed!

I must add here that I, Dorel Dorian, had met Tit Simedrea personally immediately after 1948, but my father, Menahem Mendel Iancovici, ex-clerk at the Central Bank in Piatra Neamţ, withdrawn from the army, like all the Jews, by Antonescu, had met Simedrea before 1940! Also, my paternal grandmother met Simedrea in 1918, when he was still a simple regiment priest and we all think alike, not with memories, but with arguments, that Tit Simedrea was a Great Friend of the Jews in Romania. Not enough is known, but I know, and can prove to anyone

that the one who would become, in several years, the Bishop of Bukovina, after it was reoccupied, was a great personality – and, without exaggerating – a Saint of those heroic years – when being a human being and saving a Jew could mean a bullet in the back of your head and being sentenced to oblivion for posterity. And Tit Simedrea risked all that. Tit Simedrea refused, during all the war years, to accompany the marshal on the battle fields of Transnistria and from Transnistria up to the bend of the Don, saying that all those lands do not belong to Romania, and that "those who occupy them by sword, will die of it". Tit Simedrea – as today is proven by different documents of the Romanian Security and of the Security of those times – refused any visit, even as a honor quest, in Hitler's Germany or in Mussolini's Italy. He only accepted a clerical training in the unoccupied France... That was it, no praising of the Marshal. No praising of the iron-guardist national regime. No praising of Cuza's regime. And in 1940, when my dad was withdrawn from the army, from the eastern front, where his regiment was, a major, major Şoimaru, asked the Bishop to hold Menahem Mendel lancovici as secretary of his regiment, so he could leave all the paperwork in place. Tit Simedrea knew my father so he put in a good word for him: "He should be allowed to stay another 2-3 days in the army, but he should also be accompanied afterwards to his house in Piatra Neamt, so that he returns alive and in good health."

My father had not begged Tit Simedrea, Bishop of Bukovina... He had only listened to, what my father often cited him as saying, "the order of God".

A last confession would be left, Mr. Volovici, which I'm making to you, and haven't made to Marcel Şai: how did Tit Simedrea know my father?

During the first World War of reunifying the country, between 1916 and 1919, with that unhappy year of interrupting the hostilities with the Germans during Marghiloman's peace, one of my father's elder brothers, son of Moise Teighetaru, from the family of the cow butchers, brought in Moldavia during Steven the Great's reign, without becoming in the 450 years of existence on the territory of Romania, citizens of the kingdom created in 1877, so my father's eldest brother, lancu, son of Moise Tejghetaru, volunteered for the Romanian army and fought on the front against the Germans ever since 1916 and would die in 1918. The priest of the regiment in which he had fought, and who knew of his bravery, was the very young and yet unknown Tit Simedrea. And when the priest found out that lancu was badly hurt and dying, unable to be transported to Moldavia, he asked one of the sergeants to send a postal card to the family of Moise the Butcher. And it said: "lancu Sân Moise fell like a hero but is still alive. We took him to an army hospital, north of Bucharest, and if anyone wants to see him, especially his old mother, whom he is constantly asking about - has my permission and the one from authorities, to get to Muntenia. Maybe

someone from the family will accompany her. He is always asking about his younger brother, Menahem Mendel, who, being a minor, could accompany his mother...(This Menahem Mendel, Sân Moise Tejghetarul, the Butcher, was my father). Embracing you like a brother, priest Tit Simedrea."

And they left, during a harsh winter, during harsh times, with a simple wagon pulled by one horse, my grandmother and my father, who first visited Tit Simedrea to take their authorization and to make it afterwards to Bucharest. Iancu had died, in the meantime, of famine fever, and my grandmother and the one who was going to be my father, Mendel Iancovici, had nothing left to do but burry their son, respectively brother, in today's Filantropia Cemetery at the margin of a exterior wall, because, although he had died as a hero, he also died of famine fever.

They saw Tit Simedrea again, on their way back. My grandmother bowed in front of him and Tit Simedrea kissed her hand, for her unusual courage. It seems that physically, my father, when he was 16, looked very much like the soldier Tit Simedrea gave leave to go home back in 1940, accompanied by two soldiers who were supposed to protect him, just in case... Tit Simedrea had understood very clearly that even the Jewish heroes and their relatives, just as devoted to the country, have to be protected by the Romanian church and state.

My father, and I will confess this fact, wrote to Alexandru Şafran, not to tell him this story, but to assure him and Filderman in 1940, that only Bishop Tit Simedrea could save the Jews helping them get, through him, to Antonescu.

In his memoires, Şafran mentions his meeting with Tit Simedrea, the brotherly reception the Bishop gave him and how the latter facilitated that Şafran's message, unfortunately unsuccessfully, got to Antonescu's desk. (Today we know for sure that Romania's chief rabbi, Safran, met with Tit Simedrea three times.)

After the war, the new communist regime tried to find an indictment, no matter what, for Tit Simedrea. But they couldn't find one. This is confirmed by the Secret Police's documents. Moreover, it is underlined that in the year that Simedrea was temporarily named Bishop of Hotin, he had also invited "the Jews in the region" at the installation banquet, besides the officials of the city. In 1946 this could have not be considered an indictment. Three years later, or at least I think three years had passed since that time, when my family lived on the Schitu Darvari Street, wall to wall with the hermitage, my mother had overheard how a vicar was speaking to a crowd of young people in the yard of the hermitage and telling them about how Romania was guilty of having crossed the Nistru, after the re-conquest of Basarabia, as well as the crimes committed during all this time against Jews. My mother called me and I also climbed the

wall to listen and this is how I saw Tit Simedrea for the first time. And, because my father, who had met him personally, had also climbed the wall, I heard him call, with an angelical innocence: "Long live Tit Simedrea!" I have never heard my father, since then, cheering for anyone... He didn't have whom to cheer for, actually. I also remember that my father came close to the ex-Bishop, in the yard of the hermitage, and that they wound up stories. I did not write them down nor remember them, but I remember this brotherly-like communication between my father and the man who was Tit Simedrea. Exceptional deeds and the events with an extraordinary significance are never forgotten. And how could I have forgotten them, over the years?

I saw the ex-Bishop of Bukovina once again, at the Cernica Monastery, at the end of '69, when, together with the future academician and future Minister of Culture, Răzvan Theodorescu, I would talk to the old monk, who was close to the end of his life. He knew, I have no idea how, that Răzvan Theodorescu had been close to Noel Bernard in his youth and, even weirder, he had no way of knowing that I had also met Noel Bernard, while being abroad, in Germany, at Műnchen, in July '69, and that I was also among those whom Noel Bernard would have liked to take to his side – as he also told me once, as a matter of fact.

-"Father, you know everything that happens, as I see", were the last words I addressed to Tit Simedrea.

And he answered me: "I don't know anything, my son. We don't know anything, my sons." (meaning me and Răzvan Theodorescu). "Only God, Alone, knows everything." And, as a sign that he had found out about me, he wished me good luck with my playwright.

\*

Here I would finish my letter, Mr. Volovici, to a man in whose honor and good faith I will always believe. I can feel that from your writing. If you could tell someone who deserves to find out, who Tit Simedrea was, please help me send the message... It's not just about a new "Righteous among Men", but about that something that Liviu Rotman called "Dignity during times of distress" in a book he published last year at the Judaic Studies Center in Bucharest.

Yes, dear Leon Volovici, it's about that type of Dignity that does not only demand to be recognized, but also imposed, with arguments and writing force, during times of distress. How are our times, dear Leon Volovici?

Yours, with constant friendship, even if you're not going to answer to me, even if you're not going to be able to do much for the memory of the unknown Simedrea, in a way that addresses and embraces you, DOREL DORIAN.

PS: Dear Mr. Volovici, I also transmitted, in a shorter and less bookish version, the content of this message to Mister Marcel Şai. I gave him my permission, on the same occasion, to use, if he could, this text and these confessions to do justice to Tit Simedrea as "Righteous among Men". I'm a witness forever – through this letter – that the late Bishop Tit Simedrea, who died in 1971, was a Righteous among Men of the Romanian people during the years of an awful wrath. I hope my honest words won't seem "arguments of a lawyer", but an imperative need to talk and tell the truth, not only in my memoires, current and future, but also to those who never had and will never have a reason to doubt my word. DOREL DORIAN

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#### Mult stimate domnule Leon Volovici.

Vi se adresează, surprinzător, probabil, un scriitor despre care ați auzit, sper, dar îl cunoașteți puțin: Dorel Dorian. Poate, prea puțin. Am fost, totuși, dincolo de activitatea mea literară (dramaturg, eseist, S.F.-ist, când îmi rămânea timp) și publicist, cu cei puțin două seriale pe săptămână, timp de 22 de ani, am fost și redactorul-șef, în ultimil 15 ani, al Realității Evrelești. M-am străduit și pentru binemeritatul succes al ediției speciale "Leon Volovici" care ne-a onorat, prin acordul dvs. și priza la cititor. Deci, ne-am cunoaște, totuși, astfel încât să citiți misiva mea, înainte de a o considera, poate, sublectivă (și estel) și plictisitoare, sper, totuși, câ nu a... (depinde și de lector). Stimate domnule Volovici, v-am parcurs cu încântare Dialogurile cu Norman Manea (sunt pasionante, ca istoriei, fie și tăinultă), cât și volumul "De la Iași la lerusalim și înapoi".

Un bun prieten, di. Marcel Şai, fost coleg la "Cultura" bucureşteană ("Cultura evreiască") în urmă cu peste 60 de ani, regăsindu-ne la aniversarea de 50 de ani de la desființarea acestul lăcaș de cultură în 1998, atunci când amândol ajunseserăm la bucuriile și mâhnirile inerente ale septoagenarilor; ați împlinit și dvs. 70 de ani, și mă veți înțelege, desigur...

Marcel Şal, matematician de elită, a cărui soră de excepțională ținută profesională şi condiție morală, am cunoscut-o, de asemenea, care azi nu mai e, distinsă germanistă, mi-au fost şi îmi vor rămâne prieteni, se poate, vă asigur, și dincolo de scurta noastră viață. Cel mai bun prieten al meu, ", acad. Constantin Maximilian, un genetician de renume mondial și unul din creatorii "Bioeticii, ca știință universală, m-a şi întrebat, de altfel: "Şi dacă moarte nu există, Dorele?". Mi-am amintit întrebarea pentru a vă întreba la rândul meu: "Vedeți, domnule Volovici, cât timp infinit ne-ar mai putea rămâne, pentru a coresponda, și după ultima epistolă, pe care o vom lăsa posterității, înainte de a ne îngropa, definitiv – singura moarte reală de altfel – în ultare...?

Marcel Şai este cel care, printr-un travallu enorm şi o dăruire prin excelență iudalcă, s-a Încrâncenat şi a izbutit să demonstreze posterității, până și celor care p girează la respectabilul "Yad Vaşem" că pictorul de biserici Gheorghe Rusu, de delicată şi generoasă nobiețe, ar merita să fie şi a fost declarat drept "Foarte Drepți între Drepții Popoarelor", în anii Holocaustului.

- "Dar care a fost meritul lui fundamental?" avea să-l întrebe pe Marcel Şai venerabilul ambasador Govrin, fost ambasador și în România, inclus astăzi și în conducerea cunoscutului "Yad Vasem".
- "După ocuparea Cernăuțiului, în 1941, în anii celui de-al dollea război mondial, pictorul
   Gheorghe Rusu lucra ca restaurator de interioare bisericești, la Mitropolia din Cernăuți,

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Mitropolit al Bucovinei filind, pe atunci, prea puțin cunoscutul încă, monah și om de sfântă omenie, renumitul și neultatul pentru cei care l-au întâlnit vreodată, Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea. Pictorul îi solicitase mitropolitului să încuviințeze adăpostirea în subteranele Mitropoliei a unei familii de evrei, cea a tipografulul șai, cu copiil săi, Marcel șai, sora lui, mama și alți membri ai familiei.

- "De la sine înțeles" - i-a răspuns Mitropolitul, "Adăpostește-i pe toți în subteranele noastre, să nu se arate prea mult, nici coplii săi, pentru ca nemții să nu afie și să nu-i ridice cumva. "De altfel", - a mai spus Mitropolitul - "I-am rugat și pe Traian Popovici, primarul Cernăuțiului, în acei ani de urgle, să ceară și el, întreruperea deportării evreilor cernăuțeni, a circa 40.000 de evrei care erau absolut necesari economiei reale și vietii Cernăuțului nostru".

Scurtez. Familia lui Șal a fost adăpostită. De vreo două-trei ori, văzându-i pe copiii lui Șal, zbenguindu-se pe zidurile exterioare ale mănăstirii, Mitropolitul i-a chemat la el și l-a rugat: "Copil, vă rog din sufiet, stați pe cât se poate, ascunși, sâ nu vă vadă nemții. Ar putea să vă ucidă și să ne ucidă pe toți". Şi copiii l-au ascultat, fără să-i ulte îndemnul și şansa de a rămâne în viată.

Ambasadorul Govrin I-a întrebat, pe bună draptate, pe Şal: De ce n-ai cerut de la bun început să se acorde titlul de "Drept al popoareior" și Mitropolitulul Tit Simedrea?

Marcel Şal a înțeles că greșise și m-a întrebat, mi-amintesc, ce să facă pentru repararea greșelii sale chiar în ziua acordării titlului de "Drept al popoarelor" amintitului pictor de biserici.

Ce să-i îi răspuns lui Şai, atunci când ni se părea prea târziu? Continuă, Marcell E datoria ta de evreu și de om al acestui timp european și al lumii, care a rămas îndeajuns de periculos și barbar. Continuă i Persevereazăi Vei reuși!

Adaug tot alci că şi eu, Dorel Dorlan, l-am cunoscut pe Tit Simedrea, absolut personal imediat după 1948, dar tatăl meu, Menahem Mendel Iancovici, fost procurist al Bâncii Centrale din Platra-Neamţ, scos din armată, ca toţi evreii, de către Antonescu, l-a cunoscut pe Simedrea înainte de 1940 i Şi l-a cunoscut pe Simedrea şi bunica mea din partea tatălui, în anul 1918, încă, pe când era un simplu preot de regiment, şi toţi am gândit şi gândim încă la fel, nu cu rememdrări, ci cu argumente, că Tit Simedrea a fost un Mare Prieten al Evrellor din România. Nu se știe destul, dar eu știu personal, și pot demonstra oricul că cel care avea să ajungă, peste ani, Mitropolit al Bucovinei, după reocuparea el, este o personalitate imensă și – fără să exagerez – un Sfânt al acelor ani eroici, când a fi om și a salva un evreu putea să însemne un glonte în ceafă și o condamnare la inexistență pentru posteritate. Și Tit Simedrea a riscat! Tit. Simedrea a refuzat în toți anii războiului, să îi însoțească pe mareșal pe fronturile de luptă ale Transnistriel și din Transnistria până la Cotui Donului, spunând că toate acele pământuri nu sunt ale Româniel, şi "cel ce le ocupă cu sabia, de sabie vor muri". Tit Simedrea – o recunosc azi

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documentele din diverse arhive ale Securității românești și ale Siguranțel acelor ani, a refuzat orișice plecare, fie și ca invitat de onoare, în Germania hitleristă sau în Italia lui Mussolini. A acceptat doar o specializare duhovnicească în zona Franței neocupate... Atât, nici o proslăvire a Mareșalului. Nici o proslăvire a regimului național legionar. Nici o proslăvire a regimului cuzist, iar în 1940, atunci când tata era scos din armată, de pe frontui din răsărit, unde se afla regimentul său, un maior, maiorul șolmaru i-a rugat pe mitropolit să-i mai rețină pe Menahem Mendel lancovici, ca furler al regimentului său, pentru a putea lăsa toate hârtille în ordine. Tit Simedrea îl cunoștea pe tata și a pus o vorbă bună pentru părintele meu: "să mai rămână 2-3 zile în armată, dar să fie însoțit pe urmă pe parcursul demobilizării pănă la locuința sa de la Piatra Neamţ, pentru a-i asigura viața și întoarcerea în deplină sănătate."

Pe Tit Simedrea, Mitropolit al Bucovinei, nu-l'impiorase părintele meu... Ci ascultase – tata îi cita textual - cum a spus "porunca Domnului".

Ar mal rămâne o confesiune, domnule Volovici, pe care v-o fac dvs. și nu i-am făcut-o lui Marcel șai: de unde îl cunoștea Tit Simedrea pe părintele meu?

În primul război mondial de reîntregire a țării, între 1916-1919 cu acei an nefericit de întrerupere a ostilităților cu nemții din timpul păcii lui Marghiloman, unul din frații mai mari ai lui tata, fiul lui Moise Tejghetaru, din familia casapilor de vite, aduși în Moldova pe vremea lui Ștefan cel Mare, fără să fi devenit în cel 450 de ani de existență pe tărâmul României, cetățean al regatulul creat în 1877, deci fratele mai mare al lui tata, lancu, flui lui Moise Telghetaru, Casapul, s-a înscris voluntar în armata română și a luptat pe front împotriva nemților încă din 1916 și avea să moară în 1918. Preotul regimentulul în care a luptat și care-i cunoscuse eroismul, fusese preotul de tară, foarte tânăr încă, necunoscutul încă, Tit Simedrea. Și aflând preotul, pe front filnd, că iancu e grav rănit, și-i pe moarte, netransportabil spre Moldova, a cerut unui sergent afiat în subordinea sa, să trimită o carte poștală familiei lui Moise Casapul. Şi stătea scris în acea carte poștală: " A căzut eroic, dar mai este încă în viață, lancu Sân Moise, și l-am dus într-un lazaret al armatei, la nord de București, și dacă cineva vrea să-l vadă, de preferință bătrâna lui maică, de care întreabă mereu - are învoire de la mine și de la autorităti să ajungă în Muntenia. Poate o va însoți cineva, din familie, el întrebând mereu de fratele său cel mai mic, Menahem Mendel, care ar putea s-o însoțească pe mama lui, filnd minor... (Acest Menahem Mendel, San Moise Teighetarul, Casapul, a fost părintele meu). Vă îmbrătisează ca un frate, un preot, Tit Simedrea."

Şi-au plecat, într-o larnă cumplită, în zile cumplite, cu o simplă căruță trasă de un cal, bunica mea și tatăl meu, care aveau să treacă pe la Tit Simedrea pentru a-şi lua autorizația, și a răzbi apoi spre București. Iancu murise, între timp, de tifos exantematic și mama lui, și cel care avea să fie tatăl meu, cum v-am spus, Mendel Iancovici, nu au putut decât să-și îngroape flui și respectiv fratele în actualul Cimitir Filantropia, la marginea unui zid exterior, fiindcă murise,

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erou filnd, si de tifos exantematic.

L-au mai văzut pe Tit Simedrea pe drumul de reîntoarcere, bunica s-a înclinat în fața lui lar Tit Simedrea i-a sărutat mâna pentru curajul el neobișnuit, Se pare că fizionomic, tata, cel de la 16 ani, semâna foarte mult cu soldatul, sergent TR, pe care Tit Simedrea i-a învoit să piece acasă în 1940, însoțit de doi soldați care să-l apere, eventual... Înțelegea foarte bine Tit Simedrea că până și eroii evrei, rudele lor, la fel de devotate țării, trebuie să fie ocrotite de biserică și de statul român.

Părintele meu, voi mărturisi și acest fapt, i-a scris lui Alexandru Şafran, nu pentru a-i istorisi întâmplarea, ci pentru a-i asigura, în 1940, pe Şafran și pe Filderman, că număi Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea i-ar putea salva pe evrei, ajutându-i să ajungă, prin el, la Antonescu.

În memorille sale, Şafran aminteşte de întâlnirea lui cu Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea, de primirea frățească, a mitropolitului, care a facilitat ca mesajul lui Şafran, fără rezultat, din păcate, s-ajungă pe biroul mareșalului. (Astăzi, ştim cu certitudine că şef rabinul României, Şafran a fost de 3 ori la Tit Simedrea).

După război, noua ordine comunistă a încercat să-i găsească un cap de acuzare, pricare, iui Tit Simedrea. Și nu i-a găsit. O confirmă documentele Securității (ba, mai mult, se subliniază că în anul în care Simedrea fusese numit temporar Mitropolit al Hotinului, noul mitropolit, Simedrea ar fi invitat la masa sărbătorească de instalare, pe lângă toate oficialitățile orașului și "jidovlmea acelui tinut". În 1946, totusi, nu a putut fi considerat un cap de acuzare, Trei ani mai târziu, aproximez, poate aproape trei ani, pe când familia mea locula pe strada Schitul Darvari, chiar langă schit, zid în zid, mama a auzit cum un paroh bisericesc vorbește în curtea Schitului, în fața unul mare număr de tineri, despre vinovăția României, aceea de a fi trecut Nistrul, după recucerirea Basarabiei, precum si despre crimele care s-au făcut în acel ani impotriva evreilor. Mama m-a chemat, am urcat și eu pe gard, să ascult, și atunci l-am văzut și eu pentru prima oară pe Tit Simedrea. Și pentru că urcase pe gard și tatăi meu, cei care îi cunoscuse personal, l-am auzit strigand, cu o naivitate îngerească: "Trăiască Tit Simedreal". Nu l-am mai auzit de atunci pe tata, ovaționând pe nimeni... Nici nu prea avea pe cine. În rest, îmi mai amintesc ca părintele meu s-a aproplat de fostul mitropolit, chiar în curtea schitulul, și-au depănat amintiri. Nu le-am notat, nu le retin, am sesizat doar o comunicare, ca și frățească între părintele meu și cel ce a fost Tit Simedrea. Faptele de exceptie și evenimentele cu semnificație exceptională nu se uită nicicând. De ce le-as ulta eu, peste ani?

Şi-a mai fost să fie să-l mai revăd o dată pe fostul Mitropolit al Bucovinei, la Mânâstirea Cernica, spre afârșitul lui '69, atunci când împreună cu viltorul academician Răzvan Theodorescu, viitor Ministru al Culturii, aveam să schimbâm câteva vorbe, din nou, cu un bătrân monah, aflat spre sfârșitul zilelor sale. Era Informat, habar n-am cum, de faptul că Răzvan 23 Oct 2009 14:55

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Theodorescu fusese un apropiat al lui Noel Bernard, în tinerețea lor, și infinit mai cludat — el nu avea de unde să știe că eu îl cunoscusem, la rândul meu, anterior vizitei noastre, în străinătate filind, în Germania, la Munchen, tot în iulie '69 pe Noel Bernard, că și eu m-aș afla printre cel pe care Noel Bernard — așa cum mi-a și a spus-o de altfel, cândva, - ar fi vrut să mă oprească lângă

- "Părinte, le știți pe toate câte se întâmplă, văd eu..." I-am spus, ultimele mele cuvinte adresate lui Tit Simedres.
- lar el mi-a răspuns: "Eu nu ştiu nimic, fiule. Noi nu ştim nimic, fiilor" (adică nici eu nici Răzvan Theodorescu). "Dumnezeu, Singurul, El le ştie pe toate..." lar mie mi-a adăuget, ca semn că aflase de mine că-mi urează success într-ale dramaturgiei.

Alci s-ar închela, die. Volovici, misiva mea către un om în a cărul cinste și bună credință vol crede totdeauna. Se simte asta, din scrisul dvs. Dacă puteți transmite cuiva, care merită să afle, şi-ar fi bine să afle cine a fost Tit Simedrea, ajutați-mă să parvină mesajul... Nu-i vorba doar de un eventual nou "Drapt între popoare", ci e vorba de acel ceva, pe care Liviu Rotman i-a intitulat, într-o carte de referință, publicată de Centrul de Studii ludaice de la București, chiar anul trecut: "DEMNITATE ÎN VREMURI DE RESTRIȘTE".

Da, dragă Leon Volovici, e vorba doár de acea Demnitate care se cere nu doar recunoscută ci impusă, cu argument și forță scriitoricească, în vremuri de rastriște. Cum sunt vremurile noastre, dragă Leon Volovici?



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Al dumitale, cu statornică prietenie, chiar dacă nu-mi vei răspunde, și nu vei izbuti să faci prea mult, pentru memoria lui Simedrea, necunoscutui, într-un fei, care ți se adresează îmbrățișându-te, DDREL DORIAN,



P.S.: Stimate domnule Volovici, i-am transmis, într-o formă succintă, și poate mai puțin livrescă, conținutul acestul mesaj, și domnului Marcel șai. I-am dat acordul, cu același prilej — dacă îl poate folosi acest text și aceste mărturii întru îndreptățirea prin timp a lui Tit Simedrea, ca "drept între popoare", să le folosească oricând. Sunt martor, pe vecle — și prin această mislvă, că regretatul mitropolit Tit Simedrea, decedat în 1971, a fost un Drept al Poporului Român în anii unei cumplite urgii. Sper ca sinceritățile mele să nu pară "argumente avocățești", ci o imperioasă necesitate de a vorbi și de a spune adevărul, nu doar în cărțile mele de mărturii, prezente și viitoare, ci tuturor celor care n-au avut niclodată și nu vor avea nici un motiv să nu se încreadă în cuvântul meu. DOREL DORIAN



Annex no. 23.

## THE ASSOCIATION OF ROMANIAN JEWS, VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

After reading the documentation provided by Mr. Meir Shai and Dorel Dorian's synthesis, I would complete the latter's observations with two considerations: the first, about the moment in which Tit Simedrea was called Bishop of Hotin, when he invited representatives of the Jewish community in the county, which he considered a part of the country, at his appointment ceremony,. The Security Service sent marshal Antonescu a denunciation stating that "he invited to dinner all the kikes in town". On the same page, marshal Antonescu gave an order that a copy of this annotation should be added to Tit Simedrea's personal file as well as sent to the Ministry of Education. The documents were found by Mr. Meir Shai at CNSAS (The National Council for Studying the Security Archives) and can be seen in the adjoining file. The second consideration refers to some iron-guardist manifestations of that epoch that the Bishop treated with justified horror, saying, literally: "The iron-guardists make me sick". Documents that prove that were found in the same CNSAS archives. It goes without saying that the decision of Mr. Popovici, the mayor, to ask the marshal not to deport nearly 20.000 Jews in Transnistria was done with the consent and at Tit Simedrea's prompting; even saving the family of Shai, the typographer, hiding their members in the basement of the Metropolitan Church in 1941 could have not been done without the Bishop's agreement. This family was hidden for more than a year and a half, with all the risks that those involved were ready to take. This brief recapitulation also includes the moment Tit Simedrea met with Alexandru Şafran, a dialogue that positively influenced the fate of the Jews in the two subsequent meetings that the Bishop had with Antonescu. Tit Simedrea's attitude meant not only courage, but also the Bishop's decision not to accompany, under any circumstances, the marshal in his visits to the battle field and to support the return of the deported children. For Simedrea, as well as for Maniu, the anti-communist war was supposed to stop as soon as Basarabia and Bukovina were freed. I wrote this supplementary information to thus entitle my signature at the conclusion of the declaration in which I take upon myself the conclusions of the foreword.

Liviu Beris, President of A.E.R.V.H

Bucharest 12th of May 2008

28-ANRY 12-05-2008

#### ASOCIAȚIA EVREILOR ROMÂNI VICTIME ALE HOLOCAUSTULUI

După lectura documentației întocmite de d-1 Meir Shai și a sintezei lui Dorel Dorian, aș întregi observațiile acestuia cu două considerații: prima, legată de momentul de instalare a lui Tit Simedrea ca mitropolit al Hotinului, când a găsit de cuvință să invite la instalarea sa reprezentanți ai evreimii județului pe care el o considera parte integrantă a țării. Siguranța a înaintat mareșalului Antonescu un denunt în care scria că "a invitat la masă întreaga jidovime din oraș". Pe aceeași foaie mareșalul a dispus ca la dosarul personal al lui Tit Simedrea, ca și la Ministerul Educației, să existe câte o copie a acestei note informative. Actele au fost găsite de d-l Meir Shai la CNSAS (Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității) și figurează în documentul alăturat. A doua observație este legată de unele manifestări legionare din epocă pe care mitropolitul le privea cu îndreptățită oroare, exprimându-se literalmente: "Mi-e scârbă de legionari". Acte doveditoare tot din arhivele CNSAS. Este de la sine înțeles că decizia primarului Popovici de a solicita mareșalului nedeportarea în Transnistria a cca 20,000 de evrei s-a făcut în asentimentul și imboldul lui Tit Simedrea; chiar și salvarea familiei tipografului Shai, ascunderea membrilor acesteia în subsolurile Mitropoliei în 1941 nu s-ar fi putut face fără acordul mitropolitului. Ascunderea acestei familii a durat mai mult de un an și jumătate, cu toate riscurile pe care cei implicați aveau să și le asume. Există în această succintă recapitulare si momentul întâlnirii lui Tit Simedrea cu Alexandru Şafran, dialog care a influențat pozitiv soarta evreilor în cele două convorbiri purtate ulterior de mitropolit cu Antonescu. Atitudinea lui Tit Simedrea avea să întrunească nu numai curai, ci si decizia mitropolitului da a nu-l însoți cu nici un prilej pe mareșal în vizitele sale pe câmpul de luptă și să susțină întoarcerea copiilor deportati. Pentru Simedrea, ca si pentru Maniu, războiul anticomunist ar fi trebuit să înceteze o dată cu eliberarea Basarabiei și Bucovinei. Am consemnat aceste câteva elemente informative suplimentare pentru a îndreptăți și pe această cale semnătura mea la încheierea declarației în care-mi asum concluziile cuvântului introductiv.

BUCUREŞTI 12 MAI 2008



Annex no. 24.

#### THE ASSOCIATION OF ROMANIAN JEWS, VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST A.E.R.V.H.

Esteemed Mr. Meir Shai, (Haifa 34576, Rh. Bicurim, no 17/4, Israel)

At your request, registered at no **78/28.10.2009**, through which you ask for specifications about the documents on which I base my favorable opinions in the case of Tit Simedrea – as A.E.R.V.H. President – I communicate the following:

- 1. I had the honor of being a member of the "Elie Wiesel International Committee for Studying the Holocaust in Romania", as a representative of the survivors. As such, I had the privilege to meet with great scientific personalities, from which I tried to appropriate the research methods in this field. At the same time, I also tried to share my experience as a survivor with my fellow members the atmosphere that defined that period, people's behavior, aspects that can hardly be found in archive documents. Starting from this consideration, I dared to analyze the facts and to express my opinion regarding the above mentioned case.
- 2. The document that I based my appreciation on was a primary source, meaning the testimony of the survivors that were direct witnesses to the candidate's actions (in this case, Bishop Tit Simedrea).
  - 2.1. These are, actually your confessions (Slackman Marcel) and your sister's confessions (Slackman Beatrice), the only people still alive (out of the 5 members of your family saved from death during that time) when the request was introduced to grant the title of Righteous among Men to George Rusu.
  - 2.2. Your confessions are clear. They pointed out right then the decisive role that Bishop Tit Simedrea played in saving your family. This also explains why the Bishop's name was brought forward when the Committee debated about granting the title of Righteous among Men when the Rusu file was discussed. If, hypothetically, I would have also been a member of the Committee, I would have done the same thing. And this is why:

- When your father asked painter Rusu for help, when the deportations out of the ghetto started (and you also report this in your confessions), he promised your father to talk to the Bishop, in order to obtain an authorization so that your family could stay in Czernowitz (I know from my own experience that, in those days of terror, when a father obtained such a promise, he would come and share it with the whole family);
- No icon painter (as renowned as he could have been) could afford to ask, on his behalf, the authorization for a Jewish family to stay at that time in Czernowitz; this could have only be done by the head of the institution (in this case, of the Metropolitan Church), and this was Bishop Tit Simedrea;
- Sheltering a family of 5 in the basement of the Metropolitan Church, during such a long period of time, with everything that such an action implies couldn't have been done by a church painter, without the approval of the one who ruled the institution,
- My experience made me realize that your confessions are sincere, and this is because:
  - You were not the leaders of a Jewish community meant to be exterminated, that you could have left behind in order to save your own life;
  - As such, you have no reason to justify your survival in front of others or in front of your own conscience;
  - My conclusion is that your actions reside only in your wish for memory
    of those who saved your family during such a dreadful time for the Jews
    to be revered accordingly.

Calling it a "dreadful time" is perfectly justifiable and is proven by the documents that we enclose, as a copy, namely:

- "The notification of the establishment of the Czernowitz ghetto (in which the following phrase stands out "The Jews found after 18 o'clock outside the ghetto will be shot");
- "Ordination no 38 from October the 11th 1941", in which, at article 1, it is specified "There will be punished by death:

d) All those that will hide in their residence strangers or those who will help escape those who are not allowed to leave town. "

(The documents are reproduced by "The Black Book, - volume 3 – Transnistria" by Mathatias Carp, 1947 edition, pages 154 and 157, they are shown as copies of the original also in sketch V)

You can see clearly here the danger to which both the head of the institution and his collaborator exposed themselves.

- on page 3 out of five from the "Virtual Library of the Righteous among Men" during the Holocaust, at the section called "Doubtful aspects", the case of "Monasteries" is mentioned. The head of the monastery is generally acknowledged, the one who decides whether to shelter the Jews, and not individual monks, unless their deeds are really out of the ordinary (I attach the copy). In this category Bishop Simedrea can be placed too, of course.
- 3. Moreover, I corroborated the concrete rescue action reflected by your confessions, with information from the SSI archive (The Secret Service during Antontescu's time), from the CNSAS archive (the Security archive) and those found in the "Memoires" of different personalities, regarding Bishop Tit Simedrea's general behavior during that time. Among these, I mention:
  - Annotation regarding the audience granted by Bishop Tit Simedrea, on October 13th, 1941 (the Archive of the History of Jews in Romania Studies Center), file no 407, also reproduced in the "Filderman, a lawyer of his ethnicity" book, page 246, which I enclose in copy and from which I render only this phrase: "We have been received very warmly and have been promised all his help". Next are a series of advice regarding how to get in contact with several personalities through which to get to Patriarch Nicodim.
  - SSI Annotation (The Secret Service during Antontescu's time) from October 14th 1941 (that I am enclosing as a copy) where it is shown (among other information) the following: "In the morning of the 16th of October this year, chief rabbi Dr. Şafran was received by his Hollines Bishop Tit Simedrea who assured him that, together with Flondor, the political leader from Bukovina, he interceded for the Jews in Bukovina, inviting him to visit whenever he considered it necessary and promising his support." (I enclose the copy.)
  - DGSS Annotation (The General Direction of State Security) no 232, found in the CNSAS archives (I enclose the copy), in which an SSI annotation is mentioned, dated April the 9th 1941, where the following information is presented: "...he spoke downright to some of his close friends about the pain and depression provoked by the events that took place from September 1940 to April 1941. He talked with disgust about the iron-guardist regime, showing an anti-Antonescu attitude and disagreeing with some of Antonescu's actions."

The above mentioned documents prove a great moral conduct, the favorable attitude towards the Jewish representatives, the advice given and his recommendation that his name should be use to get to the highest representative of the Orthodox Church, Patriarh Nicodim (the note from Filderman) – attitude that was also confirmed by chief rabbi Alexandru Şofran's story about the Bishop's reception ("A smoldering brand pulled from the fire", page 85").

4. Analyzing the period during which Bishop Tit Simedrea met with the representatives of the Jews adds a plus of significance to his attitude. We are talking about the beginning of the war, when the Romanian and German troops seemed unbeatable on the eastern front and when the absolute majority of the people around us, especially in the mentioned area, were showing hostility or, at best, indifference towards the Jews. And I'm saying this full of regret, there were so few people who showed an attitude similar to that of Bishop Tit Simedrea during this time of dreadful hatred.

To conclude, the elements that I have mentioned represent the "documentary basis" of the favorable attitude that I had and that I have towards Bishop Tit Simedrea's actions. He exposed himself to a danger comparable to that to which people who justly received the title of Righteous among Men, such as Traian Popovici or Queen Mother Mary, were exposed .

I express my regret that I have not done this specification in the material submitted to Yad Vashem, but I hope that my manner of thinking that led to this special appreciation for a man who was special is clear now.

Dr. Liviu Beris President AERVH

AERVH INTRARE Nr. 84 IEŞIRE Zus IZ Lurs II. Anul 09

#### ASOCIATIA EVREILOR DIN ROMANIA VICTIME ALE HOLOCAUSTULUI

Sfr. Vusile Adamache ur. 11, 030785 Bucureşti , sector 3 TEL/FAX: 0040213229554 e-mail: aeryb.ro@gmail.com Cod Fiscal 13022981

> Stimate Dle Meir Shai (Haifa 34576, Rh. Bicurim nr. 17/4 - Israel)

La cererea Dv înregistrată la nr. 78/28,10,2009 prin care solicitați precizări privind baza documentară pe care s-au sprijinit aprecierile mele favorabile - ca președinte al AERVH - în cazul Tit Simedrea, vă comunic următoarele:

- Î. Am avut onoarea de a fi membru al "Comisiei Internaționale pentru Studierea Holocaustului în România Elie Wiesel", ca reprezentant al supraviețuitorilor. Ca urmare, am avut privilegiul de a colabora cu mari personalități științifice de la care am încercat să-mi însușese metodele de cercetare în acest domeniu. În același timp, am căutat să împărtășese celorlalți membri ai Comisiei din experiența mea de supraviețuitor, atmosfera care a domnit în acea perioadă, comportamentul celor din jurul nostru, aspecte care pot fi greu regăsite în documentele de arhivă. Pornind de la aceste premise, am îndrăznit să analizez datele și să-mi exprim părerea privind cazul la care vă referiții.
- Documentul care a stat la baza aprecierii a fost o sursă primară, adică mărturia supraviețuitorilor care au fost martori direcți la faptele candidatului (în cazul dat — Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea).
  - 2.1- Acestea sunt, de fapt. mărturiile Dvs (Slackman Marcel) și surorii Dvs (Slackman Beatrice), singurii rămași în viață (din cei 5 membri ai familiei Dvs, salvați de la moarte în perioada respectivă) atunei când a fost introdusă cererea pentru acordarea titlului de Drept între Popoare pentru George Rusu.
  - 2.2 Mărturiile Dvs sunt clare. Ele au evidențiat chiar atunci rolul hotărător pe care 1-a avut mitropolitul Tit Simedrea în salvarea familiei Dvs. Aceasta și explică de ce numele mitropolitului a fost ridicat în dezbaterile Comisiei pentru acordarea titlului de Drept al Popoarelor când s-a discutat dosarul Rusu. Dacă, prin absurd, aș fi făcut și eu parte din Comisie, aș fi făcut același lucru. Și iată de ce:

- La cererea de ajutor adresată de tatăl Dvs pictorului Rusu, în momentul când au început deportările din ghetou (şi Dvs relatați acest lucru în mărturiile Dvs), acesta i-a promis că va vorbi cu Mitropolitul pentru a încerca să obțină o autorizație de rămânere în Cernăuți a familiei Dvs (ştiu din proprie experiență, că în acele condiții de teroare, când un tată obținea o astfel de promisiune, venea și o împărtășea imediat întregii familii);
- nici un pictor de icoane (oricât de renumit ar fi fost el) nu-şi putea permite să ceară, în nume propriu, autorizație pentru ca o familie de evrei să rămână în acea perioadă în Cernăuți; aceasta putea fi cerută de către șeful instituției (în cazul dat al Mitropoliei) și acesta era Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea.;
- adăpostitea unei familii de cinci persoane în subsolul Mitropoliei, pe o perioadă îndelungată, cu tot ceea ce implică o asemenea acțiune – nu putea fi realizată de către un pictor de icoane, fără aprobarea celui care conducea instituția;
- experiența proprie mi-a permis să-mi dau seama că mărturiile Dvs sunt dezinteresate și aceasta deoarece:
  - nu ați fost nici conducători și nici nu ați păstorit vreo obște evreiască destinată exterminării pe care să o fi părâsit pentru a vă salva viața;
  - ca urmare, nu aveți de ce să vă justificați supraviețuirea, nici în fața altora, nici în fața propriei constiinte;
  - concluzia la care am ajuns este că demersul Dvs derivă doar din dorința ca memoria celor care v-au salvat familia într-o perioadă atât de crăncenă pentru evrei. să fie onorată în mod corespunzător.

Denumirea de "perioadă crâncenă" este perfect justificată, fiind demonstrată de documentele pe care le anexâm în copie, și anume:

- ..Încunoștiințarea de înființare a ghetoului din Cernăuți" (în care iese în evidență fraza ..Evreii găsiți după ora 18 în afara ghetoului vor fi împușcați");
- "Ordonanța nr. 38 din 11 Octombrie 1941", în care la art. 1 se specifică: "Vor fi pedepsiți cu moartea:

d) Toți acei care vor ascunde în locuințele lor, persoane străine de locuințe sau vor uşura fuga celor ce nu pot părăsi localitatea."

(Documentele sunt redate după "Cartea Neagră – vol 3 – Transnistria" de Mathatias Carp, ediția din 1947, - pag. 154 și pag 157: ele sunt prezentate sub formă de fotocopii după original și în planșa V)

Din aceasta rezultă clar pericolul la care s-au expus, atât șeful instituției cât și colaboratorul său.

- La pag 3 din 5 Biblioteca Virtuală a Drepților între Popoare în perioada Holocaustului, fa "Aspecte Problematice", este menționat și cazul "Mănăstirii". În general este recunoscut conducătorul mănăstirii, cel care ia decizia dacă să adăpostească evrei și nu călugări separați, decât dacă în faptele lor există ceva cu adevărat îeșit dîn comun (anexez copie). În această categorie se încadrează, desigur, și Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea.
- 3. În continuare, am coroborat acțiunea coneretă de salvare reflectată în mărturiile Dvs cu datele din arhiva SSI (Serviciul Secret de Informații din timpul lui Antonescu), din arhiva CNSAS (Arhiva Securității) și cele găsite în "Memoriile" diferitelor personalități, privind comportamentul general al Mitropolitului Tit Simedrea în perioada respectivă. Dintre acestea mentionez:
  - Notă asupra audienței, acordată de Mitropolitul Tít Simedrea, în ziua de 13 Octombrie 1941 (Arhiva Centrului de Studii a Istoriei Evreilor din România), dosar 407, redată şi în cartea "Filderman, un avocat al etniei sale, pag 246", pe care o anexez în copie şi din care redau doar fraza: "Am fost primți foarte câlduros şi ne-a promis tot concursul". Urmează o serie de îndrumări pentru contactarea unor personalități prin care să se ajungă la Patriarhul Nicodim.
  - Nota SSI (Serviciul Secret de Informații din timpul lui Antonescu) din 19 Octombrie 1941 (pe care o anexez în copie) unde se arată (între alte înformații) și următoarele: "În dimineața zilei de 16 Octombrie a.c., șeful Rabin dr. Şafran a fost primit de ÎPS mitropolitul. Tit Simedrea care i-a dat asigurări că, împreună cu fruntașul bucovinean Flondor, au intervenit pentru evreii din Bucovina, invitându-l ori de câte ori va socoti necesar, să-l viziteze, promiţându-i sprijinul său." (Anexez copie).
  - Nota DGSS (Direcția Generală a Securității Statului) cu nr. 232, găsită în arhivele CNSAS (anexez copie), în care este menționată o notă a SSI din 9 Aprilie 1941 unde este prezentată următoarea informație: ...... a mărturisit fățiş unor apropiați ai lui durerea și deprimarea ce i-au produs-o evenimentele care au avut loc din Septembrie 1940 până în Aprilie 1941. A vorbit cu scârbă de regimul legionar, manifestând o atitudine antiantonesciană, nefiind de acord cu unele actiuni ale lui Antonescu."

Documentele menționate evidențiază o conduită morală de înaltă ținută, atitudinea favorabilă față de reprezentanții evreimii, îndrumările date și recomandarea de a fi utilizat

numele său pentru a se ajunge la cel mai înalt reprezentant al Bisericii Ortodoxe, Patriarhul Nicodim (Nota Filderman) – atitudine confirmată și de relatarea Şef Rabinului Alexandru Şafran privind primirea la același mitropolit ("Un tăciune smuls flăcărilor, pag 85").

4. Analiza perioadei în care au avut loc întrevederile Mitropolitului Tît Simedrea cu fruntaşii evreimii adaugă un plus de semnificație pentru atitudinea acestuia. Este vorba de perioada imediat următoare începerii războiului, în care trupele germane şi române păreau imbatabile pe frontul de răsărit şi când majoritatea absolută a celor din jurul nostru, mai ales în zona la care ne referim, manifestau față de evrei ostilitate sau în cel mai bun caz indiferență. Şi o spun cu regret, sunt atât de puțini cei care au adoptat o atitudine asemănătoare cu aceea a Mitropolitului Tît Simedrea în acea perioadă de ură încrâncenată.

În concluzie, elementele menționate constituie "baza documentară" a aprecierii favorabile pe care am avut-o și o am pentru acțiunile Mitropolitului Tit Simedrea. El s-a expus unui pericol tot atât de mare ca acela la care s-au expus oameni ce au primit pe merit titlul de Drept între Popoare ca Traian Popovici sau Regina Mamă Elena.

Îmi exprim regretul că nu am făcut aceste precizări în materialul înaintat la Yad Vashem, dar sper că acum vă este clar modul meu de gândire care a dus la această apreciere deosebită pentru un om care a fost "deosebit".



Annex no. 25.



# FEDERAȚIA COMUNITĂȚILOR EVREIEȘTI DIN ROMÂNIA

Concluzie

Ca președinte al Federației Comunităților Evreiești din Romaînia contrasemnez declarațiile domnilor Dorel Dorian și Liviu Beriș, nu fără a consemna totodată faptul că cercetările intreprinse după eliberarea României ca și cele ale CNSAS (Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității), au dus la aceleași concluzii: Tit Simedrea a fost indiscutabil, mult înainte de a fi recunoscut ca atare un adevărat "Drept al popoarelor".

Dr. Aurel Vainer, deputat, presedinte al F.C.E.R.

BUCUREȘTI 12 MAI 2008

## THE FEDERATION OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN ROMANIA

#### Conclusion

As president of the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania I countersign the declarations of Mr. Dorel Dorian and Liviu Beriş, not without recording the fact that the research undertaken after the liberation of Romania and those of CNSAS (The National Committee for Studying the Archives of Security) have reached the same conclusion: Tit Simedrea was, beyond any doubt, long before he was officially recognized as such, a true "Righteous among Men".

Dr. Aurel Vainer, Deputy, President of F.C.E.R.

Bucharest 12th of May, 2008 Annex no. 26.

#### Alexandru Şafran A coal from the fire

"On the contrary, he proved to be, in his brutal refusal, rude and stubborn at the same time. This way, he managed to hit the Patriarh's national pride, who reacted strongly. As if he was the one to embody Romania's independence, Nicodim turned towards Antonescu and appealed to his most nationalistic feelings. In the end he obtained, being supported by the queen, a slowing down of the convoys and, for those that hadn't already left, a certain postponing. But these measures were sporadic and the deportations were later resumed.

During this terrible period, the Bishop of Bukovina, Tit Simedrea, arrived in Bucharest, coming from Czernowitz, a city where our people were hit very severely. He was a notorious antisemite, but I told myself that I had to see him, at least to have his direct confession and to try to influence him in our favor.

I therefore asked him for an urgent audience and he knew the reason very well. He received me and confessed, to my great astonishment, that what he saw still disturbs him. He told me about Romanian soldiers that were pulling sick people from their beds and children screaming while they were taken against their will to trains. He understood to what extend his story was tearing me apart and, without losing an instant, I asked him imperatively to communicate his impressions to the marshal and to ask him to stop the deportations. He did it profitably, because the convoys that left Czernowitz stopped. He went even further, because when he returned to his town he made sure that the authorities, which were pretty refractory, were executing the government's order. It was something absolutely unthinkable: we obtained the ceasing of the deportation with the help of Tit Simedrea, Bukovina's anti-semite Bishop. But, alas! they were resumed at the beginning of the summer of '42.

When I found out that the authorities from Czernowitz had gathered all the Jews in a market place, Maccabiplatz, I understo-

od what was about to happen. There were a lot of children there who had nothing to drink and, knowing this, I was in a hurry to contact Maria Antonescu, the eternal "president of numerous charities". I knew that she had the possibility to intervene. I asked her thus: "Madame, I am talking about the children who don't even have the right to drink! Order at once that they receive water! Save them from dying before it's too late!"

She remained inflexible and silent on that day, without even giving me her usual answer: "This does not depend on me, contact this or that Ministry..." She's a stone, I told myself, a stone you cannot move from its place..."

I knew that on their way to Transnistria, many of the deported died because of exhaustion or were massacred with bayonet hits by the soldiers. Once they arrived, the survivors died in their turn because of hunger or the lack of medical attention. They had neither clothes, nor food, nor drugs. In the beginning we didn't even dare to hope that we could send them some kind of help. We had heard about the governor of Transnistra, a certain "professor" Alexianu, renowned for his cruelty. He was against any attempt from our part to help the deported. Once again, the queen mother came to our rescue.

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presionat deloc pe Killinger. Dimpotrivă, s-a arătat, în refuzul său brutal, impertinent și încăpățânat, în același timp. În felul acesta, el a reușit să lovească în orgoliul național al Patriarhului, care a reacționat yiguros. Ca și cum el ar fi întruchipat independența României, Nicodim s-a întors anume către mareșalul Antonescu, făcând apel la sentimentele sale cele mai naționaliste. A sfârșit prin a obține, susținut de regină, o încetinire a convoaielor, iar pentru acelea care n-au pornit încă o oarecare amânare. Dar aceste măsuri au fost sporadice, iar mai apoi deportările au fost reluate.

În această perioadă îngrozitoare, Mitropolitul Bucovinei, Tit Simedrea, a sosit la București, venind de la Cernăuți, un oraș în care ai noștri fuseseră foarte dur loviți. Era un antisemit notoriu, dar mi-am zis că trebuie totuși să-l văd, fie și numai pentru a avea mărturia sa directă și pentru a încerca să-l influențez în favoarea noastră.

I-am cerut deci o audiență urgentă, iar el știa foarte bine pentru ce. M-a primit și a mărturisit, spre marea mea surprindere, că qeea ce a văzut îl tulbură încă. Mi-a povestit despre soldați români smulgând bolnavi din paturile lor, copii țipând în timp ce sunt duși cu de-a sila la tren. A înțeles în ce măsură relatarea lui mă sfâșia și, fără a pierde nici o clipă, i-am cerut pe un ton imperativ să-și comunice impresiile mareșalului și să-i ceară să oprească deportările. El a făcut-o, și a făcut-o într-adevăr cu folos, fiindcă convoaiele care porneau din Cernăuți au fost oprite. A mers chiar mai departe căci odată ajuns în orașul său, s-a asigurat din partea autorităților, destul de recalcitrante, că ordinul guvernului e dus la îndeplinire. Era ceva absolut de ne-

închipuit: obținusem oprirea deportărilor din Cernăuți cu ajutorul lui Tit Simedrea, Mitropolitul antisemit al Bucovinei... Dar, vai!, ele au fost reluate la începutul verii anului 1942.

Când am aflat că autoritățile din Cernăuți i-au strâns pe evrei într-o piață, Maccabiplatz, am înțeles ce urmează să se întâmple. Erau acolo mulți copii fără să aibă nimic de băut, și știind acest lucru m-am grăbit să iau legătura cu Maria Antonescu, veșnica "președintă a numeroase opere caritabile". Știam că avea posibilitatea de a interveni. Am rugat-o deci: "Doamnă, vă vorbesc despre copiii care n-au nici măcar dreptul să bea! Dați ordine fără întârziere ca să li se aducă apă! Salvați-i de la moarte înainte de a fi prea târziu!".

Ea a rămas în acea zi neclintită, mută, fără măcar să-mi arunce obișnuitul ei răspuns: "Asta nu depinde de mine, ia legătura cu cutare sau cutare minister...". O piatră, mi-âm spus, o piatră pe care n-o poți urni din loc...".

Stiam că în drum spre Transnistria mulți deportați mureau de epuizare sau masacrați cu lovituri de baionetă de către soldați. Odată ajunși, supraviețuitorii mureau la rândul lor de foame sau de lipsa oricăror îngrijiri medicale. N-aveau nici îmbrăcăminte, nici hrană, nici medicamente. La început nici nu îndrăzneam șă sperăm că le-am putea trimite vreun ajutor. Auzisem despre guvernatorul Transnistriei, un anume profesor" Alexianu, renumit pentru cruzimea sa. El se împotrivea oricărei încercări din partea noastră de a-i ajuta pe deportați. O dată în plus, ne-a venit în ajutor regina-mamă. Am informat-o permanent asupra



Annex no. 27.

# The National Committee for Studying the Archives of the Security

To Mr. Colonel Dumitru STAVARACHE

Esteemed Mr. Colonel,

As a result of the communication that was registered in our files with number P6221/07 from 21.11. 2007, through which Mr. Meir Shai requested the support of the C.N.S.A.S. so that you could study Bishop Tit Simedrea's files, we convey you the following:

The C.N.S.A.S. Committee approved Mr. Shai's request.

As such, we invite you at our headquarters at no 2-4 Dragoslavele Street, district 1, Bucharest, in order to study the requested documents.

Yours sincerely,

President,
University lecturer doctor
Ladislau-Antoniu CSENDES





### Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității

București, Str. Dragoslavele nr. 2-4, Sector 1, cod 011024 Tel.: 319.09.35; 319.09.36 Fax: 319.09.32 www.cnsas.ro

Nr. P6221/07/ 0 5 -12- 2007

#### Domnului colonel Dumitru STAVARACHE

Stimate domnule colonel.

Urmarea adresei înregistrată în evidențele noastre sub numărul P6221/07 din data de 21.11.2007, prin care domnul Meir Shai a solicitat sprijinul Colegiului C.N.S.A.S. pentru studierea dosarului Mitropolitului Tit Simedrea de către dumneavoastră, vă comunicăm următoarele:

Colegiul C.N.S.A.S. a aprobat cererea domnului Shai.

Pe cale de consecință, vă invităm la sediul nostru din strada Dragoslavele nr. 2-4, sector 1, București, pentru studierea documentelor identificate.

Cu stimă.



Annex no. 28.

Mr MEIR SHAI 17/4 Bikurim Street 34576 Haifa ISRAEL

#### The conclusions of the researcher

I the undersigned, Dumitru Stavarache, military historian (colonel in reserve), member of the Romanian Military History Committee, with the residence in Şoseaua Panduri, no 3, bl. P32, ap.29, district 5, Bucharest, Romania, answer your request of drawing up a documentary for Bukovina's ex-Bishop, Tit Simedrea (1886-1971), candidate for receiving, post-mortem, the title of RIGHTEOUS AMONG MEN.

My research included more documents from Romania's National Archives, the Military National Archives, the archive of the National Committee for Studying the Archives of the Security, as well as interviews with eye witnesses.

Given your request – finding some proofs or clues that Bishop Tit Simedrea contributed to the rescue of a large number of Jews in Bukovina from being sent to camps, and clarifications in what concerns the Romanian's hierarch affiliation to extremist groups (especially the iron-guardist one) – the research I have conducted so far pointed the following:

- Bishop Tit Simedrea intervened to support the Jews in Bukovina.
   The declarations of some witnesses of the events (Chief Rabbi Şafran, Traian Popovici, mayor of Czernowitz and others) are confirmed by the Note of the Special Information Services from the 18th of October 1941, f. 38;
- Bishop Tit Simedrea was not a member of the iron-guardist or any other extremist movement. The evidence: declarations from eye witnesses, enclosed in this documentary; the mention from the Security on a document dated March 25th 1949 that SIMEDREA TIT – UNKNOWN TO ALL ARCHIVES (the C.N.S.A.S archive, infor-

mative file no 5467, volume 3, page 85); documents issued by The Ministry of National Affairs, f. 39, 40; his own attitude, of condemning the iron-guardist regime, also mentioned by the Special Services in the Note from April 19th 1941; the lack of incriminatory proof (documents, notifications, information) in all the researched funds.

- Bishop's Tit Simedrea's activity in The National Romanization Center, for which he was proposed, is not confirmed; the file opened by the Security on the 21st of December 1952 in order to clear up this problem was closed and disposed of on the 4th of July 1962, f. 41;
- Bishop Tit Simedrea was in good relationships with the representative of the Jewish community. The evidence: the collaboration in organizing some festivities, f. 42-43; some of his close friends had Jewish names Riber Cornelia, Hedelcovici Rodica, Scwartmann Simion and other, f. 44-46;

The present document contains 30 documents, preceded by a summary of these and totalizes 55 pages.

Bucharest, 23rd of December, 2007

Dumitru Stavarache

21

Domnului MEIR SHAI Str.Bikurim nr.17/4 34576 Haifa ISRAEL

#### Concluziile cercetătorului

Subsemnatul Dumitru Stavatrache, istoric militar(colonel în rezervă), membru în Comisia Română de Istorie Militară, cu domiciliul în Şos.Panduri nr.3, bl.P32, ap.29, Sector 5, Bucureşti, România, răspund solicitării dumneavoastră de a întocmi un documentar pentru fostul Mitropolit al Bucovinei, Tit Simedrea(1886-1971), candidat la acordarea, post-mortem, a titlului DREPT AL POPOARELOR LUMII.

Cercetarea mea s-a efectuat pe mai multe fonduri din Arhivele Naționale ale României, Arhivele Militare Naționale, Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, precum și interviuri cu martori oculari.

Față de cele solicitate – găsirea unor mărturii sau indicii că Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea a contribuit la salvarea de la timiterea în lagăre a unui număr însemnat de evrei din Bucovina şi clarificări în privința apartenenței ierarhului român la mişcări extremiste(în special legionară) - , cercetările efectuate până în prezent au scos în evidență următoarele:

- Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea a Intervenit în sprijinul evreilor din Bucovina. Afirmațiile unor martori ai evenimentelor( Rabinul şef Şafran,Traian Popovici, primarul orașului Cernăuți ş.a.), sunt confirmate de Nota Serviciului Special de Informații din 18 octombrie 1941, f. 38;
- Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea nu a activat în cadrul mişcării legionare sau alte mişcării extremiste. Argumente: relatările martorilor oculari, anexate în prezentul documenttar; mentiunea organelor de

Securitate pe un document din 25 martie 1949 că SIMEDREA TIT – LA TOATE ARHIVELE NECUNOSCUT(Arhiva C.N.S.A.S., dosar Informativ 5467, vol.3, fila 85; documente emise de Ministrul Afacerilor Interne român, f. 39,40; atitudinea proprie, de condamnare a regimului legionar menționată și de serviciile speciale în Nota din 19 aprilie 1941; lipsa unor dovezi încriminatorii(documente, sesizări, informații) în toate fondurile cercetate:

- Nu se confirmă activitatea Mitropolitului Tit Simedrea în cadrul Centrului Naţional de Românizare, în care fusese propus; dosarul deschis de organele de Securitate la 21 decembrie 1952 pentru a elucida această problemă, a fost închis şi clasat la 4 julie 1962, f. 41;
- Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea a întreţinut bune relaţii cu reprezentanţii comunităţii evreişti. Argumente: colaborarea în organizarea unor festivităţi, f. 42-43; prezenţa în preajma sa a unor persoane cu nume ebraice - Riber Cornelia, Hedelcovici Rodica, Schwartmann Simion ş.a., f. 44-46;
- Mitropolitului Tit Simedrea i-au fost întocmite de organele de Securitate atât dosar individual cât şi dosar de verificare. Ambele au fost închise cu hotărârea de trecere în evidență, materialele din aceste dosare fiind considerate de mică importantă, f. 47-48.

Prezentul documentar conţine 30 documente, precedate de o listărezumat a acestora si însumează 55 file.

București, 23 decembrie 2007

Dumitru Stavarache

Also, Tit Simedrea officiates masses at the Darvari hermitage.

Tit Simedrea, the locum tenens of the Bishop Church, appears on a note without date of the S.S.I., probably from 1930, that, together with Pimen, the Bishop of Moldavia, he could be a freemason.

Bishop Tit Simedrea appears in a paper from the S.S.I. from 1941, regarding the politics from the territories that had to be annexed to Romania (Transnistria), mentioned as being proposed for the religious politics committee, together with Gala Galaction, Bulescu and others.

Bishop Simedrea is also present in a note of the S.S.I. from April the 9th, 1941, in which it is shown that he spoke downright to some of his close friends about the pain and depression provoked by the events that took place from September 1940 to April 1941.

He spoke with disgust about the iron-guardist regime, showing an anti-Antonescu attitude and disagreeing with some of Antonescu's actions.

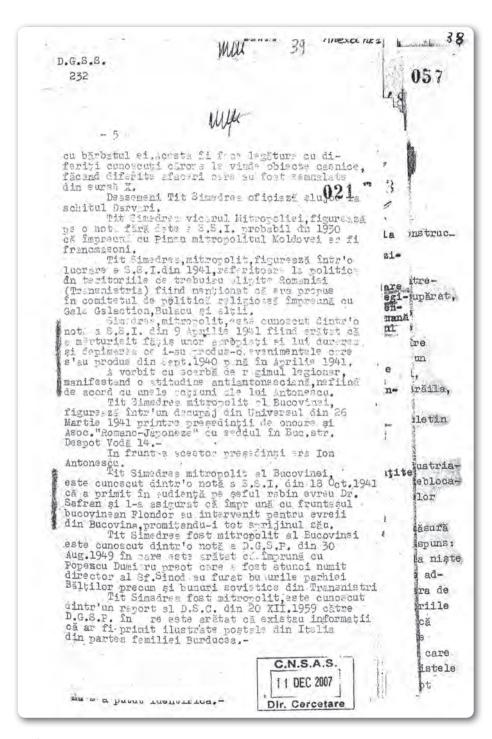
Bishop Tit Simedrea appears in a cutting up of paper from the "Universul" of the 26th of March 1941, among the honorary presidents of the "Romanian-Jewish" Association, with the residence in Bucharest, no 14, Despot Vodă Street.

The leading president was Ion Antonescu.

Tit Simedrea, Bishop of Bukovina, is known from a note of the S.S.I. from the 18th of October 1941, for receiving in audience the Jewish Chief Rabbi Dr. Şafran and assuring him that, together with Flondor, the leading politician in Bukovina, they have intervened for the Jews in Bukovina, promising them all his support.

Tit Simedrea, ex-Bishop of Bukovina is known from a note of the D.G.S.P. from August the 30th 1949, in which it is shown that, together with priest Popescu Dumitru, who was then appointed as director of the Holy Synod, has stolen the goods of the Bălți parish as well as Russian goods in Transnistria.

Tit Simedrea, ex-Bishop is known from a report sent by the D.S.C. to D.G.S.P on the 20th of December 1959, in which it is shown that there was information according to which he would have received postal cards from Italy, from the Burducea family.



In the spring of 1939, the deceased general BENGLIU was proclaimed citizen of honor of the town of Bălti.

The initiative for this act belonged to His Holiness Tit, Bishop of Bukovina, at that time Bishop of Bălți and Hotin, assisted by the representatives of the sad remembrance regime: Colonel PETRE HANCIU, the prefect of the county, IACOB COCIORVA, mayor of the city, who preferred to remain in the occupied territory, druggist GHEORGHE GH. DAIANU, president of the Chamber of Commerce, and the group of big Jewish industrialists from Bălți.

This proclamation was soon turned into a national celebration. The whole city was adorned with the national flag, carpets, oak tree garlands and triumph arches and at the train station he was welcomed by all the officials of the town with bread and salt, speeches and military music.

A special religious service was performed at the town's cathedral, after which general BENGLIU and his wife went to the Bishop Church where, for the next three days they were the guests of Bishop Tit Simedrea.

At lunch, a banquet took place in the garden of the "Popov" restaurant, at which approximately 200 guests took part, representatives of all the authorities and all the important Jews in town.

Speeches were held.

The first to speak was Bishop TIT SIMEDREA, who, among others, said: "...A duty of conscience made us proclaim general BENGLIU as citizen of honor of Bălţi, a fearless Romanian who, during especially difficult times for the country, together with other good Romanians gathered around the King, knew how to keep order in the country, silencing a herd of crazy people, strangers in what concerns the soul and aspirations of the Romanian people."

In the end, general BENGLIU answered, by confessing:

"...Yes, as well said His Holiness Tit, I was a part of that group of people who, risking their own lives, knew how to repress on time and with authority the dissolution action of a group of irresponsible country traitors."

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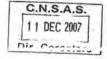
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In primăvara anului 1939, defunctul general BENGLIU, a fost proclamat cetățean de oroare al orașului Bălți.

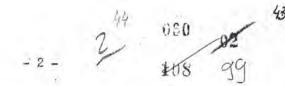
Inițiativa acestui act a fost luată de I.P.S.Mitropolit al Bucovinei TIT, pe acea vreme Episcop al Bălților și Hotinului, asistat de reprezentanții regimului de tristă memorie: colonel PETRE HANCIU Prefectul județului, IACOB COCIORVA Primarul ore șului, care a preferat să rămână în teritoriul ocupat, farmacistul CHEORGAE Ch.DAIANU președintele Camerei de Eomerț și grupul marilor industriași evrei din orașul Bălți.

Această proclamare a luat caracterul unei sărbători naționale.Intreg orașul a fost pavuazat cu Drapelul țării,covoare,ghirlande de stejar și arcuri de triumf,iar la gară a fost întâmpinat de întreaga oficialitate a orașului cu pâine și sare,cuventări și muzică militară.

La Cetedrala orașului s'a oficiat, cu acest prilej, un serviciu religios de circumstanță, după care Generalul BENGLIU cu doamna au mers și descins la



./.



Palatul Episcopal, unde timp de trei zile au fost caspeții Episcopului TIT SIMEDREA.

La prânz,în grădina restaurantului "Popov" a avut loc un banchet,la care au luat parte aproximativ 200 de invitați,reprezentanți ai tuturor autorităților și toată jidovimea cu stare a orașului.

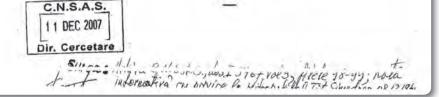
S'au tinut cuvântări.

Seria acestora a fost deschisă de Episcopul TIT SIMEDREA, care, printre altele, a rostit:

"..... O datorie de constiință ne-a cerut să proclamăm cetățean de onoare al Bălților pe gener lul BENGLIU, Român, neînfricat, care, în vremuri de grea cumpănă pentru țară, împreună cu alți buni români, strâns uniți în jurul Regelui, au știut să imprime ordinea ce turbura Tara, reducând la tăcere o ceată de desmetici, străini de sufletul și aspirațiile Neamului românesc".

Lansfarșit a răspuns generalul BENGLIU, mărturisind:

".... Da, după cum prea bine a spus Prea Sfântul TIT, am făcut parte din acel mănunchiu de oameni, cari, cu riscul vieții lor, a știut să reprime la timp și cu autoritate, acțiunea de dizoluție a unui grup de iresponsabili și țrădători de țară".



Annex no. 31.

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Annex no. 32.

## The National Committee for Studying the Archives of the Security

To Mr. Meir SHAL

Dear Sir.

As a result of the communication through which you requested the identification in the C.N.S.A.S archive of information regarding the helping of Jews by the Bishop of Bukovina, Tit Simedrea, we inform you that the following files were consulted: I 5.467/vol 1-4; I 5466/vol 1-2; I 2552/vol 1; I2213; I 2309/vol 1-2; I 1450/vol 1-2; and R 315/vol 3A.

The following conclusions were drawn from the study of these files:

- The majority of the consulted files regard the period 1950-1971 and come from the informative pursuit files opened by the Security for other persons and in which Tit Simedrea appears mentioned only sporadically.
- The Security opened an informative pursuit file on the name of Tit Simedrea I 5467. In this file there is too little information regarding Tit Simedrea's activity during 1940-1945, when he was Bishop of Bukovina. None of the information in the file contains any direct or indirect reference to the Bishop's relationship with the Jewish community or with helping Jews during the war or at any other times.
- In the consulted documents there is only one reference to the support that Bishop Tit Simedrea offered the Jews, which we present below:

"Tit Simedrea, ex-Bishop of Bukovina, is known from a note of the S.S.I. from the 18th of October 1941, for receiving in audience the Jewish Chief Rabbi Dr. Şafran and assuring him that, together with Flondor, the leading politician in Bukovina, they have intervened for the Jews in Bukovina, promising them all his support." (D.G.S.S. file from the 19th of May 1952 regarding the whole activity and the political opinions of Tit Simedrea – I 5466, vol. 1, page 21, enclosed to this communication).

Yours sincerely,

President,
University lecturer doctor
Ladislau-Antoniu CSENDES



# Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității

Bueureşti, Str. Matei Basarab nr. 55-57, Sector 3, cod 030672

Operator de date cu caracter personal notificat sub nr. 158

Nr. RCG 3526/09/ 127 -11- 2009

#### Domnului Meir SHAL

Stimate domn.

Urmarea adresei prin care dumneavoastră solicitați identificarea în arhiva C.N.S.A.S. a informațiilor referitoare la ajutorarea evreilor de către Mitropolitul Bucovinei Tit Simedrea, vă comunicăm că au fost consultate următoarele dosare: 1 5.467/vol. 1-4; 15.466/vol. 1-2; 1 2.552/vol. 1; 1 2.213; 1 2.309/vol. 1-2; 1 1.450/vol. 1-2 şi R 315/vol. 3A.

Din studiul acestor dosare au reiesit următoarele:

- Cea mai mare parte a documentelor consultate priveso perioada 1950-1971 şi provin din dosarele de urmărire informativă deschise de Securitate pe numele alter persoane, iar persoana lui Tit Simedrea apare menționată doar tangențial, în cadrul supravegherii informative a titularilor dosarelor.
- Securitatea a deschis pe numele lui Tit Simedrea un dosar de urmărire informativă I 5.467. În cuprinsul acestui dosar se află foarte puţine informaţii privind activitatea lui Tit Simedrea în penoada 1940-1945, când era Mitropolit al Bucovinei. Nici una dintre informaţiile din dosar nu cuprinde vreo referire directă sau îndirectă la relaţiile mitropolitului cu comunitatea evreiască sau cu ajutoarea unor evrei în timpul războiului sau în alte perioade.
- În documentele consultate se află o singură referire la sprijinul acordat evreilor de către Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea, pe care o prezentâm mai jos:

"Tit Simedrea, fost mitropolit al Bucovinei, este cunoscut dintr-o notă a S.S.I. din 18 octombrie 1941 că a primit în audiență pe șeful rabin evreu dr. Şafran și I-a asigurat că împreună cu fruntașul bucovinean Flondor au intervenit pentru evreii din Bucovina, promițându-i tot sprijinul său". (Fișă a D.G.S.S. din 19 mai 1952 privind întreaga activitate și opiniile politice ale lui Tit Simedrea – I 5.466, vol. 1, fila 21, anexată prezentei adrese).

Cu stimá.



## 64. Note on the audience of 13th of October 1941

I. The deported from Bukovina and Basarabia. At 10 o'clock in the morning, accompanied by Mr. Fred Saraga, we appeared before His Holiness the Bishop of Bukovina.

We were received very warmly and were promised his full support.

He recommended we should also see professor Ştefănescu, who should remind His Holiness the Patriarh and who could possibly speak to the marshal and others.

If we don't find him at the Splendid Hotel, we should go to the Patriarchate, were we should ask to speak to the professor, by addressing father archimandrite Melhisedec, whom we should tell that we came from His Holiness.

We should also try and meet with professor Alexianu.

- II. The Ministry of National Affairs. At 11 am I was at the Ministry of National Affairs, where I had appointed an audience with Minister D. Popescu, whom I handled the 1801-1805 and 1759, 1799 memoires.
  - a) 1801. Does not depend upon The Ministry of National Affairs. If the Great General Staff approved that the requisitioned men should return to their homes, it should also decide about their families.
  - b) 1802. He will give a memorandum in the whole country, that no more than 15 hostages should be retained and that they should be changed weekly.
  - c) 1803. He does not know the answer that we refer to. We should therefore present the memorial to Mr. Jacques Popescu. After all, the problem of the concentration camps depends upon the Great General Staff. National Affairs have only 2 concentration camps: Tg. Jiu and Teiuş.
  - d) 1804. He will give an order that all the evacuated Jews can be allowed to go back home and take whatever they need.
  - e) 1805. He will send an order to Vaslui, so that the provisioning order is prolonged.
  - f) 1759. He gave me back the memorial, as its solution is found in the Federation's 1802 memorial.
  - g) 1799. He approved that the old Kupferberg couple can go to Vaslui.

III. The Police Prefect's Office. At 12:30 I was in audience at Mr. Police Prefect with 280 petitions from Jews in the military areas who asked not to be evacuated. I presented the 280 petitions.

He asked me to turn them over and to personally guarantee for every one of them.

The C.S.I.E.R Archive, ds 407

# 64. Notă asupra audienței din ziua de 13 octombrie 1941

 Deportații din Bucovina și Basarabia. La orele 10 dim., însoțit de dl Fred Saraga ne-am prezentat la I.P.S.S. Mitropolitul Bucovinei.

Am fost primiți foarte călduros și ne-a promis tot concursul.

Ne-a recomandat să-l vedem și pe dl prof. Ștefănescu care să reamintească I.P.S.S. Patriarhului și care, eventual, poate vorbi domnului mareșal și altora.

Dacă nu-l găsim la Hotel Splendid să ne ducem la Patriarhie, unde să cerem a vorbi cu domnul profesor, adresându-ne părintelui arhimandrit Melhisedec, căruia să-i spunem că am fost și pe la Sfinția Sa.

De asemenea să căutăm a-l vedea pe dl prof, Alexianu.

- II. Ministerul de Interne. La orele 11 a.m. am fost la Interne unde mi se fixase audiență la domnul ministru D. Popescu, căruia i-am predat memoriile 1801-1805 si 1759, 1799.
- a) 1801. Nu depinde de Interne. Dacă Marele Stat Major a aprobat ca bărbații rechiziționați să se întoarcă la căminele lor, tot el trebuie să decidă despre familiile lor.
- b) 1802. Va da circulară în toată țara ca să nu se rețină mai mult de 15 ostatici și să-i schimbe săptămânal.
- c) 1803. Nu cunoaște răspunsul la care ne referim. Să predăm deci memoriul d-lui Jacques Popescu. În fond, chestia lagărelor depinde de Marele Stat Major. Internele n-au decât 2 lágăre; Tg. Jiu și Teiuș.
- d) 1804. Va da ordin circular ca toți evreii evacuați să fie lăsați să se ducă pe la casele lor și să-și ridice ce le trebuie.
  - e) 1805. Va da ordin la Vaslui să se prelungească termenul de aprovizionare.
- f) 1759. Mi-a restituit memoriul întrucât se găsește rezolvat prin memoriul 1802 al Federației.

g) 1799. A aprobat ca bătrânii Kupferberg să plece la Vaslui.

III. Prefectura de Poliție. La orele 12,30, în audiență la dl prefect de Poliție cu 280 de cereri de evrei din zonele militare pentru a nu fi evacuați.

M-am prezentat cu 280 de cereri.

Mi-a cerut să le îmbordez și pe fiecare să pun că garantez personal.

Arhiva C.S.I.E.R., ds. 407

Annex no. 33.

Popular Republic of Romania **Ministry of Internal Affairs** Bucharest Office No. 302/11523 of 3rd of sept. 1958

## TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT III

We kindly ask you to communicate your status on bishops TIT SIMEDREA and NIFON CRIVEANU, if there are data that they are engaged in subversive activities, particularly of legionary nature. We also ask you to communicate any data regarding the hostile activity of nuns from monasteries Nămoești, Zamfira and Viforîta.

We request the above because a legionary individual, POPESCU ION, known as TULCEA, from Tămădău, Bucharest, told one of the agents in our office that he intends to contact the above-mentioned bishops and to put them in contact to several "trustworthy" nuns in the above-mentioned monasteries.

In case you have important knowledge regarding this issue and you have informative possibilities, please communicate any material that should arise regarding the elements under our supervision.

CHIEF OF SERVICE Lt.Colonel Gh. Aurel

## REGIONAL OFFICE OF M.o.I.A.

Upon your report number 302/11523 of the 3rd of December 1956, we inform you that we do not hold relevant evidence that Tit Simedrea and Nifon Criveanu are engaged in counter-revolutionary activities at present, of legionary nature or of any other kind.

Also, we do not hold evidence of hostile activity of nuns from monasteries Nămoești and Zamfira.

With respect to the monastery of Viforîta, there was a group of monks and nuns involved in legionary activities, some of the respective elements being under the present investigation of M.o.I.A. Ploiesti, (illegible)

REPUBLICA POPULARA ROMINA



MINISTERUL AFACERILOR INTERNE

DI GOTTA REGIUNII BUCURESTI (Directia, Serviciul, Gottetea)

Nr302/11525 din 3 sept. 1958

DOSAR Nr.

STRICT SECRET Sx.ng. 1 S.C.597



CATRE

MINISTABUL AFACERILOR INTERNE = DIRECTIA III-a =

Augăm a ne comunica cum sînt cunoscuți de Dvs. episcopii <u>rir Simedrea</u> și <u>Nifan CRIVERNU</u>, dacă sînt date de aceștie ar desfășura ectivitate subversivă, în special pe linia problemei legionare. De asement rugăm a ne comunica dacă sînt date cu privire le activitatea dușmănossă a unor călugărițe de minăstirile: Mamoești, Zemfira și Vitoripa.

colicitam cele de mai sus întrucit un irrivid legionar anume popescu jon zis rucceptin com. Peredéu, reg. Sucurești a vorpit unei serve su Direcției noestre cu întențiorează să la legătura cu episcopii numivi mai sus și să-i tauă le atura cu niște călugărițe "as intredere"(is minăstirile menționate.

In coz că gint ounoscute de 175.62000te importante în legătură cu această proclema și aveți posibilități informative, să ne comunicați orice material ar apere cu privire le elementul urmărit de noi.~

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Annex no. 34.

Annex no. 34 Ministry of Internal Affairs Department C Section I Office II

SECRET SERVICE Stamp of CNSAS 11 dec 2007, Research Department

## **CESSATION NOTE**

Regarding Action File No 2477

After checking the cessation decision and the file, we have come to the following conclusions:

On 21. 12. 1949 an individual file was opened for Simedrea Teodor Titi for being one of the leaders of the National Centre for Romanian Identity.

On 4.07.1962 the decision was made to stop the action and classify the file in the archives of Department C because the target is no longer showing signs of hostile activities and is also 76 years old – the material being of small importance.

Decision made in regard to the above-mentioned individual (to be mentioned nominally whether included or excluded from records): to be included in the records for target no. 564.

Decision made regarding the connections established by the individual who constitutes the object of this action: *no connections have been established during this action.* 

Given that all the measures required by the cessation decision have been taken and the file has been numbered and certified in accordance with the provisions of the operational records order, this file can be submitted for storage in the archive.

The material contains: 177 pages.

<u>I AGREE</u> Department manager Checked Operational Director

Signatures illegible

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Annex no. 35.

MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS
Department III
Date: 18 July 1962

**APPROVED** illegible signatures

Stamp: OPERATED on 19 June 1968 Illegible signature, dated 10.05.68

## Decision to put on the record

Name: Simedrea Teodor Tit, born in 1886, month of June, day 12, place: Naipu – region Bucharest, father Ion, mother Stanca, nationality: Romanian, citizenship: Romanian, studies: Bachelor of the Faculty of Theology, profession: Priest Monk, place of work and position: retired, former Metropolitan of Bukovina during the bourgeois regime of Romania.

Political history: member of the National Peasants' Party (*in Romanian: PNT*) of Maniu. Lives in: Bucharest, 3 Calin Ion street, 1 Mai District.

#### REASON FOR PUTTING ON THE RECORD

Political activity before 23 August 1944: he was part of the PNT Maniu, as a member, and has conducted – during the anti-Soviet war – written and verbal defamation of the Soviet Union.

Taking advantage of his position as Metropolitan of Bukovina, he forced the priests who worked under his orders to read in church certain religious books printed by him with anti-Soviet messages, this taking place in 1941-1944.

He also translated and printed the work of the Russian theologian NICOLAE ARSENIEV – a runaway of the Soviet regime – entitled "The Eastern Church".

Evidence provided: photocopies of the papers to be found in the individual file.

Political activity after 23 August 1944: he has been reported to have enemy manifestations towards the social rule of our country.

Dated 28.11.97 Studied file according to MI order 00743558/73 Illegible signature

Results from: information material provided by agents "Dobrogeanu", "Sarateanu" and "Sandu Emil".

STAMP CNSAS 11 DEC 2007 Material checked and suggested putting on the record Gr. Moise Const. *illegible* 

## OPERATIONAL MEASURES TAKEN CONCERNING THIS INDIVIDUAL

| Name of type of<br>record opened<br>(action, infor-<br>mation, check-<br>ing etc.) | Date of record-<br>ing and file<br>number | Reason<br>(category of<br>enemy activity<br>in the record) | Date of cessa-<br>tion and deci-<br>sion taken  |
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| Individual file  | 2477<br>21 Dec. 1959                      | Signaled to have enemy manifestations                      | 4 July 1962<br>Material of small<br>importance  |
| Checking file  | 8725<br>21.04.1965                        | Signaled to have enemy manifestations                      | 12.01.1966 Material of small importance. The element is still present on the active record. |
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## **MENTIONS**

The material on the basis of which the target file no. 564 of the Direction III, Service IV, Dir. I 341 has been opened is preserved in the archives of Service "C" under no. 26.5.49 fund oper. No. Of volume 141 and pages 178 taken over by

Name and signature of the organ "C" who has received the material: Lt. Maj. ION PAUL

Date and signature of the operational record agent who has received the datasheet for the general library: illegible, dated 11.II. 966

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Annex no. 36.

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Expertise regarding the actions of Metropolitan Tit Simedrea (1886 – 1972) to save the Jews in Romania

1. A remarkable personality of the Romanian culture in the XX-th Century, Theodor (his monk name will be Tit) Simedrea began his studies at the Nifon Seminar in Bucharest and later studied Theology and, at the same time in Iasi, Law. Ordained as a priest, he served in Prunary (Teleorman), Blejesti (Vlasca), Movila-Peris (Ilfov), from 1907 to 1916. He took part in the First World War, being drafted in October 1916 as a Lieutenant Priest. Following his participation in the 1916 and 1917 campaigns with Regiments 35 and 36 Infantry, he was made Captain on 1 January 1918. He was demobilized only in October 1920, after serving at the Military Hospital for Contagious Diseases no. 3 and then at Regiment 30 Infantry. For his merits, he was awarded "The Commemorative Cross of the 1916-1918 War", for the regions of "Ardeal, Carpati, Marasesti 1916-1918" as a sign of his participation in the first campaigns up to 1918, as well as "Croce al Merito di Guerra", conferred in January 1918 by the King of Italy.

After the war, he served as a priest at the church of St. Nicolae Tabacu in Bucharest and a Director of the Chancellor of the Holy Synod. Meanwhile, he continued his studies in the field of Theology in Montpellier and Paris (1922-1923). He remained a widower in 1924 and went on to become a monk at Cernica Monastery, under the name of Tit. From 1926 to 1935 he was Vicar Archbishop of the Archiepiscopate of Bucharest, under the nickname "Targovisteanul", being also Director of the Printing Press of the Bible and Mission Institute, director and Liturgy professor at the Religious Music Academy of Bucharest, secretary of the magazine "Romanian Orthodox Church". Owing to his high theological knowledge he was a delegate of the Romanian Orthodox Church at the conferences of Lausanne (1927), Sofia (1929), Istanbul (1929), Vatoped (1930).

In May-July 1935 in the village of Maglavit, Dolj, a certain Petrache Lupu claimed to have seen and spoken to "the Old Man" (God) in three different occasions. His claims caused a wave of mystical ecstasy and religious fervor in

Romania. Since the Archiepiscopate of Craiova and Oltenia was tempted to recognize the theophany, the Patriarch of Romania Miron Cristea – who also was inclined to believe in what had happened in Maglavit, especially after Professor Doctor Gheorghe Marinescu had certified Petrache Lupu's mental health – asked the Vicar of the Archbishopry Tit Simedrea to conduct an investigation and present a report to the Holy Synod. The report of vicar Tit Simedrea was negative, a thing which was unfavorably regarded by a good part of the members of the Holy Synod. His report was never published and the former Vicar Archbishop was appointed – in December 1935 – bishop of Hotin, located in Balti, NE of Romania, where he succeeded the bishop Visarion Puiu.

He was a member of the National Peasants' Party. On the 13th of June 1940 he was elected Metropolitan of Bukovina. The Soviet ultimatum which changed the political fate of this part of Romania impeded his installation in 1940. Tit Simedrea was officially installed as Metropolitan of Bukovina on 25th March 1941, and only for the part of the region that had remained under Romanian rule. After the campaign of June-July 1941, the metropolitan residence was moved to Czernowitz again and Metropolitan Tit Simedrea served here until the town was occupied once again by the Soviet troops in the spring of 1944.

Metropolitan Tit Simedrea retired on 31st June 1945 and moved to Bucharest, where he lived with his family at the Darvari Hermitage until he was forced to move to Cernica Convent, where he passed away.

After his retirement, Tit Simedrea continued his activity as a theologian and historian. He published scholarly studies in "The Romanian Orthodox Church", "The Metropolitan Church of Oltenia", "The Voice of the Church", "Romanoslavica".

Also, soon after retiring to Bucharest, he was one of the spiritual leaders of the "Burning Bush Movement" – a movement of resistance against the Communist regime initiated by a number of clerical and lay Romanian intellectuals.

2. During the First World War, acting as a regiment priest, he showed the same spiritual care towards Jewish soldiers. A well-known case is that of butcher Moise Tejghetarul from Targu-Neamt (County of Neamt). After withdrawing to Moldavia in 1917, he sent a letter to Moise's family to give them news of Moise's heroic death, a volunteer soldier in the regiment whose priest he was. He was also informing the family that Iancu Sin Moise (Iancu, son of Moise) was still alive, although heavily injured, and had been taken by father Simedrea to a lazaretto (quarantine station) North of Bucharest. As Iancu had been imploring to see his family again, father Simedrea was urging them to go and see him and his letter ended as follows: "Receive a brotherly embrace from a priest, T. Simedrea." Father

Simedrea arranged for Iancu's mother and brother's passage to the occupied territory after the armistice of December 1917 (the letter of Mr. Dorel Dorian, nephew of butcher Iancu Sin Moise Tejghetaru, his brother's son, is included).

- 3. Upon the army demobilization and after the dismembering of the Romanian state in July-September 1940, Metropolitan Tit Simedrea stepped in directly in favor of soldier and military clerk Menachem Mendel Iancovici, in order for the latter to remain part of his regiment and later to be accompanied to his home in Piatra Neamt, to ensure his personal safety (Testimony of Dorel Dorian, son of Mendel Iancovici, is included).
- 4. In September 1958, an investigation conducted by Department III of the Ministry of Interior Affairs of the People's Republic of Romania into legionary (iron-guardist) activities concludes that Tit Simedrea was not guilty of any counter-revolutionary iron-guardist activity (Annex). This conclusion of the Organs of State Security of the People's Republic of Romania is confirmed by a report of the secret services during the Iron Guard government.

Thus, in the spring of 1939, as a Bishop of Hotin, His Holiness Tit Simedrea had the initiative of proclaiming General Bengliu a Citizen of Honor of the town of Balti. The banquet organized for the occasion was attended – apart from the bishop – by "all the wealthy Jews of the town". However, this is only of collateral importance.

The essential thing here is the special political significance of bishop Tit Simedrea's action. General Ioan Bengliu (born in 1882) had been, since 1938, Inspector of the Gendarmerie and, in this position, had faithfully carried out the orders of King Carol II. He was one of the main factors behind the repression of the Iron-Guardist Movement, being involved in the arresting and elimination of its leader, Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu. General Bengliu was subsequently arrested for his role in the repression of the Iron Guard Movement - soon after the installation of the Iron Guard Regime - in the autumn of 1940 and killed by an Iron Guard Commando on the night of 26/27 November 1940.

Thus, in the spring of 1939 when the Bishop Tit Simedrea had the initiative of declaring General Bengliu a Citizen of Honor of the town of Balti, organizing a celebration and hosting the General and his wife for three days in the Bishop's Palace, his attitude was a firm anti-Iron Guardist declaration. The public speech that Bishop Tit Simedrea made on this occasion is also significant: "A duty of conscience has moved us to proclaim General Bengliu a Citizen of Honor of Balti. A fearless Romanian, General Bengliu, in these times of great trouble, has – together

with many other good Romanians – supported and protected our King and imposed order [on those] who were causing turmoil in our Country. He silenced a pack of lunatics, strangers to the soul and aspirations of the Romanian nations."

The Bishop's attitude was subsequently the object of an investigation, carried out shortly after the instauration of the Iron Guard Regime, during the assassinations of 26-28 November 1940. On the 8th of December 1940, General Antonescu himself analyzed and annotated the report submitted by the Organs of State Information and decided that all the information therein should be included in the personal file of Tit Simedrea, Metropolitan of Bukovina and a notice thereof should be sent to the Ministry of National Education (see Annex).

The consequence was the delay of Tit Simedrea's appointment as Metropolitan of Bukovina. He had been appointed by Carol II in June 1940, but his appointment did not become effective until the spring of 1941, partly because of the amputation of the Romanian territory, but also due to his anti-Iron-Guardist position.

5. In the autumn of 1941 the Jews' deportation was on the agenda of the government led by Ion Antonescu. Chief-Rabbi Alexandru Safran together with Dr. Wilhelm Fielderman decided to intervene and requested a private meeting with the Leader of the Romanian State. When they noticed that the Leader's entourage was working to impede the meeting, the Chief-Rabbi appealed to the Marshal's wife, to the Queen Mother and Patriarch Nicodem. His meeting with Tit Simedrea, Metropolitan of Bukovina, took place at the same time, as Tit Simedrea had arrived from Czernowitz to Bucharest. Here is the testimony of Rabbi Safran:

"I asked for a private meeting and he knew very well why. He received me and confessed — to my great surprise — that what he had seen is still haunting him. He told me about Romanian soldiers ripping ill people from their beds and children crying, while they were taken by force to the trains. He understood how tormenting his stories were to me and, without wasting a single moment, I asked him to share his impressions with the Marshal and ask the latter to put an end to the deportations. He did it, and did it profitably, as the convoys departing from Czernowitz were stopped. He even went farther than this and, once returned to his town, made sure that the local authorities — who were quite refractory — carry out the government's orders. It was something totally unimaginable: I had achieved the stopping of the deportations from Czernowitz with the help of Tit Simedrea (underlined by S. I.).

The meeting mentioned by Chief Rabbi Safran was also recorded in a note of the Secret Information Service which states that on 18th October 1941 the Metropolitan of Bukovina met the Chief Rabbi Dr. Safran and ensured him that, together with Flondor (a public figure of Bukovina) had interceded for the Jews of Bukovina, promising his full support (annex).

The initiative of Chief Rabbi Alexandru Safran to meet with Metropolitan Tit Simedrea in order to save the Jews from Romania was also determined by three letters sent by Menahem Iancovici in the autumn of 1940 to persuade the Chief Rabbi and Dr. Wilhelm Fielderman that Metropolitan Tit Simedrea is the only person who can save the Jews, while also facilitating the two Jewish leaders access to General Ion Antonescu (the testimony of Dorel Dorian is included).

In fact, even Simon Wiesenthal in his autobiographical novel *Running Away from Destiny* — published in Munich, Nymphenburg Press — mentions among those who helped ease the martyrdom of the Jews in Romania the names of Patriarch Nicodem, Metropolitan Balan, Archimandrite Scriban and Metropolitan Tit Simedrea.

Informed by Chief Rabbi Alexandru Safran and Dr. Wilhelm Fielderman, Metropolitan Tit Simedrea together with Gheorghe Flondor, a public figure of Bukovina, saw General Antonescu in person and asked him to put an end to the deportation of the Jews from Bukovina. This intercession of the Metropolitan accompanied by Flondor had the effect of making the deportations stop, thus saving hundreds if not thousands of Jewish lives.

6. At the end of July 1941, when the campaign in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina had ended, the Romanian Authorities – including the religious ones – were re-instated in Czernowitz, among these the Metropolitan See of Bukovina.

Here, Metropolitan Tit Simedrea was personally involved in the salvation of the Slacman family, a Jewish family of refugees from Iasi to Czernowitz. The head of the family was working for the Metropolitan Press.

On the 11th of October 1941, at the orders of General Antonescu, the military governor of Bukovina assembled the Jewish population of Czernowitz in a ghetto, preparing them for deportation.

As the Slacman family was going to be deported and it was impossible to apply in their case the general exemption that Metropolitan Tit Simedrea himself had obtained, the latter disposed that the Slacman family be hidden in the basements of the Metropolitan Palace, where they lived for a year, their life being thus saved (testimony of Marcel Slacman/ Meir Shay is included).

In accordance with Ordinance no. 38 of the 11th of October 1941 issued by the Military Governor of Bukovina, there was a death penalty imposed on "all those who hide in their houses people who are strangers to their home or facilitate escape for those who are not allowed to leave the town". (see annex)

Thus, Metropolitan Tit Simedrea risked his life to save the entire Slacman family. While hiding the Slacman family in his basements, the Metropolitan took permanent care of their safety.

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In conclusion, direct testimonies and first hand documents confirm the fact that the Metropolitan of Bukovina Tit Simedrea manifested his opposition against the Iron Guard Movement and saved the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of Jews, both by stopping the deportations from Bukovina and personally, at the risk of his own life, saving from death the Jewish family Slacman.

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Expertiză privitoare la acțiunea Mitropolitului Tit Simedrea (1886-1972) pentru salvarea evreilor din România

1. Personalitate marcantă a culturii românești din secolul al XXlea, Theodor (ca monah se va numi Tit) Simedrea și-a început studiile la
Seminarul Nifon din București urmând apoi Teologia și în paralel, la Iași,
Facultatea de Drept. Hirotonist preot slujește la Prunaru (Teleorman),
Blejești (Vlașca), Movila - Periș (Ilfov), între 1907 și 1916. A participat
la Primul Război Mondial, fiind mobilizat în octombrie 1916 ca preotlocotenent și în urma participării sale la campaniile din 1916 și 1917 în
Regimentele 35 și 36 Infanterie, fiind înaintat căpitan (1 ianuarie 1918).
A fost demobilizat abia în octombrie 1920 după ce slujise la Spitalul
militar de contagioși nr. 3 și apoi la Regimentul 30 Infanterie. Pentru
meritele sale a primit "Crucea Comemoratiovă a Războiului 1916-1918"
cu baretele "Ardeal, Carpați, Mărășești, 1918-1919", semn al participării
sale la principalele campanii până în 1918, precum și "Croce al Merito di
Guerra", conferită în ianuarie 1918 de regele Italiei.

După război a fost preot la Biserica Sf. Nicolae-Tabacu din București și director al Cancelariei Sfântului Sinod. În paralel a continuat specializarea în domeniul teologic la Montpellier și Paris (1922-1923). Rămas văduv în 1924 a fost călugărit la mănăstirea Cernica sub numele de Tit și de la 1926 la 1935 a fost arhiereu vicar al Arhiepiscopiei

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Bucureștilor cu apelativul "Târgovișteanul", fiind totodată director al Tipografiei Institutului Biblic și de Misiune duhovnicească, director și profesor de liturgică la Academia de Muzică Religioasă din București, secretar de redacție al revistei "Biserica Ortodoxă Română". Datorită înaltei sale pregătiri teologice a fost delegat al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române la conferințele de la Lausanne (1927), Sofia (1929), Istanbul (1929), Vatoped (1930).

În mai-iulie 1935 la Maglavit, în Dolj, Petrache Lupu a declarat că l-a văzut și a vorbit în trei rânduri cu "Moşu" (Dumnezeu) provocând un val de extraz mistic și de fervoare religioasă în România. Întrucât arhiepiscopia Craiovei și Olteniei a fost tentată să accepte teophania, Patriarhul României Miron Cristea — și el înclinat să dea crezare întâmplării de la Maglavit, mai ales după ce profesorul doctor Gheorghe Marinescu constatase sănătatea mintală a lui Petrache Lupu, a cerut vicarului arhiepiscopal Tit Simedrea să efectueze o anchetă și să prezinte un raport Sfântului Sinod. Raportul vicarului Tit Simedrea a fost negativ, ceea ce se pare nu a fost privit favorabil de o bună parte a Sfântului Sinod. Imediat după aceasta raportul său nu a fost publicat iar arhierul vicar a fost numit în decembrie 1935 episcop al Hotinului cu sediul la Bălți, în nord-estul României, succedând aici episcopului Visarion Puiu.

A fost membru al Partidului Național-Țărănesc. La 13 iunie 1940 a fost ales mitropolit al Bucovinei dar ultimatumul sovietic schimbând soarta acestei părți a României a făcut ca Tit Simedrea să fie instalat abia în 25 martie 1941 la Suceava, doar pentru partea rămasă a Bucovinei. După campania din iunie-iulie 1941, scaunul metropolitan a putut fi din nou instalat la Cernăuți și Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea a slujit aici până ce orașul a fost din nou ocupat de trupele sovietice în primăvara anului 1944.

Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea s-a retras din funcție la 31 iunie 1945 trăind la București la familia sa, la schitul Darvari și în final, obligat, la mănăstirea Cernica unde a și murit.

După retragerea sa, Tit Simedrea și-a continuat activitatea de teolog și istoric publicând studii erudite în "Biserica Ortodoxă Română", "Mitropolia Olteniei", "Glasul Bisericii", "Romanoslavica".

În același timp, curând după retragerea sa la București a fost unul dintre conducătorii spirituali ai "Rugului Aprins", mișcare de rezistență față de regimul comunist a unei părți a intelectualității clericale și laice din România.

- 2. În cursul Primului Război Mondial ca preot de regiment a dovedit aceeași grijă duhovnicească pentru soldații evrei fiind cunoscut cazul familiei casapului Moise Tejghetarul din Tg. Neamţ (jud. Neamţ). Astfel după retragerea în Moldova, 1917, el a trimis o scrisoare familiei lui Moise în care comunica moartea eroică a lui Moise, soldat voluntar în regimentul al cărui preot era și faptul că mai trăiește grav rănit Iancu Sân Moise (Iancu, fiul lui Moise), dus de preotul Simedrea într-un lazaret la nord de București. Întrucât acesta rugase mult să-și mai vadă familia, preotul Simedrea îi îndemna să meargă acolo și încheia scrisoarea astfel: "Vă îmbrățișează ca un frate, un preot, T. Simedrea". Preotul Simedrea a și mijlocit deplasarea mamei lui Iancu și a fratelui acestuia în zona ocupată după armistițiul din decembrie 1917 (Scrisoarea domnului Dorel Dorian, nepot de frate a lui Iancu Sân Moise Tejghetarul, casapul, anexată).
- 3. La demobilizarea armatei după dezmembrarea statului român în iunie-septembrie 1940, mitropolitul Tit Simedrea a intervenit direct pentru ca soldatul furier Menachem Mendel Iancovici să mai rămână în regimentul său şi apoi să fie însoțit la casa sa din Piatra Neamţ pentru ca

viața sa să fie în siguranță (Mărturia lui Dorel Dorian, fiul lui Mendel Iancovici, anexată)

4. În septembrie 1958, în vremea desfășurării unei anchete în privința activităților legionare de către Secția a III-a a Ministerului Afacerilor Interne al Republicii Populare Romîne se constată că Tit Simedea nu se făcea vinovat de activitate contrarevoluționară-legionară (Anexa).

Această constatare a organelor de securitate din Republica Populară Romînă este confirmată de un raport al serviciilor secrete din vremea guvernării legionare.

Astfel în primăvara anului 1939, în calitate de episcop de Hotin, Prea Sfințitul Tit Simedrea a luat inițiativa proclamării ca cetățean de onoare al orașului Bălți a generalului Bengliu.

În chestiunea în discuție a fost socotit important doar faptul că la banchetul oferit cu acest prilej, alături de episcop, a participat "și toată jidovimea cu stare a orașului". Aceasta are însă o importanță colaterală.

Esențial este că întreaga acțiune a episcopului Tit Simedrea avea o deosebită semnificație politică. Generalul Ioan Bengliu (n. 1882) fusese din 1938 inspector general al jandarmeriei și, în această funcție, executase fidel ordinele regelui Carol al II-lea, fiind unul dintre principalii organizatori ai reprimării mișcării legionare, arestării și suprimării conducătorului acesteia, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. De altfel pentru rolul său în represiunea legionarismului, generalul Bengliu avea să fie închis imediat după instalarea regimului legionar, în toamna anului 1940, și ucis de un comando legionar în închisoarea Jilava, în noaptea de 26/27 noiembrie 1940.

În primăvara 1939, când episcopul Tit Simedrea lua inițiativa declarării generalului Bengliu cetățean de onoare al orașului Bălți și serba si găzduia vreme de trei zile în palatul episcopal pe generalul și soția sa,

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atitudinea sa însemna o adeziune limpede la antilegionarism. De altfel, discursul public rostit de episcopul Tit Simedrea cu acest prilej este semnificativ: "O datorie de conștiință ne-a cerut să proclamăm cetățean de onoare al Bălților pe generalul Bengliu, român neînfricat, care, în vremuri de grea cumpănă pentru țară, împreună cu alți buni români, strâns uniți în juru! Regelui, a știut să imprime ordinea [împotriva celor] ce tulburau Țara, reducând la tăcere o ceată de besmetici, străini de sufletul și aspirațiile neamului românesc".

Atitudinea episcopului avea să facă obiectul unei anchete întreprinse imediat după instalarea regimului legionar și chiar în vremea asasinatelor de la 26-28 noiembrie 1940. La 8 decembrie 1940 generalul Antonescu personal analiza și adnota raportul alcătuit de organele de informații ale statului și hotăra ca datele să fie incluse în dosarul personal al Mitropolitului Bucovinei Tit Simedrea și să se facă o înștiințare și Ministerului Educației Naționale (anexat).

Urmarea a fost că instalarea lui Tit Simedrea ca mitropolit al Bucovinei (numit de regele Carol al II-lea în iunie 1940), să fie amânată, desigur în primul rând datorită ciuntirii teritoriului românesc, dar şi a atitudinii sale antilegionare, până în primăvara anului 1941.

5. În toamna anului 1941 deportarea evreilor fiind în discuția guvernului Ion Antonescu, şef rabinul Alexandru Şafran împreună cu dr. Wilhelm Fielderman s-au hotărât să intervină solicitând o audiență conducătorului statului român. Întrucât au constatat că anturajul conducătorului încearcă să împiedice întrevedea, şef rabinul a apelat la soția mareşalului, regina-mamă, la patriarhul Nicodem. În aceeaşi vreme s-a produs şi întâlnirea sa cu mitropolitul Bucovinei, Tit Simedrea, venit de la Cernăuți la Bucureşti. Iată relatarea şef rabinului Şafran:

"I-am cerut deci o audiență, iar el știa foarte bine pentru ce. M-a primit și a mărturisit, spre marea mea surprindere, că ceea ce a văzut îl tulbură încă. Mi-a povestit despre soldații români smulgând bolnavi din paturile lor, copiii țipând în timp ce sunt duși cu de-a sila la tren. A înțeles în ce măsură relatarea lui mă sfâșia și, fără a pierde o clipă, i-am cerut pe un ton imperativ să-și comunice impresiile mareșalului și să-i ceară să oprească deportările. El a făcut-o și a făcut-o într-adevăr cu folos, fiindcă convoaiele care porneau din Cernăuți au fost oprite. A mers chiar mai departe, căci, odată ajuns în orașul său, s-a asigurat din partea autorităților, destul de recalcitrante, că ordinul guvernului e dus la îndeplinire. Era ceva absolut de neînchipuit obținusem oprirea deportărilor din Cernăuți cu ajutorul lui Tit Simedrea" (subl. S.I.)<sup>1</sup>.

Întrevederea menționată de șef rabinul Şafran a fost consemnată și într-o notă a Serviciului Secret de Informații în care se arată că la 18 octombrie 1941, mitropolitul Bucovinei a primit în audiență pe șef rabinul dr. Şafran și că l-a asigurat pe acesta că împreună cu fruntașul bucovinean Flondor a intervenit pentru evreii din Bucovina, promițându-i tot sprijinul său (anexat).

Inițiativa șef rabinului Alexandru Şafran de a se întâlni cu mitropolitul Tit Simedrea pentru salvarea evreilor din România a fost determinată și de trei scrisori trimise de Menahem Iancovici în toamna anului 1940 pentru convingerea șef rabinului și dr. Wilhelm Fielderman că numai mitropolitul Tit Simedrea i-ar putea salva pe evrei, ajutându-i totodată pe cei doi conducători ai evreilor să ajungă la generalul Ion Antonescu (Mărturia lui Dorel Dorian, anexată).

Dealtminteri și Simon Wisenthal în romanul său autobiografic Fugind de destin, publicat la München la Editura Nymphenburg, menționează între cei care au contribuit la diminuarea martirajului evreilor din România, alături de patriarhul Nicodem, mitropolitul Bălan, arhimandritul Scriban, pe mitropolitul Tit Simedrea.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Alexandru Şafran, Un tăciune smuls flăcărilor, București, 1996, p. 85-86.

Sesizat de rabinul șef Alexandru Șafran și de dr. Wilhelm Fielderman, mitropolitul Tit Simedea împreună cu fruntașul bucovinean Gheorghe Flondor au intervenit personal la generalul Antonescu pentru a opri deportarea evreilor din Bucovina. Demersul mitropolitului și al lui Flondor a avut efectul de a face să înceteze deportările, salvându-se astfel sute dacă nu mii de vieți evreiesti.

6. La sfârșitul lunii iulie 1941 când campania în Basarabia şi Bucovina de nord se încheiase, autoritățile românești, inclusiv cele religioase au fost reinstalate la Cernăuți, printre aceștia şi Mitropolia Bucovinei.

Aici Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea s-a implicat personal în salvarea familiei Şlacman, evrei din Iaşi refugiați la Cernăuți, unde capul familiei lucra la tipografia Mitropoliei.

La 11 octombrie 1941, după dispozițiile generalului Antonescu, guvernatorul militar al Bucovinei a ordonat concentrarea populației evreiești din Cernăuți într-un ghetou, pregătindu-se deportarea ei.

Întrucât familia Şlacman urma să aibă această soartă și ulterior nu s-a putut face aplicarea scutirii generale obținute chiar de Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea, acesta a dispus ca familia Şlacman să fie ascunsă în subsolul Palatului mitropolitan, unde au rămas vreme de un an fiind astfel salvați de la moarte (mărturia lui Marcel Şlacman/Meir Shay, anexată).

În conformitate cu Ordonanța nr. 38 din 11 octombrie 1941 a guvernatorului militar al Bucovinei se hotăra pedeapsa cu moartea pentru "toți acei ce vor ascunde în locuințele lor persoane străine de locuință sau vor asigura fuga celor ce nu pot părăsi localitatea" (anexat).

Astfel mitropolitul Tit Simedrea și-a pus în joc viața pentru a salva întreaga familie Șlacman.

În timpul adăpostirii familiei Şlacman mitropolitul s-a îngrijit permanent de siguranța acesteia.

În concluzie, mărturiile directe, documente de prim ordin confirmă faptul că mitropolitul Bucovinei Tit Simedrea s-a manifestat împotriva mișcării legionare și a salvat viața a sute dacă nu mii de evrei, oprind deportările din Bucovina și personal, cu riscul propriei vieți, a scăpat de la moarte familia evreiască Șlacman.



Annex no. 37

SHAI MEIR – 17/4 BICURIM STREET, HAIFA 34576 Tel: 04-8386032

Haifa, August 12, 2007

To Mrs. Irena Schteinfeld Director of the "Righteous among Men" Dept. P.O. Box 3477 Jerusalem 91034

Esteemed Madam,

I hereby reply to your letter of June 5, 2006 whereby you announced us that Mr. George Russu, file 10818 Romania, had received from the part of the commission that awards the title "Righteous among Men" the honor of being granted this homage. The title was awarded to him for saving the lives of our family of five people. I would like to add that the same title should be awarded to Mr. Tit Simedrea, head of the Orthodox church of Bukovina during the Second World War. Tit Simedrea, in his position of spiritual leader of the Orthodox Church, took it upon him to save our lives, by putting his own life in danger. He is the one who granted Mr. George Russu the right to hide us in the basement of the church and provide for us subsequently.

Moreover, during the holocaust, the government of Bucharest received the order to deport to Transnistria 40,000 Jews from Czernowitz. Tit Simedrea, together with Mr. Traian Popovici – a recognized "Righteous among Men" – the mayor of the town at that time, made unimaginable efforts and managed to convince dictator Ion Antonescu to reduce the number of deported people to half. Thus, 20,000 Jews were saved from deportation.

I would also like to add that when I filed the request that Mr. George Russu should be awarded the title, I did not file one for Mr. Tit Simedrea too, as I was persuaded that a monk had no descendents, as mentioned in the final part of your letter of June 5, 2006 - copy annexed.

Now that I found out that the title can be awarded not only personally, but also to the place where he conducted his activity, namely the church, I base my present request on this information.

I would also like to remind you that our declarations – mine and my sister Bea Shlekman's – were sent to you together with the 10818 file.

Please accept my sister's apologies for not signing this request with me, due to her advanced age and bad state of health.

The ceremony by which Mr. George Russu was awarded the "Righteous among Men" title took place in Bucharest on the 27th of June 2007 and was broadcast by the Romanian National Television. It was also recorded on a disk, commented in the press and all this material was sent to Mrs. Mina Iancu of Yad Vashem. During the ceremony, numerous influential personalities held speeches that praised the wonderful actions to save and help oppressed Jews taken by George Russu and Tit Simedrea.

Respectfully yours, Shai Meir Annex no. 38.

YAD VASHEM The Holocaust Martyrs And Heroes Remembrance Authority

The Righteous Among the Nations Department

Jerusalem 20-August-2007

To Mr. Shai Meir 17/4 Bicurim street Haifa 34576

Esteemed Sir,

I hereby confirm receipt of your letter of August 12, 2007. We are happy that Mr. George Russu was awarded the Righteous among Men title. We have received information about the ceremony from our Embassy in Bucharest.

As per your request, I don't understand clearly why you did not file it together with the original request, since it is highly probable that the evidence that you now hold existed then too. It is also unclear why you do not have information about the members of the Simedrea family and that this fact has to be confirmed, as mentioned in our letter of June 5, 2006. However, this letter was sent to you after the accepting of Mr. Russu and was not in your possession when you filed the request. In the light of these facts, I fail to understand the origin of your lack of information.

Nevertheless, your present claims are not sufficient to open a file in Tit Simedrea's name. You need evidence, papers, testimonies that certify his active involvement in the salvation of your family – irrefutable evidence that he assumed responsibility for his acts and also evidence in favor of his direct collaboration with Traian Popovici, who is a recognized "Righteous among Men".

Whatever the situation, I consider and intend to consult our specialists in History and check the information about this person.

Yours faithfully,

IRENA SHTEINFELD
Director of the "Righteous among Men" Department
YAD VASHEM

Annex no. 39.

## **YAD VASHEM**

25th of May 2008

To Mr. Shai Meir 17/4 Bicurim street Haifa 34576

## Regarding: Tit Simedrea

I have received your request to recognize TIT SIMEDREA as RIGHTEOUS AMONG MEN. As you know from the analysis of your savior's file, the admission of someone as Righteous among Men is done on the basis of testimonies and documentary material which offers first hand information about those people who risked their lives to save Jews.

The material you have sent us contains personal declarations, but not firsthand testimonies, on the salvation actions undertaken by the person proposed for the title. Part of the testimonies speak about the salvation of other people, which makes this third-hand information, given that, especially in the material presented to the committee, the witnesses have to restrict themselves to describing what they have seen and lived themselves. In this case, the stories told by the witnesses about the actions of TIT SIMEDREA are more likely suppositions based on things they have heard or were told to them. They could not possibly know what went on between TIT SIMEDREA and the Romanian authorities.

Consequently, there is not sufficient material in the file to present this for recognition as "Righteous among Men" before the committee.

Yours faithfully, Irena Steinfeld Head of Department "Righteous among Men" Annex no. 40.

## Translation of a document originally written in Hebrew

To Mrs. Irena Steinfeld Director of "Righteous among Men" Department

## Subject: Tit Simedrea

- 1. My family was saved by being hidden in the basement of the Metropolitan Palace of Bukovina between 1941-1942 at the orders of Metropolitan Tit Simedrea. His orders were executed by his counselor, painter George Russu. He clandestinely took us out of the ghetto, hid us in the basement of the church and took care of us throughout all this period, under the direct supervision of Tit Simedrea.
- Since George Russu was recognized by Yad Vashem as "Righteous among Men" (file no. 10818 Romania), it is only natural that Tit Simedrea should also receive this award for risking his life through his actions, which were kept secret from the local Romanian and German military authorities of Czernowitz.
- 3. Metropolitan Tit Simedrea's relationships with the Jews, his closeness to the Jewish community and sympathy for their suffering are recognized, recorded and confirmed in the memoirs of Chief Rabbi Alexandru Safran, page 85 and also in the book of Dr. Wilhelm Fielderman, the leader of the Jewish Community of Romania, dating from the same period (pages 246, 413, 426) and in the documents that I have received from the Romanian Secret Security Services, who allowed me to withdraw these documents from their archives and annex them to the request file.
- 4. It is true that at this moment we can no longer find witnesses that could describe the actions of the person first hand, all those who could have done that being dead. We have, however, included in the file four testimonies (pages 6, 7, 8, 9) and these are living testimonies which testify to having known of our hiding in that basement, where they were forbidden to enter due to the reality of those times. There is no doubt about the fact that my family was rescued by him
- I would hereby like to kindly ask you to come back on your decision regarding the object of this request file.

Respectfully yours, Professor Shai Meir

#### Copies:

President of Yad Vashem, Mr. Shalev Association of Bukovina Jews, Tel Aviv Members of the Elie Wiesel Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania

> Stamp of the Ministry of Justice, Authorized translator Lepoiev Sanda, Auth. No. 2983

18/06/08

לכבוד גב' אירנה שטיינפלד מנהלת מחלקת חסידי אומות עולם

## Tit Simedrea :הנדון

- הצלת משפחתי, תוך הסתרתנו במרתף Mitropolia Bucovina בתקופה שבין 1941-1941, נעשתה תוך הנחיה של Mitropolit Tit Simedrea . ההנחיה בוצעה על-ידי יועצו הצייר Mitropolit Tit Simedrea. הנ"ל הוציא אותנו בחשאיות מגטו, הביא אותנו למרתף הכנסיה ודאג לנו לאורד אותה תקופה על פי הנחיתו של Tit Simedrea.
- היות ו- Russu George הוכר על ידי יד ושם כחסיד אומות עולם (מ"ס תיק 10818 רומניה), מן ההגיון ש Tit Simedrea יוכר אף הוא בתואר זה, אשר במעשיו סיכן את חייו, בהסתירו מהשלטון הצבאי הרומני והגרמני המקומי בצ'רנוביץ.
- 5. יחסו והקרבתו של המטרופוליט Tit Simedrea, כלפי היהודים והתנהגותו כלפי סיבלם, מוכרת, רשומה ומאושרת על ידי יומן זכרונותיו של הרב הראשי של יהודי רומניה, Alexandru, עמוד 85 וגם בספרו של Dr. Wilhelm Filderman, ראש הקהילה היהודית ברומניה באותה תקופה (עמודים 246,413,426), ובמסמכים שקיבלתי משירות הביטחון החשאי של רומניה אשר אישרו הוצאת מסמכים אלו מהארכיון שלהם, ומצורפים לתיק הבקשה.
- 4. נכון לומן זה לא ניתן להמציא עדים אשר יתארו ממקור ראשון את פועלו של האיש היות ואינם בין החיים יותר. אך ארבע עדויות המצורפות לתיק הבקשה (עמודים 6,7,8,9),הם עדות חיה, המתארת את ידיעתם על שהייתנו באותו מרתף, אשר אסור היה להם להיכנס אליו מכוח המציאות נכון לאותו זמן. העובדה שמשפחתי ניצלה על ידו אינה עומדת בספק.
  - .5. אבקש בכל לשון של בקשה לשפוט מחדש את החלטתכם לגבי תיק בקשה זה.

בברכה פרופסור שי מאיר

M. Shai

העתק:

נשיא יד ושם מר שלו עמותת יהודי בוקובינה בתל-אביב חברי ועדת אלי ויזל,מחקר שואה ברומניה Annex no. 41.

Translation from Hebrew

#### YAD VASHEM The Authority for the Commemoration of the Victims of the Holocaust

Department of the Righteous among Men Jerusalem, 18th June 2008

Mr. Shay Meir 17/4 Bichorim Street, Haifa 34 576

Esteemed Sir,

Regarding: Tit Simedrea

I came back to the office and found your letter.

As I have already written to you in my previous letter, the material you have submitted is not enough for the Righteous among Men Committee to analyze it. There are personal statements in the material that you submitted – but these contain no direct evidence of the person's acts of rescuing. Part of these testimonies speak about the salvation of other people, the information coming therefore from a third source. In principle, since this material is annexed to the file you submitted for the Committee, the witnesses should testify to what they have personally seen and lived through. In this case, their testimonies on the activity of Tit Simedrea can only be classified as things they have maybe heard or someone has told them about. They were unable to know what took place between Tit Simedrea and the Romanian authorities.

In response to the points in your letter:

- 1. The Righteous Among Men Committee has recognized George Rusu on the basis of your testimony and that of your sister's and the fact that you were hidden in a basement. It is possible that he might have done this by orders of Tit Simedrea, but this is just a supposition.
- 2. The fact that one of these people has been recognized as a savior does not attract recognition for the other. Each case is discussed separately.
- 3. Proving a favorable disposition towards the Jews is not sufficient. The title is awarded on the basis of a proven rescuing act that put the savior at risk.
- 4. We are aware of the fact that witnesses for rescuing acts can sometimes not be found, however, on the other hand, we must respect the criteria. This close observance of the criteria has made the title prestigious and recognized worldwide. This is why the Committee is unable to award the title on the basis of simple suppositions.

We will keep the material and should new archive documents appear in the future that will correspond to the Committee's requirements, this case will be re-assessed.

Respectfully yours, Irina Steinfeld Director of Righteous among Men Department Illegible signature

CC: Mr. Avner Shelo, Administrative President Yad Vashem

**YAD VASHEM** 



יד ושם

The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority

רשות הזיכרון לשואה ולגבורה

המחלקה לחסידי אומות העולם The Righteous Among the Nations Department

ירושלים, ט"ו סיון תשס"ח 18 יוני, 2008

> מר שי מאיר רח' ביכורים 17/4 חיפה 34576

> > שלום רב,

## דנדון: Tit Simedrea

עם שובי למשרדי מצאתי את המכתב שהשארת.

כפי שכבר כתבתי לך במכתבי הקודם אין בחומר שהגשת די כדי להעלותו לדיון בועדה לציון חסידי אומות העולם. בחומר שמסרת לנו יש אמנם הצהרות אישיות - אך אין בהן עדויות ישירות לפעולות ההצלה של האיש. חלק מן העדויות מדבר על הצלת אנשים אחרים, כך שהידיעה היא ממקור שלישי. אך בעיקר, ככל שהדבר נוגע לחומר המוגש לועדה, חייבים העדים לתאר את מה שחזו וראו בעצמם. במקרה זה דבריהם על פעילותו של Tit Simedrea בגדר השערות על סמך דברים שאולי שמעו או שסיפרו להם. הם הרי לא יכלו לדעת מה התרחש בין Tit Simedrea לבין הרשויות הרומניות.

#### ובתשוכה לנקודות במכתבך:

- 1. הועדה לציון חסידי אומות העולם הכירה ב George Russu על סמך העדויות שלך ושל אחותך על הסתרתכם על ידיו במרתף. יתכן שעשה זאת על פי הנחייה של Tit Simedrea, אך זה בגדר השערה.
  - .2 ההכרה במציל אחד אינה גוררת בהכרח הצלתו של אדם אחר. כל מקרה נדון לגופו.
    - 3. אין די בהוכחה של יחס חיובי ליהודים, התואר ניתן על הצלה שיש בה סיכון.
  - 4. אנו מודעים לכך שאי אפשר תמיד לפצוא עדים למעשי הצלה, אך מצד שני שומה עלינו להקפיד על הקריטריונים. הקפרה זו היא שהקנתה לתואר את המוניטין הרב שרכש לו ברחבי העולם. אשר על כן אין הועדה יבולה להעניק את התואר רק על סמר השערות.

החומר ישאר אצלנו, ובמידה וימצאו בעתיד מסמכים ארכיוניים שיעמדו בדרישות הועדה, נבחן את המקרה שנית.

אירנה שטיינפלד

בברכ

מנהלת מחלקת חסידי אומות העולם-

העתק: מר אבנר שלו, יו"ר הנהלת יד ושם

P.O.B. 3477. JERUSALEM 91034. TEL 02-6443521, FAX. 02-6443743 מקס. 19-50,02-6443521, P.O.B. 3477. JERUSALEM 91034. TEL 02-6443521, FAX. 02-6443743 מקס. 19-6443521, FAX. 02-6443521, FAX. 02-644352

Annex no. 42.

 $\begin{array}{c} \text{Haifa} \\ 20^{\text{th}} \text{ of July 2008} \end{array}$ 

To Mrs. Irena Shteinfeld Director of the Righteous among Men Department Yad Vashem Fax: 02-6443743

Subject: new request regarding Tit Simedrea Ref: your letter of June 18, 2008

Thank you for the attention you have shown to the material submitted by me. I would like to clarify some points, so that we can move forward in opening a convincing file to be submitted to the committee that awards the title of Righteous among Men.

Before I start, I must underline the fact that I, Shai Meir, owe my life to this man.

I am not a young man, and I wish to see a positive solution to this case while I am still alive. I will try to respond to all the points in your letter, especially in what concerns the direct testimonies and my personal knowledge, as well as the fact – not supposition – that Tit Simedrea risked his life when he accepted that my family should be hidden in the convent, and also his contribution in the salvation of other 20,000 Jews. All the documents concerning this action are in your possession.

I am aware of the fact that to me it is a psychological necessity to see Mr. Tit Simedrea awarded the title of Righteous Among Nations, as this is the way I can repay my moral duty to him. However, in order to not be accused of being subjective, I will mention that important figures of the Jewish community of Romania, consecrated historians and specialists in the field, have no doubt that this person, Tit Simedrea, should be recognized as Righteous Among Men. This gesture will be one more proof in favor of all the efforts made to bring the truth to light and perpetuate the memory of the martyrs and heroes of the Holocaust.

In the following lines, I will refer to the four points in your letter:

## Point 1

My sister's and my own testimonies about Tit Simedrea are clear. Please reread the existing material and, if anything should be missing, I am willing to re-send it. I also know precisely that those who rule the convent now are entitled to receive the award of Righteous Among Men, and more so since Tit Simedrea in his position was the one who gave the instructions that kept my family and I safe for a year and a half in one of the convents he ruled over. I have no doubt that he risked his life for that. The actions that Mr. Russu took to save us were all following Tit Simedrea's instructions and undertaken with his approval.

The fact that I did not file for Tit Simedrea's recognition at the same time as George Russu is the result of a faulty interpretation of the information written, and also of a regrettable lack of attention.

We know that when G. Russu's file was being analyzed, one of the members of the Committee asked clearly: "Why has there not been a similar request for Tit Simedrea?" Please check this in the G. Russu file, 10818 Romania.

#### Point 2

Tit Simedrea is not "another person" who candidates for the title of "rescuer". He is directly responsible for rescuing me and my family as proven by all the documents sent to you.

## Point 3

As I have already mentioned, there are many proofs in the materials that I have submitted to you: recommendations and personal opinions of prominent figures of Jewish life and that of one of the members of the Committee who analyzed the case of G. Russu, our declarations. To be precise about this, Tit Simedrea not only showed a pro-Jewish attitude, but he actively took part in saving the Jews.

I regret that – for reasons I ignore – you haven't taken any further steps in forwarding this file to the Committee entitled to judge Tit Simedrea's candidacy for the Righteous Among Men title.

Among others, I would like to mention the book written by Romania's Chief Rabbi during the war, Dr. Alexandru Shafran (z.L.) in which the author speaks about the actions Tit Simedrea undertook to save thousands of Jews.

Also, there is the book of Dr. Wilhelm Felderman, the head of the Jewish community at the time.

I have also sent you unpublished documents, relevant ones, that I have managed to withdraw from the secret archives of the "Security" in Bucharest, the

secret service of the time. These documents cast a new light on the salvation actions undertaken by Tit Simedrea. I have managed to get hold of these documents by special approval from the President of Romania.

All these documents proceed from the secret archives of the Romanian State and were subject to authentication by historians from Romania and from abroad, who manifested a special interest in finding out new information about the Second World War. This information also includes the contribution of Tit Simedrea to the salvation of the Jews in Romania.

Three recent testimonies of some Jewish leaders from Bucharest – survivors of the Holocaust themselves – were added to the other materials, bringing to light the courage of those who risked their lives trying to save Jews.

#### Point 4

I hope that after reading this letter you will forward the file to the Committee that decides Tit Simedrea's candidacy to the title of Righteous Among Men.

I have made many efforts to gather and translate this material. I have tried to present it clearly, so as to ease the work of the Committee.

I am not a young man, and I wish to see the results of my effort.

I hope in a positive answer this time.

Yours faithfully,

MEIR SHAI Bicurim 17/4 Haifa 34576

Annex no. 43.

YAD VASHEM The Holocaust Martyrs

Jerusalem 20 July 2008

To Mr. MEIR SHAI By e-mail to dana.myrtenbaum Subject: TIT SIMEDREA

I have received your letter through Dana Myrtenbaum. Needless to add how touching the dedication of your former student is. I am sorry to disappoint you, though, but my arguments are the same as presented in my previous letters. As I have already written to you, all the evidence taken into consideration should consist of proof and documents from a first source. In this sense, the recommendations of the Jewish Community in Romania or any other similar sources – respectable as they might be – are not relevant for studying and putting together a file, since these people were not eye witnesses, they were not in the immediate vicinity of Tit Simedrea and for this reason cannot attest to the salvation of yours or of other Jewish families.

As I have written to you before, your claim – and your sister's – is that the bishop had to consent for Mr. Russu to be able to hide you. There is no explanation for this affirmation. Throughout your entire testimony you speak about the relationship established between your family and Mr. Russu. He is the one who comes to find you, who hides you. The affirmation that the bishop was responsible for your salvation is unfounded. In your letter you say that "such an approval given to one of his servants to hide a Jewish family... has put his own life in danger." In your sister's letter, she claims that you were hidden with the bishop's approval. What is this declaration based on? Is there any witness who can testify to that? It is perfectly possible for your supposition to be true; it just isn't supported by evidence. A piece of information must be backed by original evidence.

This is why, since these actions were mentioned in the initial declarations – in fact the bishop's responsibility was taken into consideration in the Committee's deliberations on Mr. Russu's case and eventually the decision was made that the responsibility for the act of hiding you belongs solely to Mr. Russu – the title was awarded to the latter and not to the bishop.

As regards the acknowledgment of convent rulers, the problem needs to be examined in detail, as there is no evidence on that. The title is not granted automatically to someone who occupies a leading role in an ecclesiastic community where human lives were saved.

I understand that you have made great efforts to gather and arrange this material that you sent us. Unfortunately, based on present evidence, we are unable to put together a convincing file to be presented to the Committee.

I am persuaded that both you and your sister have had the satisfaction of obtaining the recognition of Mr. Russu as Righteous Among Men. Your testimonies have shown us a brave man, a model human being whose qualities are eternal to humanity.

Yours faithfully,

Irena Shteinfeld Director of Dept. Righteous Among Men

Annex no. 44.

#### Translation of a document from Hebrew

Yad Vashem

The Authority for Preserving the Memory of the Heroes and Martyrs of the Holocaust

28.07.2008

To prof. Shai Meir Rh. Bikorim 17/4 Haifa 34578

Hello Prof. Meir,

I would like to confirm receipt of your letter sent to the office of the Director of Yad Vashem. The material has been submitted to the Director of Yad Vashem and will be analyzed with all devotion by Mrs. Irena Steinfeld, Director of the Department Righteous Among Men, who will examine the matter and get back to you with a response.

Yours faithfully, Vered Schlechter Head of the Yad Vashem Director's Office

Copy:

Mrs. Irena Steinfeld, Department Righteous Among Men, Yad Vashem

Stamp of translator Lepoiev Sanda, Ministry of Justice, Auth no 2933

# YAD VASHEM



יד ושם

The Holocaust Martyes and Heroes' Remembrance Authority

רשות הזיכרון לשואה ולגבורה

ירושלים, כה' תמוד, תשס"ח 2008 ביולי, 2008

> לכבוד פרופ' שי מאיר רח' ביכורים 17/4 חיפה, 34575

פרופ' מאיר שלום רב.

ברצוני לאשר בתודה קבלת מכתבך בלשכת יו"ר הנהלת יד ושם.

החומר שהעברת ליו"ר הנהלת יד ושם הועבר לטיפולה המסור של גב' אירנה שטיינפלד, מנהלת מחלקת חסידי אומות העולם ביד ושם, אשר תבדוק את הנושא ותשיבך ישירות.

ורד שכטר מנהלת לשכת יו"ר הנהלת יד ושם

בברכה

העתק: גב' אירנה שטיינפלד, מנהלת מחלקת חסידי אומות העולם, יד ושם

POB 1477, IEROSALEM 91004, TEL 02-0440185, 1 AX, 02-0440452, 278, 02-0444445, 72, 0.0034 green 3477, 7, p. www.yadvashem.org

Annex no. 45.

#### Translation of a document written in Hebrew

Iacov Tirkel Supreme Court Judge

Jerusalem, 21.08.2008

To prof. Shai Meir Rh Bikorim 17/4 Haifa 34576

Esteemed sir,

The subject of your request to acknowledge Metropolitan Tit Simedrea as Righteous Among Nations, addressed in your letter dated on 20.80.2008, will be analyzed.

I do not make personal appointments in matters concerning the committee for granting the title Righteous Among Nations within Yad Vashem.

Respectfully, Iacov Tirkel

יעקב טירקל

שופט בית המשפט העליון (בדימי)

ירושלים, רח' התקופה 18/3 92628 טל. 02-6480487

באר שבע, רח' ברק 2 84232 טל. 6277555-30 לשכה: 02-6759715/730 מקט: 02-6759654

ירושלים, כ' באב תשפ"ח (21.8.08)

> לכבוד מר שי מאיר רחי ביכורים 17/4

> > מיפה 34576

,3"R

עניין בקשתך להברה בבישוף Tit Sinedrea עניין בקשתך להברה בבישוף העלית במכחבך מיום 20.8.08, ייברק.

אינני נוהג לקיים פגישות אישיות בענייני הוועדה לציון חסידי אומות העולם של "יד ושם".

יעקה פירפל

263/77

Annex no. 46.

#### Translation of a document written in Hebrew

Iacov Tirkel Supreme Court Judge

Jerusalem, 8.09.2008

To prof. Shai Meir Rh Bikorim 17/4 Haifa 34576

Esteemed sir,

In response to your letter on 20.08.2008, we examined the way in which your request of acknowledging Tit Simedrea as Righteous Among Nations was treated. The material you presented to the Righteous Among Nations Department within Yad Washem does not include visible proof and sufficient evidence to justify raising this matter with the committee.

Respectfully, Iacov Tirkel

יעקב טירקל

שופט בית המשפט העליון (בדימי)

ירושלים, רח' התקופה 18/3 92628 טל. 02-6480487 באר שבע, רח' ברק 2 84232

טל. 08-6277555 לשכה: 02-6759715/730 מקס: 02-6759654

ירושלים, ח' באלול תשס"ח (8.9.08)

> לכבוד מר שי מאיר רח' ביכורים 17/4 <u>חיפה 34576</u>

> > ,1"K

בעקבות מכתבך מיום 20.8.08 בדקתי את עניין הטיפול בבקשתך להכרה בכישוף Tit Simedra כבישוף

החומר שהמצאח למחלקת חסירי אומות העולם כ"יד ושם" אינו מניח תשחית ראייתית מספקת שתצדיק את הבאת העניין לדיון בועדה.

/

268/77

Annex no. 47.

Shai Meir Str. Bicurim 17/4 Haifa 34576 10.11.2008

To: Mrs. Irena Shteinfeld Head of "Righteous among Nations" Department YAD VASHEM Jerusalem

#### Esteemed madam.

I have read your letter from 20.07.08 carefully and with sadness. The death of my sister, besides the pain per se, forces me to insist on solving the problem of archbishop Tit Simedrea, as an obligation of honor. In your letter you underline that our testimonies, mine, my sister's and those of other people, have no value, since they are not direct, "live" testimonies. You also write that, during the discussions regarding the Russu file, the issue of the archbishop's responsibility was addressed, but, finally, Russu was considered the real hero. I dare ask the question: how come the matter of the archbishop was addressed without someone, us to be more precise, asking for it? We did not ask for this matter to be discussed at that time, being convinced that he has no living successors. It would be interesting to know what the committee would have decided today, in the light of the entire material I have sent and that did not exist, at that point, in front of the committee who grants the title "righteous among nations".

You decided that our statements are not relevant to prove the acts of salvation performed by archbishop Tit Simedrea. In a modern society, not all historical, military, legal evidence comes from the primary source. Events that took place in the more distant or nearer historical past sometimes have their origins in literature, art or folklore. The mission of researchers, or, in our case, of a committee such as the one you preside, is to analyze, centralize and combine data, in order to find the truth. What I wish and what I ask of you is to allow the committee judge and decide. It is inconceivable that everything Mr. Russu did for us, on monastery grounds, under German occupation, putting his own life at risk, for months, was done without the consent of his superior, Tit Simedrea. In his book, published in 1997, Mr. Marius Mircu writes about the monastery hideout where "Tit Simedrea consented to all efforts of G. Russu".

We, as Jews, perhaps more than other people, have the obligation of making fair decisions regarding those who lent us a hand and saved us, because they were not many.

I thank you in advance if, for just a moment, the case of the archbishop will be discussed, maybe not pursuant to the norms of the committee, but pursuant to the humanity lying within us.

Attached: an article in a newspaper from Romania. A serious newspaper, written and read by educated people.

Respectfully, Shai Meir

Annex no. 48.

Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority Dept. "Righteous Among Men" 2008

24th November

To Mr. Shai Meir 17/4 BikurimSt. Haifa 34576

Shalom

Subject: TIT SIMEDREA

I hereby certify that I have received your letter from 10.11.2008.

As in my previous letters, I am trying to explain to you that your request does not have enough proofs in order to be possible to create a convincing file. I assure you that we are not talking about old and dogmatic rules, but respecting some values which we have been counting on for 46 years. As with every case containing divergent opinions, I talked to relevant specialists in the area. I presented the decision to the president of the commission, to whom you otherwise addressed a letter. And he had the same opinion, that there was no sustaining fact wide enough to open a file.

Sincerely yours, Irena Shteinfeld Dir.Dept. "Righteous Among Men"

Annex no. 49.

Shai Meir 17/4 Bikurim St. Haifa 34576

16<sup>th</sup> May 2009 Registered letter

To: Mrs. Irena Shteinfeld Dir.Dept. "Righteous Among Men" Yad Vashem

Esteemed Madam,

In your letter from 20.07.08 you underline, among others "regarding the recognition of some monastery leaderships, the issues needs a thorough examination", and in the letter having dated on the 24.11.08 you mention "I talked to relevant specialists in the area and I presented the decision to the president of the commission". According to the law for the freedom of information (1996), I have the right to know what the opinion of the specialists was and what the documentation on which the "thorough examination" is based was. There is no secret information, but historical facts. Therefore, thank you in advance for sending the entire material that you possess related to Mr. Tit Simedrea.

Yours faithfully, Shai Meir

#### Annex no. 50.

Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Dept. "Righteous Among Men" Jerusalem

31st May 2009

To: Mr. Shai Meir 17/4 Bikurim St. Haifa 34576

Hello,

I received your letter from  $26^{th}$  May 2009 in which you request elucidation on the opinion of the specialists in the Tit Simedrea case.

The main specialist I contacted was Ph.D. Leon Volovici from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I sent him copies of all materials you sent me. After studying them, he informed me – as he did also to yourself, as you contacted him directly in the past – that there was nothing corresponding to the criteria of "Righteous Among Men" in all this file. According to Ph.D. Volovici's opinion, the attitude of bishop/metropolitan towards the Jews can be appreciated as a positive one and there is no argument that his activity would have determined a real threat.

As you know very well, Ph.D Volovici is one of the most appreciated specialists in the area of rescuing the Jews during the holocaust in Romania. He is also one of those who opened this chapter in the report of the international specialists regarding the study of the holocaust in Romania, under the guidance of Elie Wiesel.

The information found in the file is the one you provided us. I didn't find in the archives any other historical certification that would reveal any heroic rescue activities referring to Tit Simedrea. As I wrote you in my former letters, in order to recognize somebody as Righteous Among Men it is necessary to have a clear informational basis from which the rescuing act can be easily noticed, without any doubt. The candidate should correspond to the basic definition of the "Righteous Among Men", just like the way it was expressed in the Yad Vashem Law 1953: "he risked his life for rescuing Jews".

I would like to add that I appreciate your efforts and the grimness you fight, but I have the obligation to respect the laws and the criteria which have been laying at the basis of the commission's decisions for almost 50 years.

Respectfully, Irena Shteinfeld Director of Dept. "Righteous Among Men"

Annex no. 51.

Shai Meir 17/4 Bikurim St. Haifa 34576

Registered letter 7<sup>th</sup> June 2009

To: Irena Shteinfeld Director of Dept. "Righteous Among Men" Yad Vashem

#### Esteemed Madam,

I read your letter very carefully, but, unfortunately, I couldn't find an answer to my request – that of sending me copies of the entire material that you have regarding Tit Simedrea's case. As for the rest, from everything you are writing to me, results that there is no clear reason to reject the file and to block it from going to the commission's decision. And here you have the reasons:

A) Without any doubt, Mr. Volovici Ph.D. is a great specialist in the field of rescuing during the holocaust in Romania, but he was not the only one. There are also other specialists, at least as appreciated as he is. Some of them told me that "it was the case to propose bishop Tit Simedrea as "Righteous Among Men" – Liviu Beris, the president of the association of holocaust's victims in Romania. Mihai E. Ionescu Ph.D – general manager of "Elie Wiesel Institute for Holocaust Study in Romania".

You mention in your letter "according to Dr. Volovici's opinion, the attitude of the bishop/metropolitan towards the Jews can be appreciated as a positive one". What else would be necessary to have the title "Righteous Among Men"? My impression is that Tit Simedrea's issue is debated on your corridor.

B) Quoting Dr. Volovici, you write "there is no argument that his activity would have determined a real threat".

It is hard to understand what your analyses and studies are founded on in

It is hard to understand what your analyses and studies are founded on in order to draw this conclusion. I wonder if you have been in the region where my family and I were rescued. Anybody whom listens to my sister's "memories" and mines understands that anybody who is caught hiding a Jew, under German occupation, or knows about a Jew's hiding-place and does not inform against him – is executed instantly. It's easy to understand why I affirm

that by hiding us at the monastery the bishop put his life in great danger. My sister's testimonies and mines – who survived the holocaust, are obviously less valuable than yours.

It is now the case to mention that according to your criteria, the testimonies of two survivors and also four testimonies of some persons that were at that certain place are enough to create a dignified file to stay on the discussions table of the committee.

Considering all these, I am kindly asking you again to leave the dogmatism behind and to present the case of the bishop Tit Simedrea to the commission. In case you hold your position, please send me the entire material that you have, as soon as possible.

Please remember that I am not a young man any more. My powers are wearker day by day and conscience presses me. I don't have the intention to give up. We have to make justice for the man who saved my family and I, even if I will summon the High Court of Justice for this.

Sincerely, Shai Meir

Annex no. 52.

Shai Meir 17/4 Bikurim St. Haifa 34576

Registered letter 17th June 2009

To:

Mrs. Irena Shteinfeld Director of Dept. "Righteous Among Men" Yad Vashem

Subject: Presentation of new evidences in the Tit Simedrea's case

Esteemed madam,

Following my letter from 7<sup>th</sup> June 2009 and the discussion with dr. Meir Rozen and after the conclusions – stating that there are not enough convincing evidences in order to support the file in front of the commission – I hereby add four testimonies that sustain my thesis: Mr. Tit Simedrea is worth to be entitled "Righteous Among Men".

These evidences have been communicated to you in the past and they exist for sure in your files. Please see what they are about:

- A) Mrs. Katz Trude appears in the file at pp. 8-9 act no. 1
- B) Mr. Rozner Israel appears in the file at p. 11 act no. 2
- C) Mr. Oskar Katz appears in the file at p.7 act no. 3
- D) Mr. Bilici Gabriel appears in the file at p.13 act no. 4

Beside these four testimonies I would like to add the one of Mr. Barbu Cioculescu, the son of the Romanian Academy president, who told me how his father (Şerban Cioculescu) and he met Mr. Tit Simedrea at the monastery where he used to live. Being there, he told them how he hid a Jewish family, during the war, in the basement of the Metropolitan Church he was leading. Certain evidence of this meeting also appears in one of the secret documents of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (C.N.S.A.S.).

This evidence exists in the file at pp. 28-44 and consists of act no. 5-6.

Respectfully, Shai Meir Annex no. 53.

Shai Meir 17/4 Bikurim St. Haifa 34576

Registered letter 29th June 2009

To: Mrs. Irena Shteinfeld Director of Dept. "Righteous Among Men" Yad Vashem

Esteemed madam,

According to the law of freedom of information and following my letter on 16th May 2009 to which you replied on the 31st May 2009, I demand concrete answers at the following questions:

- A) On what documentation was Dr. Volovici based when he stated "the attitude of bishop/metropolitan towards the Jews can be appreciated as a positive one and there is no argument that his activity would have determined a real threat" quote from your letter from 31.05.09
- B) In your letter from 24.11.08, you write: "I consulted with specialists and I presented the decision of the commission's president". Who are these specialists you consulted with except Dr. Volovici? Please annex to your answer all the adequate documentation that made you decide to present the case to the president of the commission.
- C) In your letter from 20.07.08, you write: "the bishop's responsibility was discussed during the debates that took place for the Russu file reason for which he was granted the title, not the bishop". In the light of this phrase, please provide me with the professional opinion of the proceeding before the discussions in the commission and also the protocol of the commission's meeting that decided to entitle G. Russu and, according to your statements quoted above, all that was discussed regarding the bishop's responsibility.

I am kindly reminding you that at that time I hadn't claimed the bishop Tit Simedrea's recognition, ignoring the fact that he had descendants.

Respectfully, Shai Meir

Annex no. 54.

Translation from Hebrew

#### YAD VASHEM

### The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority

The Department "Righteous Among Men"

Jerusalem, 5th July 2009 (the equivalent of the Judaic calendar)

Mr. Shay Meir 17/4 Bikurim St. Haifa 34576

Esteemed sir.

Regarding: Tit Simedrea - your last three letters from 7.6.2009, 17.6.2009 and 26.6.2009

I am honored to reply your three letters.

As I explained in the former exchange of emails, according to the regulations of the commission, the testimonies of the survivors or archive documents from that period of time are necessary in order to be able to grant the title. The declarations in which a person says he/she knows about the rescue are not enough for that purpose. At the same time and from understood reasons, the testimony of the rescuer is not sufficient for giving the title.

Excepting doctor Wolovitz, I consulted also with dr. Radu Ioanid and I even wrote to doctor Ionescu from the Eli Weisel Institute with the request of sending us a relevant certification. With the lack of such a certification we do not have the possibility to present the file. I know that doctor Ionescu supports the request and I respect this fact, but as I said before, this support must be completed with the archive certification.

The legal opinion of the referents and the discussions in the commission are confidential in order to allow the referents and the members of the commission to speak openly about the files. Therefore, unfortunately I can't answer your request.

Going back, I have to mention that I respect your great obligation, but we have the duty to respect the stipulations of the commission. It is not about the dogma, but the accent that has to be put on a correct standard and on following the instructions of the president of the commission, who is a judge of the High Court of Justice.

Respectfully, Irena Steinfeld Director of Department "Righteous Among Men" Illegibly signature

Copy: Dr. Meir Rozen

PO Box 3477 Jerusalem 91034, phone:02-6443521, fax: 02-6443743, www.yadvashem.org, email: righteous.nations@yadvashem.org.il

Annex no. 55.

Translation from Hebrew language

Shay Meir 17/4 Bikurim St., Haifa 34576 Phone: 04-8386032 (0506-977650) 26.8.2009 (the equievalent of the Judaic calendar)

Attn: Mr. Lindenstraus State supervisor Jerusalem

Referring to: Annex to my complain regarding Mrs. Irena Steinfeld's action

I have written to you explicitly, on the 9th August 2009, the reasons for my resentments towards Mrs. Irena Steinfeld's behavior. But the phone discussion with Mr. Ionatan Marcovici left the impression that I complain against "Yad Veshem" as an organization, which in not true. My claim is only towards the behavior of Mrs. Irena Steinfeld as a public employee. Therefore, I'm sending you this document as an annex to my first letter. This is my main claim:

- 1. On the 25.5.2008 and 18.6.2008, Mrs. Steinfeld has defined my sister's testimonies and mines (as we were survivors of the death rooms) "as third source". This was in spite of the fact that I have sent her a 10 pages written provision (the copy is annexed). Are my sister and I considered as third testimonial?
- 2. On the 18.6.2008 she states that there is no evidence that Bishop Tit Simedrea is a supporter of Jews (please see the attached letter). This statement proves that Mrs Steinfeld didn't read the 60 pages material (official documents from the National Council for Studying the Archives of the Security which came to my hand with the help of General Dr. Ionescu, the Manager of the Holocaust's Centre "Eli Wiesel"). And what is written in this certification argues against her statement. More than that: in her letter from 31.5.2009 she contradicts herself by the fact that she writes "the bishop's (Tit Simedrea) behavior towards the Jews is positive".
- 3. In the letter from 24.11.2008 she writes: "I have also consulted specialists and I have brought the decision into notice to the President of the Commission who has even replied to the letter you have sent into his attention and certified the fact that there was no sufficient probationary base in order to present the file" (see the copy in annex). After the mails exchanges and the publicati-

on in the Maariv newspaper (on the Holocaust Memory Day), Mrs. Steinfeld deigned to reveal who were the specialists. It seems that one of those (Dr. Volovici) is not a historian at all, as he has a Ph.D. degree in philology in Romania and made analyses at Yad Vashem upon the issue of the anti-Semitism in Romania and he is not a specialist in the Holocaust period. The second one, dr. Radu Ioanid, director of the Museum of Holocaust in Washington, wrote me that he has no idea about the Bishop because he didn't investigate the case. In other words, he can't serve as an expert from Mrs. Steinfeld's side. The third specialist, according to her statement, is General dr. Ionescu, whom, to a great degree of irony, is the one who encouraged my statements, helped me and even in his visit to Yad Vashem (February 2008) he translated my material to Mrs. Steinfeld, from Romanian to English (annexed copy).

4. She avoids, for I don't know what reason, the opinion of the specialists from Israel and Romania who defend the testimony of me and my sister (such as: prof. Wagu, historian at Tel Aviv University; dr. Michman, dean of the Holocaust Faculty at Bar Ilan; dr. Shlomo Leibovici, former researcher of the Romanian history at the Minister of Externals; dr. Iosef Guvrin, member of the Commission from Yad Vashem and Ambassador of Israel in Romania in the past; dr. Liviu Berish, director survivors in Romania and others).

I have talked and/or exchanged mail with all the above and they saw the material and they remained with the impression that it was credible and authentic and that it could be trustworthy.

Respectfully, Shay Meir

The undersigned, MARCUS EMANUEL BEZDEDEANU LAURENTIU, certified translator by the Minister of Justice with the number 2146, I certify the correctness of this translation with the text of the document from Hebrew language to Romanian language.

Stamp, Signature

Translator

Annex no. 56.

#### Yad Vashem The Authority for the Martyrs' and Heroes' of the Holocaust Memory

Jerusalem, 18th October 2009

Honor. Lawyer Adamit Rozentzvit Dereh Magdial 11/55 Hod Hasharon

In reply to your letter from 17.9.2009

The title of "Righteous Among Men" is granted according to well defined rules and criteria. The Commission which grants the title of "Righteous Among Men" functions under the presidency of a retreating supreme judge, who guides its activity. According to these rules, the commission takes into consideration only primary sources, meaning testimonies of the survivors who were direct witnesses to the candidate's actions or archive documents from that certain period of time, proving that the candidate has exposed his life for rescuing the Jews. For understandable reasons, it is not taking into account only the testimonies of the candidate's relatives or his close friends. As the proof of the positive attitude towards the Jews or the helping actions is not sufficient, but is it necessary to be certified that the candidate put his life in danger during the rescuing action, the committee thoroughly analyses the conditions of the action. It results from here that it is not based on secondary sources, or in other words, on the recommendations or the opinions of those who were not witnesses to the action, but it analyses the primary sources in order to understand the nature and conditions of the rescuing actions.

The name of the Bishop Tit Simedrea was raised during the Commission's debates for granting him the title of "Righteous among Nations", when the Rusu file was discussed, but the Committee has decided that the one who had exposed himself in rescuing the family was Mr. Rusu, granting him the title. The decision had been approved by the president of the Commission, the retreating judge Yakov Tirkel.

Mr. Shai Meir has been sending many additional documents since then. All the material has been carefully analyzed, as always, and the service addressed to the specialists in the Holocaust period in Romania in order to receive their expert appraisal.

As judge Tirkel has already answered to your client, the rich documentation that reached Yad Vashem did not correspond to the requested rules: Shai Meir and his sister had been witnesses to their hiding in the church by the "Righteous Among Men" Rusu – and based on their testimony the title was granted to the icons painter, but they couldn't testify on Bishop Tir's participation, because they were not present at the meetings between the Bishop and Rusu. Also, the other depositions that are mentioned in your letter (6, 7, 8, 9) are not testimonies of some persons who were witnesses to the events, but of some who state that they knew such a rescue action existed—but they haven't witnessed the Bishop's contacts and didn't mention what their information regarding the rescue were base on. As they have not been witnesses to the actions, they cannot testify regarding the circumstances. And, more correctly: Dorel Dorian sais that he has heard about the rescue from Shai Meir and general Mihai Ionescu, the manager of the Institute Eli Wiesel from Bucharest and that in his family the bishop is mentioned and that he has heard from his father that only Tit Simedrea could have convinced Antonescu to stop the persecution of the Jews; Razvan Theodorescu stated

that he had met the Bishop 50 years before the declaration, meaning in the period after the war, and affirms that the Bishop had been a friend of the Jews and he had acted for their rescue; Henry Balter stated that he had read about the events during the Holocaust in Carp's black book and also the Bishop's nephew and his family had told him about his positive attitude towards the Jews; Valeriu Bartolomeu was talking about his meetings with the Bishop in the '50s, after the war, and complimented his personality. In rabbi Şafran's book it is said that the rabbi went to the Bishop to ask him for help and the Bishop promised him that he would address Antonescu, but there are no documents referring to the follow-up of this action to the danger for the Bishop. In addition, the material contained statements of some survivors who knew Mr. Shai Meir's family and who heard the story of their rescue; Statements of different persons – among whom Romanian Orthodox clericals, regarding Bishop Tit's personality; Statements of the leaders of Romanian Jewish Communities Federation and of the activists in the Jewish organizations that defend the request – again, without the primary documentation support, evidences from the Romanian archives that the Bishop was not a legionary and that he was not part of Romanian nationalistic organizations.

The service addressed to the Eli Weisel Institute, in Bucharest, and to the Museum of Holocaust, in Washington, requesting to receive additional information to support the actions of Bishop Tit Simedrea, but it didn't receive any auxiliary material. Therefore, the material in the file is the one that Mr. Shai Meir sent from the beginning. He was informed of this in detail by the chief of the Service, in her letter from 31.5.2009 (the copy of the annexed letter) and thus there was no refusal of sending any documents, because it was not the case for him to be sent copies of the documents he had sent himself. Please not that it is not usual to send the approvals of the specialists and the members of the Commission whom we consult to those who address to us. The internal correspondence is not available in order for those who are consulted to be able to express their opinion openly and without external pressures. Nevertheless and wishing to meet your client's view, the head of the Service quoted the summary of the conclusions of the Commission's specialist in this case. This notification was presented also to the president of the Commission, the retreating judge Yakov Tirkel.

As a conclusion, a lot of work has been invested in this file, in order for all the possibilities for study to be developed. During this period, the head of the Service answered to all the letters and the notifications of your client in detail, showing respect for his position. Nevertheless and besides his great wish that Bishop Tit Simedrea to be recognized as "Righteous among Men", we have to respect the rules that lay at the basis of the program and to act according to the rules and criteria which guide our functionality. Strictly following those rules grants the international reputation that this title has.

In order to avoid any doubt and to meet your client's view, judge Tirkel decided to bring the file into debate.

Blessing, Avner Shalev, President of Yad Vashem Management

Copy: Mrs. Yrena Steinfeld, head of the Service for "Righteous Among Men"

P.O.B. 3477, Jerusalem 91034, Tel. 02-6443455, Fax 02-643452, www.yadvashem.org

Annex no. 57.

#### The translation of a document in Hebrew language

Shai Meir Rehov Bikorim 17/4, Haifa, 34576 Phone: 04-8386032 (0506-977650) 29.10.2009

> To Mr. Avner Shalev Manager of Yad Vashem Jerusalem

Object: reply to your letter from 18.10.2009

First of all, I would like to thank judge Tirkel for his decision to bring my file into discussion. Nevertheless, I'm afraid significant details are missing in your letter, details which could have answered to some important aspects regarding what is surprising you related to the degree in which bishop Tit Simedrea is legitimate to be entitled as "Righteous Among Men".

- 1. In the second paragraph of your letter, you say: "Tit Simedrea's name was raised during the Commission's debates for granting him the title of "Righteous Among Men", when the Rusu file was discussed". I wonder how the bishop's name could have been raised into discussion without mine and my sister's request (and I have already mentioned in my former letters that I haven't requested this, because I didn't know at that time that he had descendants).
- 2. You mention in your letter some statements of different persons who met the bishop after the war, but you excluded (for reasons that are unknown to me) four of the testimonies from the file I presented as belonging to some witnesses who were somewhere near my family's hiding-place in the course of the war and whose testimonies are very relevant for my request. (Katz Oskar, Grinshein Truda, Bilit Gabriel and Rosner).
- 3. You didn't refer to the documents from the Romanian Security Services office at all, which show clearly that Tit Simedrea had traveled on purpose to Bucharest in order to clandestinely meet Romania's chief Rabbi (rabbi Şafran) and the president of the Jewish community (Dr. Filderman). From these documents results what they have talked about (I am sure that their discussions haven't been about the periscope of the week).
  - And more than that: these documents haven't been presented either to Mrs. Orna Steinfeld's attention, with the argument that general Ionescu (the manager of "Elie Weisel Institute of Holocaust) didn't approve them. This motivation raises a lot of astonishment, because during a private discussion

with general Ionescu, two weeks ago at the official opening of the Museum of Holocaust in Bucharest (where I have been one of the guests), he reacted with displeasure at Mrs. Irena Steinfeld's unreasonable argument. And this was because according to his statement, he didn't receive any official request from Yad Vashem. More than that, he was the one who translated the relevant documents from the file from Romanian into English, when he was at Jerusalem in February 2008.

4. At the end of the fourth paragraph you say: "...the testimonies of the chiefs of Romanian Federation of Jewish Communities' and of the Jewish organizations' activists' who defend the request – again, without any evidence with documents from a primary source, the records from the Romanian archives which certify the fact that the bishop had not been a legionary and hadn't took part of Romanian nationalist organizations". There is no fundamental for this argumentation in the file I presented. In their testimonies, they write clearly that they are based on the secret documents of the Romanian Security Service's office. More than that: your argument that Dorel Dorian heard about the rescue from General Mihail Ionescu has no support. That is because in the phone discussions I had with them the day before yesterday, both denied that such a conversation had taken place.

Considering all the above, I would be grateful to you if you take into account in the spirit of justice to allow me to present myself in front of the commission at a moment that would be considered appropriate for them, in order to answer the questions and/or to detail or to stress aspects that this short presentation can't include.

Please present this request to the commission.

Best regards, Shai Meir

The undersigned Lepolev Sanda, certified by the Minister of Justice as a translator with no. 2933, I certify the correctness of the authentic document I have seen.

Translator, Signature Stamp Annex no. 58.

#### The translation of a document in Hebrew language

Yad Vashem The Authority for the Martyrs' and Heroes' of the Holocaust Memory

Jerusalem 5.11.2009

To Mr. Shai Meir

Rehov Bikorim 17/4 Haifa 34576

Good afternoon,

I want to thank you and confirm the receipt of your last letter addressed to the director of Yad Vashem, Mr. Avner Shalev, on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.11.2009.

Regarding your request syated in the letter, I return to what Mr. Avner Shalev, head of Yad Vashem, and Mrs. Irena Steinfeld, head of the department "Righteous Among Men" have already informed you: the recommendations you mentioned as belonging to the chiefs of the communities do not represent testimonies, evidences of rescuing that correspond to the criteria of the commission.

Following the examination it results that all the material you sent regarding the file was forwarded to the representatives of the commission. We state once again that according to the rules imposed by the commission, the witnesses do not present themselves in front of it.

Respectfully, Iosi Gvir Principal assistant manager of Yad Vashem

Copies: Mrs. Irena Steinfeld, Director of Department "Righteous Among Men"

The undersigned Lepolev Sanda, certified by the Minister of Justice as a translator with no. 2933, I certify the correctness of the authentic document I have seen.

Translator, Signature Stamp

Annex no. 59.

Yad Vashem
The Authority for the Martyrs' and Heroes'
of the Holocaust Memory
Dept. "Righteous Among Men"

31st January 2010

To: Mr. Shai Meir 17/4 Bicurin Str. Haifa 34576

Subject: TIT SIMEDREA # 11738

The commission who decides granting the "right among nations" title has analyzed your request of recognizing bishop Tit Simedrea.

After long and thorough studies of the documentation, discussions and references of the specialists in this certain area, the commission decided that this case does not correspond to the criteria of the commission.

The decision has been sent to the president of the commission, former judge at the High Court of Justice, Yakov Tirkel, who confirmed the decision.

Best regards, Irena Shteinfeld Director of Department "Righteous Among Men"

## YAD VASHEM



יד ושם

The Holocoust Martyrs' and Herney' Remembers of Authority

רשות הזיכרון לשואה ולגבורה

המחלקה לחסידי אומות העולם The Righteons Among the Nations Department

ירושלים, ט"ז שבט, תש"ע 2010 ינואר, 31

> מר שי מאיר רח' ביכורים 17/4 חיפה 34576

> > שלום רב.

#### Tit Simedrea # 11738 :הנדון:

הועדה לציון חסידי אומות העולם דנה בבקשתך להכיר בבישוף Tit Simedrea כחסיד אומות העולם. לאחר בחינה מקיפה של כל החומר בתיק והתייעצות עם היסטוריונים מומחים החליטה הועדה שאין המקרה תואם את הקריטריונים שמנחים את פעולתה.

ההחלטה הועברה לעיונו של יושב ראש הועדה, שופט בית המשפט העליון בדימוס, יעקב טירקל, שאישר אותה.

בברכה,

אירנה שטיינפלב מנהלת מחלקת חסידי אומגם העולם

עו"ד גילה בריזלי, אורן 29/2, חיפה 34735

P.O.B. 3477, JERUSALEM 91034, Ttd. 02-6443521, FAX. 02-6443743 פקס: 02-644354, 174, 1747 מיניטלים 191034, 1747 בייניטלים 191034, 1747 בי

Annex no. 60.

Page 3 from 5. The Virtual Library of "Righteous Among Men" during Holocaust

#### AMBIGUOUS ASPECTS

Most of the rescue cases which are taken into debate in front of the commission of "Righteous Among Men" do not raise issues regarding recognition and giving the titles of "Righteous Among Men" to those who saved Jews. We shall shortly mention the cases which raised debates and the conclusions taken by the commission through the years of its existence.

- A minor's testimony is accepted, but not sufficient in the case of "Righteous Among Men" and an auxiliary testimonial is necessary.
- Someone rescued a Jew, but at the same time wounded other Jews or members of other peoples that person is not recognized.
- Someone rescued a Jew, but also cooperated with the enemy the position of the person and the way of cooperation are studied. The affiliation to the Nazi or Fascist Party doesn't cancel the right to be awarded.
- The saver has anti-Semitic opinions as long as they were not related to the Jews, this doesn't cancel the right to be awarded if he rescued and endangered his life.
- Someone has worked as a representative of an illegal group in general, he
  is not recognized only if he acted completely according to the instructions
  and had a personal initiative to rescue.
- Diplomats who rescued if they have consciously broken the instructions of their superiors and rescued hundreds and thousands they are recognized as "Righteous Among Men" (for example Consul Mendes from Portugal, who offered passing service for thousands of Jews from their homes to south of France).
- Monasteries in general the leader of the monastery is recognized, the one who makes the decision of hiding Jews, and not separate monks, only if there is something outstanding in their actions.
- Someone has saved his Jewish wife he will only be recognized if in addition he has saved her family members and/or other Jews.
- Convert persons who acted as saviors and rescued includes Jews who have changed the religion from their own belief, before the Nazi dominance in their countries; they are not recognized as Jews in "Righteous Among Men" case.

Annex no. 61.

# TRIBUNAL OF JERUSALEM IN CAPACITY OF TRIBUNAL FOR ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Before the Honoured Judge Noam Solberg

File 14311-06-10

Claimant:

Meir Shay

Represented by lawyer Gila Barzilai

Against

Defendant

Yad Vashemn- Authority of Memory of Holocaust and of Heroism Represented by lawyer Shomron and lawyer Avarech

Present:

Representative of claimant lawyer Gila Barzilai

The claimant himself

Representative of defendant lawyer Shomron and lawyer Avarech

Rina Steinfeld, Manager of the Department Straight among People

#### **PROTOCOL**

Representative of claimant: We refer only to the fundamental rights of claimant, to view, by juridical duty applied to claimant as administrative authority.

The decision itself is very ample and its impact is also difficult, it may be difficult to encounter a decision which may affect harder than this. I shall give an example of goodwill of defendant, namely to present the claimant in order to reach this agreement, a great part of the documents and another part, in terms of a reasonable explanation, to remain confidential but the defendant decided that the entire material is confidential and this is a fundamental lesion.

Representative of defendant: There is a legal opinion of some external bodies and writs of some historians and certainly a protocol of discussions. There is a document which is a public document. In the individual discussions, such this discussion, when we discuss in fact with respect to the issues afferent to some persons or facts or their absence, in order to be included in the category straight among people, Yad Vashem or the commission does not have an attitude of force in vain, since the issues, although they pass with closed doors, they were carried out, so to say, reasonably, for the special status, proper historical and juridical evidence and at the beginning judge Landau supported it and subsequently it was supported as well by other judges such as Meltz and currently, by judge Tirkel. The approach is very serious, we do not talk about a commission of officials. There is supervision on the highest level, as it may be presented. Since it is about judging the souls of people, on a certain level, the historian says a word or another about the candidate to title for the acknowledgement of it and, as a rule, we avoid to reveal the material. There is a case with which we reached an agreement and which received

validity as compromise and which is not bound but, on a moment at the Supreme Court of Justice, we reached an agreement according to which we have drawn up a summary of the Protocol and we have established that, if the other party, the claimant, rejected the summary, we would reveal the protocol before a judge from another court of the Supreme Court of Justice, who was then Itzhak Zamir and he would decide, he would see the original protocol and the summary and he would decide. We do not want and I do not want something additional to what I have written, the issues have high degree of sensitiveness and personal deepness and I do not have any problem under no circumstance, with the claimant, we respect him and his right to resort to a court. We are prepared with this kind of regulations, on any moment. We fear that here may be a problem. We have a legal opinion of some historians, there are referees employed by Yad Vashem and they are member of the commission who worked, who investigate the issue and accept as well opinions from historians and in this case, there are also correspondences, there are protocols, legal opinions of a historian and the work of a referee.

Representative of claimant: The defendant cannot invoke, in my opinion, the fact that there are sensitive discussions, I agree that we talk about judging souls but we cannot generalise and say that the entire material is confidential and the claimant is not allowed to be accepted his basic demands. There is the obligation of transparency incumbent upon the defendant etc. My client wants to receive the opinion from a historical point of view since only in this way we may know on which the decision relied.

Representative of defendant: We are ready to present a summary. Regardless the claimant is satisfied with the demand or not, we may present the material to the court judge who will view the material and will see if it is necessary to be added something. From our point of view, this is a logical regulation. If the judge decides that something else must be revealed, we will agree.

Representative of claimant: I accept the offer but I want to speak with my client too. We may have reached to this earlier, despite the multiple correspondence of the claimant, I regret that this proposal was made now.

After the break:

The claimant: I am 80 years old, I am not a lawyer or businessman. I am a culture man. I demand to speak about what I am doing. I was in ghetto during the war in 41. 10 Jews were taken with me by force in the ghetto. My father was specialist in printing and I worked at church under the supervision of a painter called Gheorghe who was the assistant of Episcope. When he found out that my father no longer comes to work and that we are in ghetto, Gheorghe came in ghetto and told us not to get out of there with the first transportations in trains of extermination but he told us to wait. He told us not to get out with the first transportation because he would demand the approval of Episcope. He came, gave the approval to Gheorghe and there the secretary gave a page and a seal and they demanded for whom, they said that it was for the Episcope but he refused

to sign and returned it. Gheorghe went to the Episcope and he told him that they refused to sign and he said that he understood why they had refused to sign. He said: I see a page with seal and I think that the police will think it is official and they will allow leaving the ghetto and I got out and the Episcope said that they would stay in my basement. We have stayed one year and a half in the basement. 65 years passed and after I retired, I taught mathematics in schools and I wanted to show the heirs that I was alive, I knew that Gheorghe had a daughter, I looked for his daughter. I found his daughter, I demanded Yad Vashem to offer Gheorghe the title of straight among people, we did not make the petition for the Episcope too, there was a person who was living in the monastery and he did not have any heirs and I knew that only the heirs would receive the title but I found a heir and I wrote a petition to Yad Vashem to thank him, I owe my life to him. One couldn't be in a church without the church leader knew that I was there in the basement.

This case is present in all history books in Romania and even Maariv newspaper, on Holocaust Day, wrote an article about me and about the nephew I found.

They told me that all Episcopes are anti-Semite, the doctor is not historian, he wrote books about anti-Semitism and currently he is the main referee from Yad Vashem. If dr. Yani told me that he did not know Czernowitz and asked me the material, afterwards he saw that I demanded a meeting at Yad Vashem with the President of the Commission and the answer was that he did not receive survivors of Holocaust for discussions. Afterwards, I addressed the president from Yad Vashem and I received the same answer, that he did not receive me. I was shocked that they refused to receive me, it is not a shame to receive a survivor of Holocaust. I went to historians from Tel Aviv University, specialists from Israel and I show this to them, Yad Vashem read these things? Three years passed and the lawyer wrote a letter to the President Yad Vashem. They refused to say this before the commission for three years, the translation was not accurate. They read the confidential documents which I gave them. Afterwards, there was a commission and I said that it was confidential, first of all, I want two things, I want to check if something is missing from this file, a few documents are here, I want to check amiably maybe here in this court or elsewhere. I do not agree that this history is something confidential. I am a professor of mathematics, I give an exam to a pupil, he asks me where the exam is and I tell him that it is confidential. This cannot be possible. There is here an article of Yad Vashem, and Mrs. Steinfeld wrote the article. I travelled to Moscow, I have 4 witnesses and they told me that they were not witnesses. Why? Why they are not witnesses? They asked me how they found out, I said that I told them. There was a basement not a hotel.

I demand to see if all this material is there and if something is missing. I travelled 12 times in Romania. I read that they want me to incur the expenses. For all my trips in Romania, I did not demand expenses. I consider this a donation to Yad Vashem since I gave them the material.

Secondly – it cannot be confidential. I want to speak with them and this will be a historical conversation and not a security one, an educational discussion. I want to speak with those persons.

#### **JUDGEMENT**

There were mutually determined the following:

- 1. Yad Vashem will draw up a summary of the material (protocols, legal opinion and correspondences) and will present it to be viewed by the claimant. The summary will be drawn up within 45 days.
- 2. If the claimant is not satisfied, with the parties consent, one will appoint a court judge to establish if the summary reflects accurately the content of material. The parties agreed to accept without objections the decision of such court judge, decision to be passed. The decision will be pronounced within 45 days after the date the material is presented to him.
- 3. At Yad Vashem one will perform a verification if all these documents held by the claimant in his file and which were sent to him at Yad Vashem, are truly in the possession of Yad Vashem. Also, with respect to additional documents filed from the Archive of Romania as well from some specialists historians from Romania and other states.

Passed this day, 09/11/2010, in the presence of the parties.

Noam Solberg, Judge - indecipherable signature

Seal of the Tribunal of certification of the copy, according to the original Date: 9/11/10, General secretary – indecipherable signat

Annex no. 62.

# E.S. SHIMRON. I. MOLHO, PERSKY & CO. LAWYER OFFICES Founder: ERWIN S. SHIMRON 1919-1978

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Ierusalem, November 21st 2010

In attention of, Mrs. Gila Barzilai, lawyer Oren 29/2 Haifa, 34735

Without prejudicing the rights, By registered letter and by fax on no. 03-5163940

Reference: File 14311-06-10 Meir Shay against Yad Vashem, Authority of Recalling the Martyrs of Holocaust and of Heroism

In the name of my client, Yad Vashem – Authority of Recalling the Martyrs of Holocaust and of Heroism ("Yad vashem") and pursuant to the judgement of the Honoured Court dated 09.11.2010, I have the honour to address you, as follows:

1. Yad Vashem has the honour to communicate to Mr. meir Shay, by you, the

excerpt of the material and this in terms of paragraph 1 to the decision on the file above mentioned.

- 2. I am also honoured to inform you that Mr. Meir Shay met on the date of 16.11.2010 on his demand, Mrs. Irena Steinfeld, manager of the Department for Straight among People from Yad Vashem, with a view to check whether all documents sent by him to Yad Vashem were truly in the possession of Yad Vashem and this in terms of paragraph 3 to the court judgement in the above file.
- 3. In attention and with all respect due, it is stated that the content of this letter of mine, does not represent a waiving to any claim and/or any right of Yad Vashem and all rights are maintained with this.

Yours faithfully, Eli Evarech, Lawyer Indecipherable signature

#### YAD VASHEM Authority of Recalling the Martyrs of Holocaust and of Heroism

#### DEPARTMENT OF STRAIGHT AMONG PEOPLE

# EXCERPT FROM FILE NO. 11738 Tit Simedrea – Romania Protocols and internal correspondences

Excerpt from the Protocol of the Meeting of the Commission dated 28.12.2009. The meeting was attended by 10 persons.

#### Referee opinion:

After the occupation of Czernowitz town by Romanian and German armies, in October 1941, the Jews from the town were concentred in an area of the town turned into ghetto, from where they were expulsed to the camps from Transnistria. Shelkman family (parents and three children), who was living in the ghetto, managed to avoid the expulsion during a few days. Afterwards, the father, David Shelkman, typographic artist, specialist in drawing up Christian liturgical books in the typography "Mitropolia" of Czernowitz, had the possibility to go to Gheorghe Rusu, icon painter with whom he collaborated in typography. Due to Rusu intervention, with the consent of Simedrea Episcope, Shelkman family hid on the territory of Episcope church and thus it was saved from expulsion.

(Pursuant to the address of Meir Shay, Gheorghe Rusu received in April 2006 the title of "Straight among people", file 10818#, address of 2006 reminds the consent of Simedrea Episcope, without demanding then the title for this too. On that moment, Meir Shay returned and demanded this qualification).

In the deposition of Beatrice Shelkman, sister of Meir, born in the year 1920, Gheorghe Rusu, with the consent of Simedrea, obtained a permit from mayor Traian Popovici, which certified that the presence of Shelkman in the typography of Mitropoly was essential. Thus, he became one of almost 16,000 Jews of Czernowitz, for whom the mayor managed to avoid expulsion, under the pretext that their presence is essential for the economy of town. (Traian Popovici was the first Romanian who received the title of "Straight among people").

In June 1942, when a new waive of expulsions started, after the removal of mayor Popovici, Rusu obtained the consent of Episcope so the entire Shelkman

family remains in the basement of the church of Mitropoly, where they stayed until 1943, when the risk of expulsion passed.

#### Documents:

- Testimony of Meir Shay, a high number of addresses of him to Yad vashem, a part of these through lawyers, who return on the same data presented by him in the preparation of the file of Gheorghe Rusu.
- Testimony of Beatrice Shelkman, Shay sister.
- Declarations of Oscar Katz, Truda Katz, Israel Rozner, Gabriel Bilici all from Czernowitz and which certify the testimony of Meir Shay.
- 18 letters and opinions of some personalities from Romania, among which the President of Jewish Community of Romania and the President of the Organization of Holocaust Survivors in Romania, which refer to moral degrees of Simedrea and the affection manifested towards Jews during the war. No addressors acknowledged the facts incumbent upon the Episcope by Meir Shay.
- Several secret writs from Security, from communist period, concerning political positions of the Episcope, not related to the issue of saving.

#### A few observations and conclusions.

- The file prepared by Meir Shay does not include any document from that period which may attest the involvement of Episcope in saving the Jews. The only testimonies belong to the two children of David Shelkman, who couldn't knew directly the involvement of Tit Simedrea. In the statement dated December 17th 2009, which was give through the lawyer, Meir Shay declared that Gheorghe Rusu said before his father that the Episcope blamed him that the child (Meir) was hanging out around the church of the Episcope and could endanger the risk of all ("they will kill us all").
- The sister of Meir Shay, in her testimony from 1997, written and published by the journalist Marius Mircu, saw in Rusu, "our saver", but she also mentioned the Episcope as being "the one who allowed all efforts of Gheorghe Rusu for our saving".
- I don't consider grounded the assertion that the consent of Simedrea to shelter the family, represented in any way a risk for the Episcope. Hierarchically, Romanian Orthodox Church supported the anti-Semitic policy of Antonescu and one does not known cases of application of some sanctions on those who demanded the stop of expulsions.
- According to the statement of Rut Sharf Sherbit, included in the file, Tit Simedrea obtained permit for the avoidance of expulsion of her father, Itzhak Zigler, the personal tailor of Episcope. In the two cases (Shelkman and Zigler), the intervention of Episcope was does in favour of two persons needed by the Episcope.

- Both the Rabin Alexandru Shafran and the President of Jewish Community of Romania, Filderman, state in their memories that they were warmly received by the Episcope (who, despite all these, was known as "famous anti-Semite", states Shafran), who promised to interfere to Antonescu to stop the expulsions. There is no information concerning a palpable involvement of him.
- The mayor Traian Popovici, who wrote in detail, immediately after the war, about his efforts to save as much Jews as possible from deportation, never mentions the Episcope among those who helped him in his efforts.

In conclusion, one may say that Episcope Tit Simedrea agreed with the efforts of Gheorghe Rusu to offer shelter to the family Shelkman. In spite of all these, the assertions concerning the hypothetical risks undertaken by Episcope, do not seem convincing to me. The fact that he agreed the position of Gheorghe Rusu in case of the family Shelkman, does not justify the offer of the title Straight among people.

(This is the opinion of referee).

#### Summary of discussion.

In the discussion, the referee also added: the background of the history of Holocaust in Czernowitz is the most important. The fight of the mayor of Czernowitz, Popovici, against the incorporation of the ghetto and deportation of the Jews from his town, is extremely impressive, and therefore he was acknowledged as Straight among people. He is the true hero of the story. There is much evidence of his protests concerning Antonescu against the programs of authorities and he uses expressions which call the attention, such as "barbaric fact" and "non-Christian fact". Popovici manages, despite the entire opposition of army chiefs, to obtain exemption for 20,000 Jews to avoid deportation. Eventually, 16,000 Jews received permit with his signature. Rusu received as well such a permit for Shekman family. Therefore, their staying on the church property was legal and there was no risk for the Episcope.

Generally, the leaders of Romanian church, supported Antonescu. No such leader is known to be exposed to any risk pursuant to involving in favour of Jews. Antonescu took care to preserve the support of church people. More than that, the Episcope was known as anti-Semite. His article from 1937 does not express only the theological Christian anti-Semitism but it also includes additional elements and in fact it supports the expulsion of Jews from Romania. He also attacked the Rabin Shafran in Parliament when he demanded rights for Jews.

As for the address of Rabin Shafran and of the President of Jewish Community from Romania Filderman to the Episcope, he answers them politely, but there is no evidence which may certify that he addressed subsequently to Antonescu.

One of the members asked how could be explained the fact that the current President of Community supports the address.

The referee answered that the Presidents of Communities know him in the period after the war and they do not know his activity during the Holocaust. And I remind once more that Popovici who died in 1946 states in his book all those who helped him to defend the community from Czernowitz and there does not appear any word about Episcope Tit.

One of the members asked why Meir Shay demands the acknowledgement of Episcope?

The referee answered that he has the impression that here there is a wish to settle the relations with the church. Meir Shay, after being acknowledged Rusu and on his own, addressed the church so the ceremony took place in church, in Romania. The Episcope who headed the church, had a fascist past in his youth and an embarrassing situation was created for the Israeli representation in Romania. Meir Shay considers himself a person who may repair the relations and purify the name of the church.

During the meeting, one also read the remarks of another specialist referee for Romania, who couldn't attend the meeting and demanded to transmit that he agrees with the opinion of referee and added a few more observations:

- 1) The deceased Ancel, in his book History of Holocaust in Romania, Volume A page 143 quotes from poisonous anti-Semite assertions of Simedria, which, although they were said/written in November 1937 however, we cannot delimit the challenging tone of these against the Jews from Romania. I find it difficult to see how the title "Straight among people" is offered to a person who expressed as him.
- 2) As you have said, rightfully, there is no evidence that Simedrea acted really for the avoidance of deportations from Czernowitz, although he heard the assertions of Rabin Shafran with courtesy, both in October 1941 and in June 1942. I wonder from where did the Rabin Shafran obtained information about deportations, periodically, which were fast performed and spontaneously.
- 3) The permit which Simedrea gave to Rusu, did not really involved any risk for his own person. Since Mr. Shelkman was a typographic artist who worked for church and who, on the moment of his work, received benefits, as in case of tailor Zigler, who was also included in the category of those who were receiving staying permits within the cover insured by the permits of Popovici (and not less than 16,000, as it seems). Despite all these, one may suppose that Rusu cannot offer shelter within the complex of the church, on his own, without receiving the consent of Simedrea. But, as I have already said, Simedrea did this if he really did it not from love for Jews but to receive benefits from the artist's work. In the conclusion of his information, the author proposes to be considered the sending of a letter of gratitude and may already receive support from the committee, depending on the referee opinion.

One of the members said that he does not see the reason of sending a letter of gratitude, since there is no evidence of the responsibility undertaken by the Episcope in hiding Jews and more than that, there are all reasons that he did not act as such.

Pursuant to the discussion, two votes took place:

It was unanimously decided the non-acknowledgement.

It was unanimously decided not to send the letter.

### Summary of the correspondence concerning Tit Simedrea

Dr. Leon Wolovitz – electronic mail of 22.8.2007, as answer to the address of the manager of the Department of Straight among people:

He assessed the case and she does not see any reason to discuss on file. He said that he discussed with Dr. Jean Ancel and the latter told him that the demand is under no circumstance grounded.

He recommended consulting with Romanian historians.

Letter received by electronic mail from Dr. Wolovitz în 15.3.2009 as answer to the address of the manager of the Department of Straight among people:

He analysed the material received, he was convinced that he supported the initiative of stopping the deportation of Jews from Czernowitz and certified the facts of Rusu but although this conduit is positive, no risk was involved.

Registry conversation with Dr. Radu Ioanid – 30.6.2009:

Dr. Ioanid saw the material and did not encounter in it any evidence of saving or risk. There is no document from the war period that could attest the salvation – everything is based on suppositions. He knows that Meir Shay addressed as well to Professor Michael Shapir and his answer is below. If documents had been encountered in the archives of church, they would have been sent a long time ago to Yad Vashem.

Prof. Dan Machman – electronic mail from 17.9.2009 (as answer to the address of the manager of the Department of Straight among people to her and to Dr. Vago, after the letter to the state investigator, Meir Shay said that Prof. Machman and Dr. Vago "support his testimony"):

Meir Shay was truly at him, he said that he did not say anything about the file but he said that there is new material, it must be brought to the department.

Dr. Rafi Vago – electronic mail of 17.9.2009 as answer to the address of the manager of the Department of Straight among people:

He says that he has explained Meir Shay that he himself did not check this issue and consequently he may return only over what others wrote. That in his assertions, he did not assess the facts in terms of any criteria.

Dr. Rafi Vago – electronic mail of 18.9.2009 as answer to the address of the manager of the Department of Straight among people:

The purpose of settling the relations with the church cannot be a reason of acknowledgement. It must not be construed the partial acceptance as majority acceptance.

Electronic mail of the manager of the Department of Straight among people to dr. Mihail Ionescu, President of the Institute Eli Wissel – 4.11.2009:

Explanation for the certification demanded in order to fulfil the criteria of commission. The author demands as well, to understand whether, as Meir Shay wrote in his letter to Avner Shalev, Dr. Ionescu expressed his fury opposite to the manager of the Department of Straight among people, after Meir Shay told him that he had refused to received the documents sent to us (things which never happened). The demand to send material about the saving of Jews by Simedrea Episcope, if the case.

Report of the manager of the Department of Straight among people to judge Tirkel, concerning the situation of the facts in the file – 21.8.2008 – pursuant to the address of Mr. Meir Shay.

Memorandum of the manager of the Department of Straight among people to the president of administration Yad Vashem -4.11.2009 pursuant to letter of Meir Shay to the president of administration.

Annex no. 63.

## OBSERVATIONS ON THE SUMMARY SENT BY YAD VASHEM ON THE DATE OF NOVEMBER 21st 2010

I acknowledge receiving the answer from Yad Vashem in the File no. 11738. I am forced to make the following general observations (A) and details (B):

#### **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

The entire report is preconceived negatively, including serious prejudices and false presumptions.

In order to support the negative assertions, the referees are forced to reject the "writs", in fact sources, primary documents contemporaneous to life and facts of metropolitan Tit Simedrea, issued by State security, Secret services and Communist Security, which represents a serious methodological and main error, lacking in fact historical sources on which their opinion should have relied. As these writs prove both the action of metropolitan Tit Simedrea for saving the family Şlacman as well as of other Jews from Czernowitz and Bucovina, it is understandable their ignorance by the referees whose negative verdict was preconceived.

#### A) DETAILED OBSERVATIONS

- 1. The ghetto from Czernowitz was incorporated by a notification where were stated the streets and perimeter of it and the order of movement of all Jews from the town in the ghetto.
- 2. Şlacman family, being threatened to be moved in the ghetto, managed to hide in a gang. The father (David) got out from the perimeter of ghetto and reaching to the Mitropoly contacted the painter Gheorghe Russu, asking for his help and telling him the place where they were staying.
- 3. During the first days of deportation the mayor Popovici did not issue authorisations. The first authorisations were issued only by the Government of Bucovina and signed, in hierarchical order, by the cabinet chief of governor, by major Stere Marinescu, and then by the general governor Corneliu Calotescu, only on demand of the chiefs of institutions in our case the Metropolitan Tit Simedrea for the interest of economic life of the town.

The general Calotescu refused to sign the authorisation for family Şlacman, which had been previously signed by his cabinet chief. However, taking advantage of gendarmes' negligence, with this incomplete authorisation, Şlacman family could leave the ghetto and they were sheltered at Mitropoly where, at the initiative of Metropolitab Tit Simedrea, and hid in the basement of the building.

Barely after these events, had our family obtained a provisional authorisation from mayor Popovici. All these authorisations lost their validity in June 1942, when their holders were deported in Transnistria, over Bug, most of them loosing their lives.

In this situation, Şlacman family was hidden again in the basement of Mitropoly, also at the initiative of Metropolitan Tit Simedrea.

# Repeating this risky action shows clearly the direct involvement of Metropolitan Tit Simedrea in saving the five members of our family!

- 4. My demand refers to offering the title of "Straight among people" to Metropolitan Simedrea for saving my family.
- 5. By stating the assertion that: "the episcope allowed all efforts of Gheorghe Russu to save us" it is acknowledge the point from virtual Library of "Straight among people" concerning the "monastery" (Statute of Yad Vashem, title Problematic Cases).
- 6. The position of referee, of not considering grounded the assertion according to which the consent of Tit Simedrea to shelter our family represents a risk for his life, is contradicted by the disposals of the Ordinance of the Governor of Province Bucovina, general Calotescu, no. 38 of October 11th 1941, point 1, letter d), read as follows: "they will be punished with death...all those who will hide in their places other persons, or facilitate the run of those who cannot abandon the locality".

Or, Gheorghe Russu was leaving outside the Metropoly, had his own home and only the Metropolitan Tit Simedrea, who had hidden family Şlacman in his own home – as defined by ordinance – is liable for capital punishment.

- 7. Concerning the involvement of Metropolitan Tit Simedrea in saving generally the Jews, these are known from the memories of chief Rabin dr. Alexandru Şafran (...something absolutely unimaginable: we had obtained the ceasing of deportations from Czernowitz with the help of Tit Simedrea A. Safran Memories); of Wilhelm Fielderman and of Wiesenthal (Simedrea, the metropolitan of orthodox church used his contacts had among the Romanians considered fascist and anti-Semites to improve the situation of Jews. The priests subordinated to Simedrea received a confidential order to issue fictive certificates of baptize to protect the Jewish people from German people. German people couldn't act against some pseudo or alleged Christians unlike government. Simedrea obtained the consent of patriarch Nicodim who used repeatedly his influence over the prime minister Antonescu to support the Jewish people. Simon Wiesenthal-Flucht vor dem Schicksal).
- 8. Concerning the assertion from point 8 in the summary Yad Vashem, it is obvious the flagrant contradiction between the acknowledgement of the fact that the "episcope agreed to hide the family Şlacman" and the conclusion that the "risks" undertaken were only "hypothetical". These contradict obviously the imperative disposals of the Ordinance 38/1941.

- 9. On chapter "Discussions" the referee speaks about Traian Popovici, but I must say that he whose merits we do not want to diminish at all is not the object of this file.
- 10. With respect to the assertion that the staying of our family in the Mitropoly was legal, I state that I gave details on point 3, concerning the entire illegal character of our staying in the building of Mitropoly, without forming strictly the object of the file concerning the saving of our family.
- 11. As for the anti-Semitism of Metropolitan this cannot be supported only by an interview given in 1937. I went specially in Romania to investigate the press of the time at the Library of Romanian Academy and I encountered as well the article to which Yad Vashem refers. The article was published in the newspaper Curentul, of September 8th 1937, and it was not signed by Tit Simedrea, but it is an interview offered to a journalist who discussed with the episcope and who was not a friend of Jews. Not being a loyal registration but only the answers of Metropolitan Simedrea by the journalist, this cannot be taken for granted. One may consider as well the political context at the end of the year 1937, the general trend reflected in the elections from December the same year and the mentality of journalist. However, according to the same interview, the Metropolitan asserts that: "the problem of Jews may be solved but not by crimes, by bloodshed, broken windows and unrooting the brushes". His true attitude was reflected in anti-legionary attitudes (the case of general Bengliu – according to CNSAS, note SSI of April 09th 1941: Simedrea, the Metropolitan stated directly to some close acquaintances of him the pain and depression caused to him by the events in September 1940 until April 1941. He was disgusted by legionary regime, displaying an anti-Antonescu attitude.) and in the actions for saving the Jews from Bucovina and from the entire country, proved by the memories of Rabin chief Alexandru Şafran, of Simon Wiesenthal, the reports of Safety and Security - filed by me at Yad Vashem. This supporting documents were entirely ignored by the referee. And, if on that time, Tit Simedrea was a convinced anti-Semite, we cannot image how my father – Jewish typographer – was received to work in the workroom of Mitropoly.

I am baffled when a contemporary article, signed by an unknown redactor has a more important evidence character of great range than the memories of some contemporary personalities, such as Wiesenthal, Fielderman or Safran, not to mention our own testimony.

Even if we suppose, absurdly, that in the year 1937, the Metropolitan were anti-Semite, nothing prevents him to change subsequently the attitude. One may state the case of officer from Wehrmacht Wilhelm Hosenfeld, involved in the interrogatories performed to war prisoners and who, captured by Red Army, was condemned by a Soviet tribunal, but rewarded (dignified) by Yad Vashem with the posthumous title of "Straight among people" for saving a Jew.

I also recall the visit at Jerusalem, upon the invitation of Israeli authorities, of the Italian dignitary Mr. Fini, who in the year 1992 organised in Rome a march of 50.000 of persons for the commemoration of Mussolini and who after this event changed his convictions, manifesting friendship towards Israel. (the article about life in Israel of Fini appeared in English edition of newspaper Haaretz, dated February 3rd 2010).

- 12. Concerning the assertion that Traian Popovici mentioned the person who helped him in his action of saving Jews, this unfortunately is not acknowledged in his book. In his book *Testimony* (page 38, in Romanian edition and page 86, in English version) he avoid to mention the name of those who helped him, which means that Metropolitan Simedrea couldn't have been one of them.
- 13. The report suggests the idea, profoundly offending, of a megalomania of the claimant Meir Shai, who, would be a hidden Christian??? and who would want to purify and conciliate Romanian Orthodox Church with Israel. We do not doubt that the honoured court will qualify properly this surprising attempt of discrediting and compromising the claimant Meir Shai, by such false and offending declarations.

The ceremony of granting the title of Straight among people to Gheorghe Russu, at the Palace of Romanian Patriarchy of Bucharest, was demanded by the daughter of Gheorghe Russu, petition existent and approved by Yad Vashem, so the degree and signs are deposited in the hall of the Patriarchy, under the original paintings, created by her father. Personally, I did not do any demarche in this respect, but this made be glad because, in fact, this was implicitly recognition of Holocaust.

- 14. The Teoctist Patriarch, who was leading the Romanian Orthodox Church, was the same person on the head of R.O.C. when Mrs. ambassador Rodica Gordon participated, at the Patriarchy, to the offering of the title of Straight among people to the priest Petre Gheorghe.
  - 15. For this point the answer is at point 11.
- 16. I state once more that my petition, in the file no.11738, refers to my family and not to the issue of annulling the deportation of Jews from Czernowitz.
  - 17. The answer is at point 7.
- 18. With respect to the fact that Metropolitan Simedrea saved us to receive benefits from the work of my father, I state that it is an absurd assertion, since all the time we were hidden, my father couldn't work with the others, therefore the assertion is not grounded.
- 19. I do not know personally professor Sapir, I do not address him and consequently I did not receive any answer from him.

None of the persons mentioned, with whom I discussed in 2008, respectively professor Vago and professor Michman, were sent the additional documents whi-

ch I remitted to Yad Vashem in the year 2009, their opinion being determined only by the initial documents in the file of the cause.

Dr. Leon Wolowitz grounded his opinion mainly on those discussed with dr. Jean Ancel, but he died in April 2008 and he did not know the additional documents sent subsequently to Yad Vashem. Also, although he was recommended to consult the historians from Romania, he did not consider any expertise came from this country and he did not formulate any official demand to obtain such expertise.

I state that several persons draw my attention on the fact that Yad Vashem opposed entirely for several years to offering the title "Straight among people" to Queen Mother Elena, who saved the lives of dozen thousands of Jews from Romania. Only after the interventions of some great personalities the Institute accepted, eventually, to offer the title, which was received, on behalf of his mother, the son of the queen, the former Romanian sovereign, Mihai I.

In the answers given, I tried to clear the obvious confusions reflected in the analysis of referee and which influenced decisively the negative decision of the Commission. The entire argumentation proves a previously formed opinion with a base attempted to be built in time.

This explains marinating secret the documents of the Commission.

## I want to emphasize a range of actions of Yad Vashem which from my point of view suggest much bad will.

- a. For 3 years Yad Vashem refuses to discuss with me!
- b. The president Yad Vashem and the president of the Commission answer me that they do not receive in audience survivors of Holocaust!
- c. After 8 months of insistences, I was announced that the file does not include direct testimonies. I delivered personally the direct testimony of the two brothers (mine and my sister);
- d. The section chief delayed 3 years in presenting the file to the Commission Yad Vashem, afterwards I received a letter with many historical and translation errors, by which I was announced that the file was rejected. I was not allowed to be heard by the Commission;
- e. The Tribunal from Jerusalem demanded Yad Vashem to present a note with the conclusions of the Commission. This document contains several deliberate errors or generated by ignorance;
- f. Yad Vashem keeps secret the documentation made by 'famous historians' on which relies the decision of rejection;
- g. The Tribunal decided that I should go to Yad Vashem to check up personally the existence in the file of all documents sent by me. I noticed the absence of my testimony and of my sister which I have deposited 3 years ago. More than that, the Commission did not consider the additional documents, namely, the Expertise of the President of the Institute of Victims of Holocaust from

Romania, dr. Liviu Beriş and the Expertise of the Ministry of Culture of Romania, drawn up by dr. S. Iosipescu;

I regret that for such analysis one did not find a specialist in Israel or Romania who may know the history of Czernowitz and of the events passed there.

I believe that Yad Vashem has a special policy with respect to offering the title to some people original from Romania, policy which contrasts flagrantly with the special relations of friendship between Israel and Romania.

<u>IN CONCLUSION</u>: I insist in my demand of asking you to send me the name of historians and of other consultant specialists, as well as the full text of their argumentation.

Meir Shai

Haifa, January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011.

Annex no. 64.



....The Romanian people and the German people split up the administration zones among themselves, by then occupied by the Sowjets. The River Bug represented the borderline. By and by, the harsh approach of the Jewish people by the Romanian people diminished. In Bukowina especially, the regulations and rules existed only on paper. That way the Jewish people had a short sit-down. The circumstances in Bessarabien were considerably more complicated and worse.

20.000 Jews lived in Czernowitz. The threat of a possible deportation still existed. After the Russian troop withdrawal enabled the Rumanian people to return to Czernowitz, they were ordered by the German people to put up posters that announced the creation of a Jewish housing area. They had to leave the exclusive neighborhoods and were relocated to the slum in Czernowitz. The Ghetto of Czernowitz was established this way, although it only existed shortly. After the Romanian Popowicz was confirmed as mayor of Czernowitz life became easier for the Jewish people. Popowicz acted against the German attempt to deport the Jewish people to the conquered administration area Transnistrien. As the Romanian civil administration didn't act as rough on the Jewish people as the German civil administration many Jewish people had the opportunity to leave the Ghetto using false certificates of baptism and to then move to other Romanian regions. Samendrea, the metropolitan of the Orthodox Church took advantage of the fact that he had Romanian friends, which were considered fascists and anti-Semites to improve the Jewish well-being. The priests who were subordinated to Samendrea received the confidential order to issue fictitious certificates of baptism to protect the Jewish people from the German people. The German people could not take actions against Christians in pretense unlike the general Governement. Simedrea assured himself the approval of the orthodox Patriarch Nikodemus, who repeatedly stood up for the Jewish people in front of prime minister Antonescu....

Die Rumänen und die Deutschen teilten sich die bis dahin von den Sowjets besetzten Verwaltungsgebiete, der
Fluß Bug war die Grenze. Mit der Zeit aber schwächte
sich die scharfe Vorgangsweise gegen die Juden durch die
Rumänen ab, besonders in der Bukowina bestanden die
Gesetze zum Teil nur auf dem Papier. So hatten die Juschlechter waren die Zustände in Bessarabien.
20.000 Juden lebten in Czernowitz. Das Gespenst der
Deportation war noch keineswegs gehann.

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Deportation war noch keineswegs gebannt. Als der Abzug der Russen den Rumänen die Rückkehr nach Czernowitz erlaubte, ließen sie auf deutschen Befehl Plakate anbringen, die die Gründung eines jüdischen Wohnbezirkes ankündigten. Die Juden mußten die vornehmen Wohngegenden räumen und in das Armenviertel von Czernowitz übersiedeln. So wurde das Czernowitzer Ghetto errichtet, das allerdings nur kurze Zeit bestand. Als der rumänische Bürgermeister Popowic sein Amt eintrat, wurde das Los der Juden erträglicher. Popowic widersetzte sich vor allem den deutschen Versuchen, die Juden in das wiedereroberte Verwaltungsgebiet Transnistrien abzuschieben. Da die rumänische Zivilverwaltung mit Juden nicht so streng verfuhr wie die deutsche, bestand für viele die Möglichkeit, mit Hilfe von falschen Taufscheinen das Ghetto zu verlassen und in andere Gebiete Rumäniens zu ziehen.

Der Metropolit der orthodoxen Kirche, Samendrea, der Freunde auch unter den rumänischen Faschisten und Antisemiten hatte, nützte gerade diese Beziehung zum Wohle der Juden. Die ihm unterstehenden Priester erhielten den geheimen Auftrag, Juden fiktive Taufscheine auszustellen, um sie dem Zugriff der Deutschen zu entziehen, die hier, anders als im Generalgouvernement,

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gegen Scheinchristen nicht vorgehen konnten. Samandrea sicherte sich auch die Zustimmung des orthodoxen Patriarchen Nikodemus, der sich beim rumänischen Ministerpräsidenten Antonescu wiederholt für die Juden einsetzte.

Die Rumänen hatten die Drohung »über den Bug werfen« erfunden und auch oft verwirklicht. Der Bug trennte die rumänischen Verwaltungsgebiete von den deutschen. Sooft ein rumänischer Kommissar eine jüdische Gemeinde erpressen wollte, sprach er vom »Bug«. Die Juden wußten, was das bedeutete. Auf der anderen Seite des Bugs gab es Lager, in denen regelmäßig Vernichtungsaktionen durchgeführt wurden. Die rumänische Polizei sorgte dafür, daß es der deutschen Vernichtungsmaschinerie nie an Opfern mangelte.

Einigen Todgeweihten gelang die Flucht nach Czernowitz. Sie erzählten von den grauenhaften Geschehnissen im Herbst des Jahres 1941, als die Einsatzkommandos und besonders das Sonderkommando »R« der volksdeutschen Mittelstelle in Transnistrien wütete. Immer wieder berichteten sie von Massenhinrichtungen und sadistischen Grausamkeiten. Zahlreich waren die Namen der Lager: Brazlav, wo der Bug ein Knie bildete, Trihati, Ladejin, Cetvertinowka, Tepliz, Berschad. In diesen Gebieten gab es mehrere deutsche Siedlungen, in denen Juden wohnten. Die Volksdeutschen warteten nicht auf die SS, sie bildeten freiwillige Einheiten, die die weiße Armbinde mit dem Hakenkreuz trugen, und ermordeten die Juden in eigener Regie. Als die Rumänen Grupnicht im Regat (Altreich)

gegen Scheinchristen nicht vorgehen konnten. Samandrea sicherte sich auch die Zustimmung des orthodoxen Patriarchen Nikodemus, der sich beim rumänischen Ministerpräsidenten Antonescu wiederholt für die Juden einsetzte.

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Annex no. 65.

#### The Speech of Pope John Paul the 2nd at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, on 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2000<sup>1</sup> – (Papal Documents 1978-2000)

. . .

The word of the Psalm resounds in my heart:

"I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind; I am like a broken vessel.

For I have heard the slander of many, terror is on every side; while they took counsel together against me, they schemed to take away my life.

But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD, I say, "You are my God."

1. In this place of memories, our whole souls aspire to stillness. To silence, in which we recall. To silence, in which we try to give a sense to the memories which assault us. To silence, as we don't have appropriate words to bemoan the horrible tragedy of Soah....

I have come to Yad Vashem to express my pious respect to the millions of Jews whom, being ripped of everything, but first of all their dignity, have been killed in the holocaust. More than 50 years have passed since then, but the memories remain.

Here, like at Auschwitz and many other places in Europe, we are horrified by the echo of the sounds of pain. The mass of men, women, and children – shouts to us from the deep of the abominations they lived in. It is impossible not to pay attention to their painful shout! Nobody here can forget or ignore the events that happened.

**2.** We want to remember. But we want to remember tendentiously for what happened to the millions of victims of Nazism never to happen again.

Why has the human being become capable to desecrate the human? Because it gave up God... the fact that here, Yad Vashem expresses the gratefulness of Israel towards the "righteous among men", those whom heroically rescued the Jews putting they own lives at risk in most of the cases, proves the fact that even in time of the darkness there still are some flashing lights...

**3.** ... Let's recall, but free of any feeling of revenge, and not to arouse the desire of hatred. For us, remembrance means that we are praying for peace and justice, and that we devout our entire being to them. Only a world that is calm and good towards everybody is capable to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past and its unfortunate sins.

i II. János Pál megnyilatkozásai, Pápai Dokumentumok 1978-2005 [The Lectures of Pope John Paul the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Papal Documents 1978-2005], Vol. III (Lectures, letters, messages), Ed. "Az Apostoli Szentszék Könyvkiadója", Budapest, 2005, pg.238-239;

As bishop of Rome and the descendent of Saint Apostle Peter, I assure Jewish people of the fact that the Catholic Church – and not for political reasons, but motivated by the evangelic impulse of justice and love – deeply regrets the manifestations of hate, persecution and anti-Semitism promoted by the Christians, anywhere and anytime in the world. The Church rejects any form of manifestation of anti-Semitism, because it denies the image of the Creator, present in every human being.

**4.** In this place of recollection, I pray that our pain for the sufferings the Jewish people has gone thought during the 20th century tragedy to lead to new relationships between Jews and Christians. Let's build a new future, without any feelings against Jews in the Christian hearts and without any feelings against Christians in the hearts of Jews, but instead to hold mutual respect towards those who praise the only God and Creator and in faith accept Avram as parent.

People have to be receptive to the warnings which come from the victims and the survivors of the Holocaust. Here, at Yad Vashem, the memory is inspirited and animates the souls. That is why, our lips shout: We have heard the slander of many, terror is on every side.

But I trust in You, o Lord, I say, "You are my God."

[the translation of the present work]