

**PROFESSOR IOAN SCURTU AT OCTOGINTA QUINQUE ANNIS –
MEMORIALISTIC AND CONTEMPORARY HISTORY
(STUDIED AND LIVED)**

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Professor Ioan Scurtu, founding member of the Romanian Academy of Scientists (and former president of the Section of Historical and Archaeological Sciences) – born in Neamț County 85 years ago, on the date of N. Iorga's assassination (November 27, 1940), is among the first-rate scientific personalities that the country can be proud of; and for our Historiography, no less, the celebration of the age of the scientist with such a vast editorial production – the most authorized, with scientific validation, researcher of the interwar period, and not only, of Romania –, with national-cultural attitudes and firm patriotic conduct – constitutes a professional duty that springs from the soul of every servant of Clio, of the Romanians who have appropriated national history – especially that of the past century –, from the books of the one to whom, for many, he was a precious mentor.

As the venerable historian – who has also held various high-level positions, such as director of the “Nicolae Iorga” Institute of History, general director of the National Archives, inspector general in the Ministry of Education, president of the Romanian Society of Historical Sciences, dean of several History faculties, founder and director of historical publications, PhD supervisor of dozens of young researchers –, recently summarized (on September 9th), “By the summer of 2025, I had published 52 books of my own, 59 as coordinator and co-author, 108 as collaborator, 18 of which in languages of international circulation. In addition, there are over 500 studies published in specialized journals. In 2002, Ars Docendi Publishing House included 48 of these in the volume: Ioan Scurtu, *Studii de istorie* [Historical Studies] (573 pp.)”.

We recall, in this anniversary review, for the informative benefit of the hurried citizen – but interested in the intellectual and professional path of great contemporary personalities – just a few of the titles, almost all of which constitute pioneering works in our Historiography:

– books by a single author: *Din viața politică a României. Întemeierea și activitatea Partidului Țărănesc (1918-1926)* [From the Political Life of Romania. The Foundation and Activity of the Peasant Party (1918-1926)] (1975: 198 pp.), *Viața politică în România [Political life in Romania]. 1918-1944* (1982: 336 pp.), *Din viața politică a României (1926-1947). Studiu critic privind istoria Partidului Național-Țărănesc* [From the political life of Romania (1926-1947). A Critical Study on the History of the National Peasant Party] (1983: 552 pp.), *Contribuții*

privind viața politică din România. Evoluția formei de guvernământ în istoria modernă și contemporană [Contributions on the Political Life of Romania. The Evolution of the Form of Government in Modern and Contemporary History] (1988: 688 pp.), *Istoria Partidului Național-Țărănesc* [History of the National Peasant Party] (1994: 488 pp.), *Istoria României în anii 1918-1940. Evoluția regimului politic de la democrație la dictatură* [History of Romania in the Years 1918-1940. The Evolution of the Political Regime from Democracy to Dictatorship] (1996, 252 pp.), *Viața cotidiană a românilor în perioada interbelică* [Daily Life of Romanians in the Interwar Period] (2001: 280 pp.), *Istoria românilor în timpul celor patru regi, 1866-1947* [History of Romanians During the Four Kings, 1866-1947], 4 vols, (2001: 236+198+338+224 pp.), *Revoluția română din decembrie 1989 în context internațional* [The Romanian Revolution of December 1989 in International Context] (2006: 364 pp.), *Istoria Românilor de la Carol I la Nicolae Ceaușescu* [History of Romanians from Carol I to Nicolae Ceaușescu] (2010: 280 pp.), *Un istoric pe meridianele lumii* [A Historian on the Meridians of the World] (2013: 278 pp.), *Tezaurul României de la Moscova. Note și amintiri privind activitatea Comisiei Comune româno-ruse (2004-2012)* [The Treasure of Romania in Moscow. Notes and Memories on the Activity of the Romanian-Russian Joint Commission (2004-2012)] (2014: 368 pp.), *Povestiri adevărate. Memorii* [True Stories. Memoirs] (2022: 612 pp.), *Martor la impunerea, evoluția și prăbușirea regimului socialist totalitar din România (1957-1989)* [Witness to the Imposition, Evolution and Collapse of the Totalitarian Socialist Regime in Romania (1957-1989)] (2024: 248 pp.); and very recently: *Istoria de după 1989 prin experiența unui istoric* [The History After 1989 Through the Experience of a Historian] (2025: 326 pp.);

– co-author: *Istoria României între anii 1918-1981* [History of Romania between 1918-1981] (1981: 376 pp.), *Actul de la 23 August 1944 în context internațional* [The Act of 23 August 1944 in an International Context] (1984: 626 pp.), *Titulescu and the Peace Strategy* ((1984: 646 pp.), *Democrația la români (1866-1938)* [The Democracy among the Romanians (1866-1938)] (1990: 248 pp.), *Anul 1940. Drama românilor dintre Prut și Nistru* [The Year 1940. The Drama of the Romanians Between the Prut and the Nistru] (1992: 192 pp.), *Istoria Românilor în secolul XX (1918-1948)* [History of Romanians in the 20th Century] (1999: 687 pp.), *Istoricul Academiei Oamenilor de Știință din România (1935-2009)* [History of the Romanian Academy of Sciences (1935-2009)] (2009: 214 pp.), *Istoria Academiei de Științe din România. 1935-1948* [History of the Romanian Academy of Sciences. 1935-1948] (2014: 288 pp.), *Istoria Asociației Oamenilor de Știință din România. 1956-1996* [History of the Romanian Association of Scientists. 1956-1996] (2016: 360 pp.);

– coordinator/author (thematic syntheses, collections of documents and/or studies, several titles are translated into languages of international circulation or/and

published abroad): *Istoria Basarabiei. De la începuturi până în 1994 / 1998 / 2003* [History of Bessarabia. From the beginnings to 1994] (1994: 412 pp.; additional editions – 1998: 370 pp., 2003: 606 pp.), *Minoritățile naționale din România. 1918-1938* [National Minorities in Romania. 1918-1938]. Documents], 4 vols. (1995-1999: 782+680+606+516 pp.), *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta în România. 1927-1943* [Ideology and Right-Wing Formations in Romania. 1927-1943], 7 vols. (1996-2009: 680+304+364+444+414+412+452 pp.), *Tratatul de Istoria Românilor* [Treatise on the History of Romanians], vol. VIII: *România întregită (1918-1940)* [Unified Romania (1918-1940)] (2003: LIII+856 pp.), *Marea Unire din 1918 în context European* [The Great Union of 1918 in a European Context] (2003: 448 pp.), *Structuri politice în Europa Centrală și de Sud-Est (1918-2001)* [Political Structures in Central and South-Eastern Europe (1918-2001)], 2 vols. (2003: 238+328 pp.), *România. Marea Unire* [Romania. The Great Union] (2008: 120 pp. – with editions in French, English, German, Italian, Spanish).

Within the space of this biannual journal, we revive the interest of the readers by highlighting a few landmarks from an extremely valuable memoir opus (published in Iași three years ago in a prestigious collection by Junimea Publishing House – *Historia Magistra Vitae*), entitled *Povestiri adevărate. Memorii* [True Stories. Memoirs] (612 pp.).

The structure of the volume is as follows: after a short accompanying Word, six chapters follow (thematically subsegmented and accompanied by numerous photo images).

They are:

I. From childhood to maturity – “The years passed like long clouds on the roads”: a) The village, grandparents, parents, b) Childhood. Pupil in the commune of Dochia, Neamț county; High school student: a) From Bacău to Piatra Neamț, b) My teachers, c) Life as a student, d) The maturity exam.

II. History student – From Dochia to Bucharest; My teachers – courses, seminars, practical activities, Exams and more exams, Politics and history; Student life; State exam. Distribution.

III. Colleague with former teachers – Change of distribution. Accommodation to the new situation; Attentive to political developments and official assessments regarding the history of Romania: a) The April 1964 Declaration, b) New interpretations regarding the history of the Romanians; Doctoral student and assistant professor: a) Beginning of scientific activity, b) Enrollment in doctoral program. Assistant professor, c) Marriage. Daily life; Involvement in scientific life. In the foreground – doctoral thesis: a) Participation in debates, scientific sessions, etc., b) Elaboration of doctoral thesis, c) Doctor in history.

IV. University lecturer – Teaching activities: a) Courses and seminars, b) Other activities, c) Visit to the D.P.R. Korean [1972]; Scientific research work: a) Political context, b) Effort to publish scientific papers; Inspector general in the Ministry of Education and Training: a) Competition for the position of associate professor, b) Foreign policy – topic in political education; International Congress of Historical Sciences (August 1980); Daily life

V. University lecturer – Internal context – time of restrictions; Teaching and related activities; Valorization of scientific research: a) Political campaign to falsify history; b) Historiographic contributions – confrontation with representatives of the regime; In the history commissions of the Ministry of Education and beyond; Everyday life – between restrictions and normality.

VI. Following, as a historian, the collapse of a political regime – Preliminaries; The accumulation of political functions; A catastrophic decision: the early payment of Romania's external debt; Payment of external debt. Worsening of the internal situation; Romania's international isolation; The inevitable collapse of the regime. Romania and the domino principle.

The precious documentary volume – which should, in my opinion, be on the desk of anyone who wishes to become acquainted, *sine ira et studio*, with the stages and content of contemporary history, from students, to journalists and opinion leaders, teachers and politicians, or simple lovers of Clio – is conceived in a special way; namely, it combines memoirist notes with the insertion of documentary “certificates”, which makes it far exceed its status as a simple memoir – it is a true compendium of the history of the last seven decades.

In this short material from the documentary group dedicated to Professor Ioan Scurtu, we present the testimonies below – with an excerpt, clarifying of the honest and truthful historian, from the end of the accompanying Word:

“I referred to what I saw and experienced, with my perception at the time, but I considered it necessary to include some clarifications in square brackets [...], regarding the documentary attested reality, which was not known to me at the time, so that readers can realize that between visible history (propaganda) from those years and the real one (scientifically studied) is often a big discrepancy. This way they will understand how my generation lived and achieved itself professionally”.

The avatars of the publication in post-war Romania of the first book on the history of a political party:

“After the negative responses from the four publishing houses, I complained to my former assistant, Nicole C. Niculescu, who became editor-in-chief of the Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House, in the hope that she would help me publish the first book after 1944 on the history of a political party in Romania. He replied: «The answer received is based on a directive of the Propaganda Section of the Central Committee of the PCR; you will not be able to publish a book with this

title before the history of the PCR appears». Deeply disappointed, I asked him to give me a suggestion. He specified: «All editorial plans are approved by the Propaganda Section; you must give it a title that does not raise problems, for example *Din viața politică a României* [From the political life of Romania]».

I accepted the suggestion, but I did not I could address the same publishing houses. I learned about the existence of Litera Publishing House, which published books under the direction of the author. The cost was set according to the number of pages. As a result, from the 800 pages of the doctoral thesis I made a synthesis that, typed by Aurel Dârnu, had 265 pages. In February 1975 I went to the headquarters of Litera Publishing House, located in Casa Scânteii, the building on the right. I talked with the director Gheorghe Buzatu (he was not related to the historian Buzatul from Iași), who agreed to “collaborate”. He called the chief accountant, who made an estimate on the spot, resulting in “around 13,000 lei”. Quite a lot, considering that my salary was 2,700 lei per month. I decided that this sacrifice was worth it, especially since I could pay in installments, the first being 400 lei. He told me that I could recover my money. From the moment it entered the bookstores, there was a six-month wait for distribution, after which the calculation was made: I would receive the money for the copies sold, and the rest would be returned to me. With the thought that not all the copies might be sold, I proposed a print run of 1,000 copies. The director agreed.

The writer Radu Albala was appointed as the book editor, a tall, blond, elegant gentleman with a bow tie. He showed great interest in the subject and within two weeks he wrote a positive report. He told me that he liked it very much, he had a few detailed observations that I resolved on the spot.

The Litera Publishing House included my work in the 1975 plan with the title *Din viața politică a României. 1918-1926* [From the Political Life of Romania, 1918-1926]. This publishing house printed literature books, which did not need the approval of the Propaganda Section of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, but they were sent to the Press Directorate. I waited about six months, after which Mr. Albala advised me to call “comrade Micu”, who had my book. I did so and he invited me to his place (the building behind the Academy of Economic Studies). Mr. Micu – short, bald and stocky – received me kindly. He told me that he wanted to meet me, he thought I was a former member of the Peasant or National-Peasant Party, but he noted that I was “a young man, raised under our regime”. The book is “courageous”, but “just in case”, I should quote from the Party’s Program. I told him that there was nothing about the Peasant Party in that program, but he insisted that “it had to be that way”. He asked me to “tame” some of the assessments towards Ion Mihalache and to avoid using the word Bessarabia, which was quoted 12 times; to also use “the province between the Prut and the Nistru”, people would understand at which territory I was referring to because the

cities of Chişinău, Soroca, Bălţi etc. appear. He promised to resolve the observations made and wished me success.

[Years later, when I had to deal with the pressure of the Muşat-Ardeleanu couple from the Propaganda Section of the Central Committee of the PCR, Mr. Micu's attitude, full of goodwill, always came to mind.]

The work returned to the publisher, with a publication permit. Together with Mr. Albala, I resolved the observations contained in the paper. I proposed to give it the subtitle *Întemeierea și activitatea Partidului Țărănesc (1918-1926)* [The Foundation and Activity of the Peasant Party (1918-1926)] and he agreed. The graphic designer János Bencsik asked me if I had a suggestion for the cover and I proposed the color green, depicting the field, but also the fact that the Peasant Party of Romania had been part of the Green Peasant International.

In the meantime, I borrowed money from my brother from Călărași and from my father-in-law, so on October 11, 1975, I paid the last installment. The manuscript was sent to the Printing Company "13 December" in Bucharest.

After it was printed, the Central Book Distribution Center informed the publishing house that my work could not be sent to bookstores because the cover was green, the color of the legionnaires, the order had come "from above". Such an association had not occurred to me and I had to give explanations, specifying that the Green International was affiliated with the Third Communist International and that the legionnaires wore dark green shirts. My arguments were partially accepted, in the sense that the green color was maintained, but a much lighter one was made. As a result of this operation, I had to pay 2,500 lei for "labor plus materials".

In December 1975, the book *Din viața politică a României. Întemeierea și activitatea Partidului Țărănesc (1918-1926)* [From the Political Life of Romania. The Foundation and Activity of the Peasant Party (1918-1926)] entered bookstores. The technical box stated: «Work published under the direction of the author. Circulation 1,000 + 60»; price: 17 lei per copy. On January 21, 1976, I was called to the Central Book Distribution Center and I determined the cities where the book would be available in bookstores. I indicated the university centers and several county capitals.

A month later, I received a call from the Central Book Distribution Center and was told that all the copies had been sold. I received all the money and returned it to those who had lent it to me. The book aroused great interest. There were dozens of notes and reviews."

Example on the beginnings of cultivating the personality cult:

"In July 1989, on the occasion of the summer courses of the Society of Historical Sciences, held in Cluj-Napoca, an excursion was organized, on which occasion I visited Alba Iulia again. When I entered the Union Hall, I could not believe my eyes: it was dominated by a huge painting representing Nicolae Ceaușescu and Elena Ceaușescu, responding to the ovations of the crowd. In the

background of the hall, where on December 1, 1918, the presidium of the great National Assembly that voted for the Union of Transylvania with Romania had been located – headed by Gheorghe Pop de Băsești, the president of the Romanian National Party – was the bronze effigy of Nicolae Ceaușescu. In the display case, books dedicated to the Great Union, including three volumes signed by Nicolae Ceaușescu. I talked with a museographer, who told me that the room was arranged by a team from the Ministry of Culture and Socialist Education, who came from Bucharest.

The political tricksters [*politrucii*] sought to accredit the idea that Nicolae Ceaușescu had an important role on August 23, 1944. [In his memoirs, Ion Traian Ștefănescu reported that he was present at a discussion in 1973 between Chivu Stoica, Gheorghe Stoica and Nicolae Ceaușescu: «Let comrade Ceaușescu say that you are stubborn as always, Chivu!» – thundered Gheorghe Stoica (an elderly man with impaired hearing and who spoke, consequently, very loudly). « – I don't know, I wasn't there, I didn't have personal contacts with the Royal Palace», Ceaușescu replied. « – How could you not be there... You were there!» replied the brave illegalist. « – Yes, yes, yes, that's right», the other Stoica, Chivu, intervened, forgetting about the altercation between them. This time, annoyed, Ceaușescu cut off their conversation: « – You know better than me where I was on August 23rd... I wasn't in Bucharest, so I can't confirm what you want... You're the best! Let the historians have their say».

Time passed and, in July 1989, Constantin Olteanu, as secretary of the CC of the PCR, received a phone call from Manea Mănescu for a discussion about the activities dedicated to the day of August 23rd, 1944, on its 45th anniversary. On this occasion, Mănescu told him that «we can't talk about such an important event without mentioning the role of the comrade». C. Olteanu reported this discussion to Ceaușescu, and he just said: «Good!», which meant that he did not reject Mănescu's idea.]

Activities within the Romanian Historical Sciences Society:

“In September 1987 I participated in the celebration of the 30th anniversary of my high school graduation. I experienced the same emotion with which I entered this institution in 1954, when it was called «Boys' Middle School No. 1». Through the care of my colleagues of Piatra Neamț, from the high school we traveled to the balneoclimatic resort of Bălțătești where accommodation and meals were prepared. While we were going by bus to our destination, the driver turned on the radio and I was surprised to find myself listening to the program *Memoria pământului românesc*, where I had a consistent participation. Obviously, my «actions» increased, the result being that I had to give the «festive speech» at the dinner.

I organized my vacation in such a way that it was as varied as possible, but also to participate in the activities for which I was requested. Since 1970, I have

participated in all the summer courses organized by the Romanian Society of Historical Sciences during the students' and pupils' vacations. A series consisted of 40 students (teachers from pre-university education), with registrations taking place in April. There were many requests, so the principle was applied: "first come (applicant), first served (registered)". As a rule, the courses lasted ten days. Until 1974, the Ministry of Education provided transportation, accommodation and meals, and for the lecturer a substantial daily allowance. After this year, the ministry stopped funding, so the courses could not be held for two years. Since 1976, the Society has benefited from the support of the rector of the Pedagogical Institute in Suceava, Professor Vasile G. Ionescu (member of the Board of Directors), and then of the rector of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca, Professor Ştefan Pascu (president of the Society), who provided accommodation and meals at the dormitories and canteens for students. Also, through the relations of the two rectors, a consistent program of excursions (practical applications) was carried out. The students' contribution was less than half the cost of a ten-day vacation organized by ONT. For example, between July 26 and 31, 1987, I participated in the summer courses together with Paula /wife/ and Georgiana /daughter/. I paid 1,416 lei for the flight tickets Bucharest–Cluj-Napoca and return; 1,398 lei for excursions; 620 lei for accommodation and meals. In 1989 I went to Cluj-Napoca with Ionuţ/son/ and paid 566 lei for the Bucharest–Cluj-Napoca plane tickets, 70 lei for the meal card for me and 160 lei for Ionuţ (since he was not a member of SŞI), 625 lei for me and 1,000 lei for Ionuţ for the excursions, 191 lei for the train ticket for Ionuţ, who came to Bucharest alone, because I had to go to other activities.

(...) Each time I had presentations (along with other well-known academics – our note), I led debates and, above all, I talked to professors who came from all over the country, which allowed me to know firsthand the problems they were facing, their thoughts and hopes.

The courses were very lively, there was no inhibition in saying what resulted from historical documents, even if it contradicted party documents and higher-ranking instructions. In no year were there any shortages of lectures and debates on the history of Bessarabia and Bukovina. In 1989 – when the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution was celebrated – the evocation of this event was forbidden, as a result of the criticisms addressed by President Mitterand to Nicolae Ceauşescu. I knew that the magazine "Studii", edited by the RSR Academy, had prepared a special issue, but it did not receive approval from the Propaganda Section of the CC of the PCR to be printed. Nevertheless, I supported that a theme for the summer courses should be *The Great Revolution of 1789 and its teachings*. The presentations by professors Camil Mureşan and Pompiliu Teodor – who also spoke about Romanian-French friendship, were successful.

In the same year, I presented *Romania's Political-Military Situation Around the Historic Act of August 23, 1944*, in which I cited concrete data regarding the

abundance of food products given that the country had been participating in the war for three years and about the Hitler-Antonescu discussion of August 5, 1944, at which the Romanian state leadership requested and obtained that products exported to Germany be paid for in gold, so that on August 23, 1944, the National Bank of Romania had a reserve of 244.9 tons of gold. It is certain that the teachers were making comparisons with the current situation in Romania”.

The Systematization of Bucharest – a landmark plan approved by Carol II:

“Of course, it would be simplistic to assess that the years 1948-1989 were only marked by the destruction of some churches. It is a fact that during the years of socialism, numerous churches were built (especially in villages), historical monuments, including monasteries, were renovated. During my travels around the country, I read the inscriptions and history of some churches.

(...) The construction of the civic center of Bucharest became Nicolae Ceaușescu’s essential concern after the 1977 earthquake. I watched on TV the working meeting held in the former Royal Palace (the headquarters of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party was seriously damaged) with the builders and architects organized on March 22, 1977, 18 days after the earthquake. On that occasion, Nicolae Ceaușescu, without a suit and tie, spoke about the necessity the reconstruction of Bucharest.

It seems that this idea had been brewing in his mind for several years. Those around him claimed that Ceaușescu was impressed by the image of Paris and wanted to create such a modern capital in Romania. He requested a documentary, from which it emerged that the initiative belonged to Napoleon III, dissatisfied that Paris was a medieval city, with narrow and winding streets (...).

[I do not know if Ceaușescu learned that Napoleon III remained the most hated emperor of France for two reasons: he destroyed old Paris and was taken prisoner by the Prussian army following the war of 1870-1871.]

In Romania, there were several plans regarding the systematization and modernization of Bucharest, the most coherent dating back to the time of Carol II. [It is possible that the architects Nicolae Ceaușescu consulted presented this document to him, as the chief architect of the capital wrote about the meeting of March 22, 1977: «The “Comrade” presented a scheme for the reorganization of the city and especially of the center of the Capital, resuming a proposal based on a systematization plan of the Capital from 1935».]

I studied at the Academy Library the work *Planul director de sistematizare al municipiului București. Memoriu justificative* [Master Plan for Systematization of the Municipality of Bucharest. Explanatory Memorandum], signed by architects Duiliu Marcu, G.M. Cantacuzino, R. Bolomey, Ion Al. Davidescu, and engineer Teodor Rădulescu, published in 1934, from which I noted a few ideas: «The plan opens up the possibility of the monumentality necessary for a city that is meant to coordinate different tendencies of a nation and which is at the same time a royal

residence»; «Bucharest is *a national problem* (emphasis in the text – I.S.) on which the whole country must work together financially»; «The development of the capital is not just a communal problem, but a state problem»; «The state must subsidize the development of the capital with significant amounts»; «The project proposes the reunion of the two Chambers [of Parliament] in a single building, which would be located on *Arsenal Hill* (emphasis in the text – I.S.). The Parliament would thus be located on the most important hill in the center of the Capital. A beautiful garden with wonderful views of the city as well as interesting perspectives in many directions, then ramps and monumental access stairs would enhance this important building»; «In place of the current Chamber [on Patriarchate Hill], the higher church authorities could be installed». This «master plan» was approved by King Carol II, but times did not allow for its implementation.

What is certain is that what was built during Ceaușescu's time bears a striking resemblance to the proposals in that master plan. The main objective was the House of the Republic, also called the People's House, which would become the Palace of the Parliament – as in the 1934 plan. On June 28, 1984, I watched on TV the moment when its construction was inaugurated, when a steel cylinder was laid down containing a parchment signed by Nicolae Ceaușescu and Elena Ceaușescu, in order to “constitute a testimony for centuries of this great achievement” (...).

In order to build the civic center, all the buildings in the area of the former Army Arsenal were demolished. Some monuments were saved by moving them outside the buildable area. In December 1984, I learned from my former colleagues who worked at the State Archives that they were participating in the relocation of documents from the Mihai Vodă Monastery to the Militari neighborhood, and that the General Directorate would move to the building opposite Cișmigiu.

I went several times in October-November 1985 to see a miracle with my own eyes. The relocation of the Mihai Vodă Church and its bell tower. Engineer Eugen Iordăchescu allowed me to witness this operation, telling me that the church weighed almost 4,000 tons, and was to be relocated over distance of 289 m and with a level difference of 6.2 m. It slid along the rails at a speed of 2.3 m per hour. Through this ingenious method, the church was saved, but it was no longer on the hill that dominated Bucharest and it ceased to be an emblem of the capital.

[After 1989 I went to see the Mihai Vodă monastery again and I was disappointed and even outraged: the church and the bell tower were surrounded by 10-story blocks, so that they had no visibility. A similar method was used in the case of the *Sfântul Ioan Piață* church, which was moved between October 1895 and May 1896, under the direction of engineers Eugen Iordăchescu and Gheorghe Mijea, over a distance of 23 m, at an angle of 37 degrees – after which 10-story blocks were built on the left and right, so that it can only be seen from close range.]

During the years of Ceaușescu's "reign", 29 churches were demolished – some of them of historical value. After my arrival in Bucharest in 1957, I passed by some hundreds and hundreds of times (*Văcărești, Sfânta Vineri, Spirea Veche, Enei*). Also, civil constructions that were demolished should be mentioned: Brâncoveanu Hospital, Mina Minovici Medical-Legal Institute etc. The demolition of such buildings meant a loss for Romanian culture and civilization. Unfortunately, such acts were not unique. During the time of Carol I, several churches were demolished in order to build monumental buildings. I saw the marble plaque in front of the National Military Circle, where it is written that the church of the Sărindar monastery was located on that site. A similar plaque is in the courtyard of the CEC building – built on the site of the church of *Sfântul Ioan cel Mare*. By demolishing the *Sfântul Sava* Monastery (where the first Romanian school operated), the University Square was created, where the statues of Michael the Brave, Ion Eliade Rădulescu, Gheorghe Lazăr, and Spiru Haret were placed. For the widening of Brătianu Boulevard, the Corner Tower was demolished etc. etc.”

The “Selling” of Ethnic Germans and Jews – Realities and Myth

“Obsessed with the idea of quickly paying off Romania's foreign debt (debt announced to have been paid off in April 1980 – our note), Nicolae Ceaușescu imposed serious measures that seriously affected the standard of living of the population. After 1981, the overwhelming majority of Romanian citizens, regardless of nationality, suffered from restrictions on light and heat, the lack of basic necessities in stores and the introduction of food ration cards, the reduction of TV programming to two hours a day, the feeling that they were being followed by security, restrictions on granting visas to travel abroad, etc. etc.

Against this background, a special mood was created: Romanians wanted to emigrate to the West in order to ensure a decent living. We found that ethnic Germans and Jews – benefiting from the support of the German Federal Republic and, respectively, the State of Israel – were able to emigrate, gaining freedom.

Ceaușescu tried to stop this exodus, resorting to administrative and political measures, including financial ones. Many of those who requested to leave were highly educated professionals, whom Romanian society needed. On November 1, 1982, the decree of the Council of State was published regarding the obligations of people who request and are approved to permanently settle abroad to fully pay their debts to the state, socialist organizations and individuals, as well as to reimburse some expenses incurred by the state for schooling. This was taken into account that in Romania education was free, all students were given free textbooks from grades 1 to 12, many students received scholarships, benefited from free places in rest camps, and that as Romanian citizens they benefited from free medical care, etc. Following international protests, the Romanian government suspended the application of this decree but did not repeal it.

In order to stop the emigration process “individual discussions” were used. In April 1985, I attended a meeting held at the level of the Faculty Party Committee, at which a “comrade” (probably from the Securitate) assessed that there were many requests for the permanent departure of some Romanian citizens, which was contrary to the policy of the party and the Romanian state. He insisted that we must carry out “more intense political work” to determine them to give up this intention, to make it clear to them that their place is in Romania, the country where they were born and which provides them with all the conditions for professional achievement. The first secretary requested that those who had requested to permanently leave the country be invited to the BOB (Basic Organization Office of Romanian Communist Party), to discuss “tactfully and be convinced to withdraw their request”.

(...) Ceaușescu’s attempt to stop the emigration of ethnic Germans and Jews did not yield results. There was clearly a desire for them to escape the deprivations of life daily, but also an intense international campaign on this topic, carried out through the media, demanding that Romania respect human rights, including that of emigration.

[After 1989, it was made a point of saying that Ceaușescu “sold Jews and Germans” to get foreign currency. This is a simplistic and unilateral assessment. The documents attest that it was not Ceaușescu who demanded that Germans and Jews leave the country, but Germany, the USA and Israel who exerted pressure to allow them to emigrate.

The governments in Bonn, Washington and Tel Aviv insisted on making secret financial agreements in order to “redeem” those who were leaving Romania. Aiming to obtain certain amounts in foreign currency – to include in the fund for paying off the foreign debt – Ceaușescu accepted, reaching specific agreements. (...) It was only in 2011 that I was able to learn about the agreements concluded between Germany and the German Federal Republic, reading a massive volume (943 pages, with 468 documents) entitled “Recovery” Action. Security and German Emigration from Romania (1962-1989)” in which, based on concrete facts, it is categorically stated: “the insistence on starting these operations and on intensifying the pace of emigration came permanently from the representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany” and was carried out through the secret services of the two states. An annual quota of Germans who were allowed to emigrate and the ransom amounts that had to be paid to Romania were established. According to some calculations, in the decade 1978-1988 approximately 120,000 ethnic Germans emigrated; the amounts varied as follows: \$650 for an uneducated person, \$1,964 for a student, \$2,500 for a high school senior, \$3,298 for a college graduate, \$1,035 for a skilled worker.

A real exodus occurred in 1990, when 111,150 ethnic Germans left, although the dictatorial regime had been liquidated, Romania was returning to democracy and the motivation from the Ceaușescu era no longer existed. This fact

shows that there was a state of mind that went beyond the limits of a political regime.

The situation was similar regarding Jewish emigration, but with the apparent involvement of the governments of the two states. Based on the agreement between Romania and Israel, 40,577 Jews emigrated between 1968 and 1989, with the Romanian state receiving between 2,500 and 3,300 dollars per person. In fact, Israel paid lower amounts than those mentioned, given that it did not pay for children and pensioners. In 2002, Yosef Govrin, the former ambassador of the State of Israel to Romania /1985-1989; born in Cernăuți, in 1930/ provided statistics on the emigration of Romanian citizens of Jewish origin to Israel, from which it results that the emigration process was very intense in the first three years after the creation of this state; between 1948 and 1951, 118,899 ethnic Jews emigrated, while in the last three years of the Ceaușescu regime, only 4,645 of them emigrated. Analyzing over a longer period, it can be seen that during the time of Gheorghiu-Dej (1948-1964) 208,426 Jews emigrated, and during the time of Ceaușescu (1965-1989) their number was 58,426. This process accelerated after 1989, so that in the period 1990-1994 they left Romania for Israel. 94,616 citizens of Jewish origin.]

There were several hundred ethnic Romanians, perhaps even thousands, who officially went abroad as engineers, geologists, teachers, doctors, actors, athletes, etc., where they requested political asylum and never returned to Romania. Illegal border crossing and escape across the border, towards Hungary and Yugoslavia, to reach the West, was a widespread phenomenon after 1986”.