In all tales, the grandfather is always pictured sitting by the fireplace surrounded by his grandchildren and, as flames flicker and come to life, he tells them the story of his life.

There is no fireplace in our home and I have no grandchildren yet. I would like to share with them my whole life story, made up of many experiences and lived to its fullest, wish they could learn from it. All my life I have given, in one way or another, but to you, my grandchildren, there is no other way but this, allowing me to turn the pages of my memoirs. It is something that gives me great pleasure and the sensation of forgetting the small daily worries."

DAN DAVID PRIZE

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DAN DAVID
MY LIFE, MY DREAMS
1929

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I am an only child and was born in Bucharest, Rumania, on the 23rd of May 1929, at my parent's home at n°84 on Sfinti Apostoli street, which means Saint Apostles. I was a healthy fat baby weighing 4.5 kilos.

My mother - Alisa, for whom everybody used her nickname, Lizi, was a tiny woman. While she was giving birth, my father, Alfred, could not help but march nervously across the bedroom until even the doctor tried to come up with ways to get him to leave. "Could you please bring me my bag with all my various instruments?", he asked my father. But my father refused to move, understanding it was only a way to keep him busy and out of the bedroom.

Already at the age of one I was the cause of great concern for my parents, as my legs had taken a very round shape. My parents immediately took me to the doctors, who told them: "Your son is much too heavy. His 15 kilos are deforming his legs. He has to lose weight." At the age of one, I started my first diet and it would not be the last of my life. My mother had breastfed me until I was 3 months old, when I finished all her milk and was put on Glaxo, a very special, good-quality milk imported from Australia, this way turning me into a fat little baby.
Another reason for worry for the rest of the family was that I did not talk. My grandparents tried in every which way to teach me to speak at least a few words. One day, I was already 2 years old, I was standing at the window of our flat and saw a car entering the inner yard of our building and that was when my first word burst from my mouth "auho" (auto). Ever since, I have never stopped talking!

Like in all traditional bourgeois homes, I had a nanny, whose name was Berta Grundich and whom I loved very much. She remained with me until I was 7 years old. Berta was from Transylvania, the Saxon part of Rumania, where German was the spoken language. German was the first language I spoke. Today, my German is rather rusty, but it can still be understood.

I dearly remember my frequent visits with Berta to the public park, named after King Carol, where the leader in me was born. At the age of six, I had put together a group of children who were engaging in battles against another group of children. I was the group leader and even had a “right-hand man”, meaning a close and dedicated friend, Livio.

One of the reasons I loved Berta was because she allowed me freedom of movement. She did not ask obedience of me, she did not scold or warn me of the dangers in the many fights. She simply sat on the park bench, which one had to pay to use, read her book and let me return home full of scratches and bruises.
I also recall our lovely summer vacations on the Black Sea in Tekerghiol or at Berta's family's home, in the village of Cisnadie in Transylvania. I enjoyed pony riding in summer and sometimes ice-skating in winter. I was not attracted then by winter sports (and have remained so), disliking the cold weather.

At the age of 6, I received my first lesson for my conscience: We were at Berta's family country house, where there were lots of animals. Here I made friends with a little girl called Hildegarde, who had beautiful long blonde braids bouncing off her back. One day, I encouraged her to climb up an apple tree: "I am afraid this is forbidden", she said. I kept on insisting and encouraging her, even though she reminded me it was forbidden. We were caught. That same evening, as punishment, her grandfather took a twig and beat her with it. I felt bad since it had been my doing and I could not be punished for it.

I had to improve my knowledge of the Rumanian language. My father spoke to me in French, my mother and friends in Rumanian and Berta spoke to me in German. It was now time to go to school. At Poenarescu school I made a new friend, Puiu Rubinstein (who became an important composer). Livio went to another school and we lost sight of each other. When we did not study as we were supposed to, I too was among those children who received the teacher's rod on their palms, and my loyal friend Puiu often tried to save me from this punishment, asking the lady teacher to forgive me.
We still have today, in our home, a beautiful picture of my maternal great grandfather, David Grunberg, who was a very good-looking man with a thick black beard. He was a scholar in the Torah and Talmud and he had dedicated his life to study and teach the Holy Books at his father-in-law’s home, until his father-in-law went bankrupt. He was then forced to enter into the business world. It consisted, in his small town of Moldavia, Moinesti, of bringing from the nearby mountain forests, heavy trunks of wood, transforming them into boards, construction material, furniture for resale. He had 17 children (with one wife); he remained a personality with great authority and many people approached him with the title of "Honourable Rabbi".

My grandmother, Gisela, was one of those 17, blessed children. She married Nathan Goldschlagler. Nathan continued dealing with his father in law’s woodwork business and was successful. Nathan and Gisela had two daughters, my mother Alisa and my aunt Otilia, whose nickname was Tilica.

My aunt Tilica studied at Cambridge and was an English teacher in Bucharest. She is the one who taught me English. I was the youngest but not the brightest of her students. This was perhaps due to the “5 o’clock” story: I still remember the non-electric brown refrigerator at the kitchen entrance, in which blocks of ice, brought to our door by a horse carriage, had to be placed every morning during the summer. My aunt Tilica kept in it, her reserved delicious chocolate cookies, which were called "5 o’clock". I have had a sweet tooth since the day I was born and I could be very creative whenever I was near that brown refrigerator.

Slowly but surely the amount of cookies would diminish, making my aunt angry and my forgiving and loving mother had to try calming her down.

The photo hereafter shows her group of Jewish students in 1941, as she was no longer allowed to teach to non-Jewish students. On my right, first my cousin Felicia Rapaport, my cousin Serge Zimmer and then composers and musicians, Edgar Cosma and Theodore Cosma.
In 1942, aunt Tilica had married Alexander Blumenfeld – Sandu, a small, very bright Jewish man, brilliant bridge player, and lawyer by profession.

My cousins Serge and Carlo Zimmer were also on the maternal side, great grandchildren of David Grunberg, while on the paternal side, their grandfather was Carol Zimmer, who created a big industry in Rumania of oils, soaps and similar products and lived to a long age through two world wars, to see his property nationalised by the Rumanian Communist Regime. Carlo died very young, following a rare illness, while Serge is living happily in Canada, with his enchanting large family. Isidor, their father, was a big fan of Napoleon, passion which a few years later I started to share.

Felicia Rapaport was also my second-degree cousin and also a great-grandchild of David Grunberg. Her father, Marco Rapaport, married Carol Zimmer’s daughter, so she was double cousin to Serge and Carlo.

My paternal grandfather and his brother were called Simon David Boxangiu and David David Boxangiu. David David left Rumania for Switzerland at the end of the 19th century and started working in the field of jewellery and manufacturing watches in Neuchatel in Geneva. According to the fashion of that period, they changed their surname to the German sounding Goldenthal, and so they became David and Simon Goldenthal.
My father studied at the Engineering Polytechnic in Zurich and graduated with the highest votes. I clearly remember his diploma proudly displayed at home. In 1919, immediately after graduating, he had to leave Zurich because his love affair with the Dean's wife had been discovered and caused a great scandal. He arrived in Bucharest and began a career as engineer with the metallurgic Vulcan company. He got engaged to Renutza Sanielevici, a beautiful young woman from a very respectable family; her father was a very well-known professor. However, at the same time, my father had a very passionate affair with Lizi's and Tilica's nanny. In order to reach her room at night, he would climb over Lizi's window. Lizi, who would not yet be asleep, would stare at him wide-eyed, happy to be, as a child, an accomplice to the good-looking adult.

When she finished high school, Lizi wished to study medicine and to go to university in general. Her mother however put a categorical veto to it. Lizi secretly broke her mother’s veto, but only partially; she completed her studies, receiving a doctorate in philosophy (less years of studying than medicine).

When, in 1927, Lizi turned 22, a matchmaker came to her parents' home and started speaking about a brilliant, young engineer from a good family. Lizi knew who this young man was, he was the one she had fell in love with during his visits to her nanny's room.

Lizi and Alfred married in 1927, going on honeymoon to Vienna and Paris. In Paris, they visited the family of Alfred’s uncle, Micu Zipper, who had left Rumania at the beginning of the Century. Micu was the father of Jacqueline, Evelyn and Claude Zipper and the grandfather of Francis and Regine Wahl, with whom closer relations would be re-established many years later.

The economic crisis of 1929 left my father without work but, fortunately, we could continue to live in my grandmother's big flat, where two bedrooms as well as a room for the nanny were at our disposal.

My grandmother Gisela and her brother were not very religious people, but they still respected tradition and I well remember the beautiful Seder evenings with lots of participants, where I had the important mission of finding the Afikoman, a piece of Maza, the bread without yeast, which was eaten during the 8 days of the Passover Feast, in
remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt. As the youngest member of the family, I also asked the four questions: why is this evening different from all other evenings? On the other hand, in December, my nanny put a small Christmas tree for me in my room and I was very pleased with the presents I found beneath it.

At school, the children were requested to make the sign of the cross, before the start of the lessons; my parents explained to me that I would not do it, but instead stand quietly in respect for the others.

My father was a bright, intelligent person who spoke four languages fluently. He read a lot, had a taciturn character and did not enjoy other people’s company. When I was very small, my father dedicated little of his time to me, but as I grew up he shared his books with me and one day he said: "When I die, all these books will be yours", to which I replied "When will you die?". The relationship with my mother was very warm, and I enjoyed making up nicknames for her, which I would tell her while kissing her affectionately.

I still today distinctly remember how, between 1936 and 1938, my father and I followed the Spanish Civil war. We were on the Republicans’ side and we passionately collected every piece of written information from the newspapers and followed the various battles on the maps.

In 1936, my father finally obtained a very good position. He became the managing director of the property of a very important French family, Montesquieu Fezensac and Fancigny Lucinge, whose property included a brick factory, lots of woods and a timber factory. My father had at his service a car with a driver, Petrica. It was a great luxury for that time. The car was not really big, but the backseat (where I usually sat) roof could be opened, which was something I enjoyed enormously.

I was only 7 years old when I started my first business. I asked Petrica to buy me cigarettes on his various trips away from the big city, as they were cheaper in the small towns outside Bucharest, and I then sold them in Bucharest, sharing the profits with Petrica, my new partner.

Berta, my nanny, had a friend who was the nanny of another little boy called Tutu Iancu. When we first met, we were both two young boys aged 6 and 7 and we remained close friends ever since, even if the paths we have encountered in life have sometimes led us in different directions.
Although then we did not study at the same school, I still became close to him. To me, his parents seemed much more severe than mine, but I loved them and his cousins, and especially his beautiful sister Calila.

There is a special warm part in my heart reserved for Tutu. At home, I still have the photographs of the events we shared together, the Purim parties, where I am dressed like a gypsy girl selling popcorn or another year, in an elevator-boy costume.

I was sent to the Bossuet French school to improve my French and please my father's employer. I disliked it at the beginning. My writing was a disaster and I needed private lessons. A minute, French woman, Mrs. Grigorescu, and her husband (a distinguished elegant Rumanian gentleman, Mr. Grigorescu) gave me private lessons to improve my French. My parents were also very demanding and I still remember the day we were about to leave for a lovely trip and they demanded that I finish a chapter in French history - before any pleasure. The subject was French history of many years ago and I still remember the text: "Il y a mille ans.....".

That same year, for Christmas, 3 months after I joined the school, I became the best pupil and was given a beautiful book, the “General Dourakine”, by the Comtesse de Ségur. I read it very fast and became a bookworm for French teenage literature. I started using all my savings from pocket money and from the cigarettes business to buy first all the books of Comtesse de Ségur: “Les petites filles modèles”, “Les malheurs de Sophie”, etc. I then went on to reading Jules Vernes, Jean de la Hire, Louis Boussenard and many others.

As a Christmas present, I received from my parents a subscription to two weekly French comics magazines: Mickey and Robinson.
My parents could finally afford to rent our own flat in the centre of town, in Vasile Lascar n. 6, on the fifth floor, and we no longer needed a nanny. My mother walked me to school every morning, a half hour walk, and only when it would be very cold, we would take the streetcar.

My best friend at school, Paul Mathieu, the son of the Belgian Consul in Bucharest, often hosted me at his home and there I fell in love with the well-known Belgian sweet “Gaufres”, which I still love.

When Paul would come visit me, we specialised in messing up my room, playing with the many tin soldiers, which were my other passion after French literature. I remember one day my father's employer, Odon de Montesquieu Fezensac, was due to come visit us and my mother was in a frenzy to prepare a beautiful dinner and reception. To do my part, I collected all my soldiers and arranged them as if they were on parade, but the honourable visitor did not even bother to look in my room. I was deeply disappointed.

Another occasion I remember feeling disappointed over 70 years ago was once my father travelled to Paris and I had asked him to bring me back the soldiers of Napoleon’s beautiful Imperial Guard, with Napoleon himself on his horse and the tricoloured flag with the eagle, which my Zimmer cousins had. My father returned from Paris with a collection of plastic Cowboy and Indian soldiers and not with the requested Grenadiers. I anyway still played a lot with them. Over the years, I have kept this passion and, many years later, I happily shared it with my son Ariel. We created a beautiful French army and reconstructed various historical battles, many Napoleonic ones, from Austerlitz to Waterloo. We visited together various collector exhibitions. Our soldiers are now still in proud display in a glass cupboard, in order of rank, and among those are some original tin soldiers of Napoleon III, manufactured in 1860. Ariel and I like to think they still secretly carry out their own battles, as we are both too “grown up” to play those games, but maybe my grandchildren will.

In the summer of 1937, I did not return to Berta's country house, but joined a summer camp organised by a nice couple of educators, Medy and Lorenz Aronescu, she a very tiny woman and he a big-built, tall man. I took a real liking to this charming couple, who followed the educational theories of Adler and Weigel. We were treated as grown-ups. They did not use punishment but instead used a system of thinking and reasoning, helping us to freely draw logical conclusions from our actions. For example, if we did not finish the starter, it meant that we were full and therefore there was no need for the main dish. We could however indicate two dishes which we disliked or were allergic to. If for instance one of us started a quarrelled with another member of the group, the logical conclusion was that you did not want to be with the others, but preferred to be on your own and so it should be for the rest of the day.

In the mornings, we used to hike in the nearby mountain forests, whilst in the afternoons we had organised discussions on many subjects. One afternoon for instance, we discussed the internal configuration of the Earth. At that time, I was reading "Journey to the Centre of the Earth" by Jules Verne, and my thoughts and imagination flew into this author's world. Convinced that Earth was cold in its interior, I put forward very heated arguments to support it, against the opposite theory of the hot bubbling lava.
We also used to spend the afternoons in long games of monopoly and I was happy to win nearly all games, taking loans from banks, building yellow houses and red hotels on land I bought from the other players.

Summer of 1939, in Zamora, was my third and last summer camp with the Aronescus. We were taught how to bind books, all the necessary material was there and we worked on the books we brought from home. My dear cousin, Dinu Wecsler, was also there. A wonderful person who, years later, became a mathematics professor at the Sorbonne. If he were still with us, he would have recalled those days.

In 1940, Rumania underwent a great shock with General Antonescu's coup d'état, forcing the King to abdicate and leave for Portugal in exile. General Antonescu formed an alliance with the Germans and the King's son became a puppet in the dictator's hands. It was a situation similar to the Italian one, with Mussolini and Vittorio Emmanuele III.

My father was a lieutenant in the Engineering Corps of the Rumanian army, he was CHAIL HAHANDSA. In 1940, he was mobilised and stationed with his regiment in Basarabia, in a town called Tighina, where he was frequently hosted by its well-off Jewish citizens. Many years later, I discovered that among those who had hosted my father so nicely, there was the family of a Hanoar Hatzioni friend, Sadi (Sacha) Parpar.

Under pressure from Russian, German, Hungarian and Bulgarian governments, the Rumanian Government had to withdraw and give up part of the territories it had occupied during the First World War. From the moment of the agreement with the Russians, Rumania only had four days to withdraw from Basarabia, walking all the distance from the old border on the River Nistru to the new border on the River Prut. The Rumanian soldiers had to march through villages, with some inhabitants booing them. The high-ranking army officers told their soldiers that these were the communists' and the Jews' reactions. The atmosphere of resentment towards the few Jewish officers taking part to this return journey, made it an even more difficult journey for them. As soon as the troops returned to Bucharest, my father was dismissed from the Army, just as all the other Jewish officers and soldiers.

New racist laws were issued. My father was fired from his job with the Count and, to prevent ending up in a labour camp, he managed to find a job in the Statistics Department of the Jewish community. He also started writing scientific articles in several Rumanian newspapers, under a Rumanian pseudonym.
New heavy taxes were applied to Bucharest's Jewish citizens in support of the Rumanian Army and they were even requested to donate warm clothes so that the Rumanian soldiers serving in the cold Russian areas would be warm. Poverty was all over and many Jews were obliged to beg to make a living.

I was deeply moved when, one day, a very short man with a pair of spectacles riding on his nose knocked at our door. I knew exactly who he was: Ion Pribeagu, a famous satiric writer. The man read some of his works to us and when he was finished, asked for some money. We could not give him money, but instead shared our modest meal with him.

We, children, also suffered from the new racist laws. Public schools were closing their doors to Jewish children and, even though I had successfully passed with high votes all the entrance exams for the "Spiru Haret" college, I was not admitted to study there.

The Jewish community was allowed to organise its own schools, with the professional teachers that had been fired from public school, alongside some non professional teachers. Tutu and I were at the same school in 1940, at Grauer, and from 1941, at Cultura. We had to change our residence once more, moving from one flat to the other, from one room to another.

One of our good teachers at Cultura was the Latin teacher, Professor Blum. Unfortunately, with the passing years, most of the Latin language he inculcated in us disappeared. It helped me however, many years later, to learn Italian and Spanish more easily. We did not forget a funny episode when, during the lesson on "Julius Caesar's Battles", in a hot and excited pathos, Professor Blum read Caesar's letter to Ariovistus, the leader of the German tribes "If you dare cross the Rhine..." “I will slap you, you idiot”, but this time pointing his finger to a noisy pupil. For a moment, a deep silence fell over the classroom but then all of us, including our red-faced professor, burst out in laughter. Caesar would have certainly promised a battle between life and death and not a slap.

I loved history, it was my passion. The shadow of Napoleon was already over me in those years. Obviously I was very good at the French lessons, but Professor Calmanovici did not like me. When I tried to correct him in the middle of his explanations, he stopped me with a severe tone in his voice saying “Mr. Goldenthal, je vous en prie”. Generally, I performed very well in all humanistic domains, although not so well perhaps in mathematics and physics, even though I never confused Pytagora with Archimede. Our mathematics professor, Mr. Rechler, was also the general tutor of the class and kindly tried to help me as much as possible.

In the enclosed picture end of school year 1942, the tall person is me at the age of thirteen, while Prof. Rechler is in the middle of the group. In 1950, Prof. Rechler, who was a member of the clandestine Communist Party, changed his name to Zamfir, became the Colonel in charge of the Securitate Department, issuing exit permits to Rumanian Jews. I was never able to get an audience from him when I needed it in the '50s.
With the German lessons, I recalled some of the German I spoke as a child, but the problem was the difficult grammar, the verpfluchter; der, die, das articles, prepositions, etc. We were also especially interested in our German teacher, Mrs. Lupu, a round, pretty lady. One day after school, Tutu and I decided to follow her. We were not worried for her security, but simply wanted to follow with our eyes the movements of her body as she walked.

Some afternoons, I joined courses which Medy and Lorenz Aronescu were giving in their home, such as boxing and Greco-Roman wrestling. I was good at the wrestling, where I used to catch my adversary’s neck, who at a certain moment would collapse and ask for a break, but boxing was a different story. I was a young, tall and clumsy thirteen-year old weighing 67 kilos and one of the boxing partners, Cocutza Negrianu, small, thin, and very agile, made all sorts of movements to distract me and then hit me swiftly and strongly on my nose. He quickly backed off before I could react. I would every time leave Aronescu’s home with a swollen and bleeding nose.

In 1942, we could no longer stay at our flat in Vasile Lascar, which was nationalised and became Government property. We sold part of our furniture and put the rest into storage. We kept on moving from one address to another, from one room to the other, with only a few suitcases with our personal belongings. At the beginning of May, we moved into a very simple furnished small room, in which we were able to stay for a longer period. It was tight but even so, our difficult life was not as bad as that of other Rumanian Jews who had to go into war brigades, cleaning up the roads from snow, collecting garbage, or, much worse, those in the northern part of the country being deported to Transnistria.

I became friends with our landlord’s daughter, who was 17 while I was 13. It initially seemed to be a very innocent friendship. One evening, we climbed to the roof of the house where she tried, without much success, to teach me to dance: waltz, fox trot, tango. Slowly but surely, she began to give me more intimate lessons. It started with lending me a serious book on sexology. We were limited in our movements and could only allow ourselves to act quietly when my parents and her mother were not at home. She taught me quite a lot.

In May 1942, the preparations for my Bar Mitzvah began. In addition to our Hebrew lessons at the Jewish school, Mr. Schreiber gave me private lessons in Hebrew grammar, in putting the Tfilin and prepared me for reading the Torah. The ceremony
was modest, in a small synagogue in Atena street, in the presence of family members and friends. I have to confess that, after my Bar Mitzvah, I was not so assiduous in fulfilling my religious duties. I always felt, and I still strongly feel today, that I am a Jewish, but not an orthodox one.

Our family was very short of money. My father, fluently speaking French, English and Rumanian, was able to receive translation assignments, especially of scientific documentation, to be done at home and delivered under the name of a non-Jewish friend. My contribution was to walk to the publishing house, to take the new material and deliver the translated one. However, I wished to bring a more consistent contribution and I started giving private lessons to pupils having difficulties at school. I followed many subjects, especially French and I even sometimes dared give mathematics lessons. My pupils were sometimes older than me and I had to lie about my age, saying I was 16, but the problem started when they were studying in a higher class than mine and I first had to prepare myself on their level of material before teaching it. This obligation dramatically improved my own grades at school.

With the additional income from my father’s translations and my lessons, we were able, in 1943, to rent 2 rooms from a family who had a big apartment. In my room, I was able to mount the binding equipment, using the skills acquired from Aronescu. My book-binding was beautifully done, with leather covers and golden letters. I associated Tutu to the commercial part of this activity, to find people wanting to bind their own damaged books. We also purchased second-hand books in bad conditions, bound and resold them.

Food and other essentials were rationed. Each family received a number of coupons to buy them, the Jewish families less than the non-Jewish. We were able to add to those meagre rations a few free items now purchased also with the additional income from book-binding.

Bakeries were allowed to sell their products only once a week, on Tuesday. Choice was limited and I used to buy (with some of my earned money) some Pricomigdale, which is a dry cake made with almonds, sugar and flour. I still have a weakness for almond-based sweet.

Mr. Suchianu, my father’s friend, who also was involved in the translation work, had a free entry permit to all cinema halls. When delivering my father’s translations, I told him about my passion for the movies and he put at my disposal his permit, from Friday afternoon until Saturday evening. I would then go on a cinema spree, making the most
of it and seeing up to 5 or 6 movies, starting on Friday evening, followed by the Saturday matinees and afternoons until returning the permit to its rightful owner (fortunately, in our Jewish school, there was no school on Saturdays and Sundays).

Whatever time was left from my out of school obligations, was dedicated to my studies at Cultura and I was still able to be one of the best pupils of my class.

In the same summer of 1943, some of our age-class Jewish youngsters were summoned to Branesti, a small village 30 km from Bucharest, to collect medical plants. We slept at the village's school on the classroom floor. Each one of us brought his own blanket, and since we were tightly packed together, we used one blanket for two people as a mattress and the other to cover ourselves. In the evenings we killed time by telling stories, and my stories were mostly about my beloved hero, Napoleon Bonaparte. My colleagues however always pushed me to tell them about the love story between Napoleon and Josephine, more than about the battles of Marengo and Austerlitz. One of the members of our group, SM, started spreading the rumour that Tutu and I, while sleeping together under the same blanket, were doing dirty things at night. I reacted angrily and we obviously ended up fighting. Our group leader decided that both SM and I were wrong and we were both punished with kitchen work for 3 days, 3 days of peeling potatoes, washing dishes and cleaning-up.

I made a new friend at the camp, Harry, who was three years older than me. He told me that once we would have returned to Bucharest, he would invite me to a new experience, one he said I would remember for the rest of my life. That is how one evening, we set out for an area of town called “The Stone Cross”, heading for a particular one-story house. I felt anticipation rise in me, as Harry had told me it was a whore house. Once we arrived, Harry led the way in and I followed a little hesitantly, awed by the atmosphere surrounding us, not quite sure what to expect. We entered a large colourful lounge filled with women, some sitting, idly sipping a drink, watching us as we entered the room, others chatting in close groups. They stopped their chattering as we approached and turned to look at us, making us feel quite the centre of attention, although ours was equally riveted on them. One thing that immediately caught my attention was that they seemed to have more makeup on than actual garments. They started to line up in front of us and I could not really distinguish one from the other. All I could focus on at first was their bright red lipstick, heavily eye-shadowed eyes, cheeks with strong strokes of blush over a heavy layer of face powder. All that makeup made them look quite grotesque to me. But of course, in a whore house, it is maybe the rest of the picture that has to be taken in and which I also did.

I was told to choose a woman of my taste and, feeling embarrassed, I hastily chose one. She took hold of my hand and led me to her bedroom, where she proudly told me that, that same day, she had had a 14-year old client. My age! My height of course deceived her and made her think I was older. She started fussing over me, whispering words of love and affection, pulling me towards her. I guess it was all supposed to put me at ease and “prepare” me, but the truth is that it had the opposite effect! It only increased my feeling of uneasiness and I must say disgust. All I felt able to do, was to walk away, without fulfilling the “mission” that was expected of me. Harry was right about one thing, it was an half-lived experience I was never to forget. From that time, I have never been even remotely tempted to try paid love again.
In the following months, we were completely taken up by the preparation for our exams to pass from junior school to high school. To those exams was attached the name Capacitate (capacity). I was quite proud to pass the Capacitate examination with the first place.

At that time, my father taught me to play chess, and ever since I am a big fan of this challenging game. I played a lot of chess during my university years, then stopped playing for many years, being too busy playing the Dedem Automatica game. Only years later, during holidays at Club Med resorts, did I have the time to return to chess, to my great pleasure. As soon as I arrived in some resorts, I would immediately put an ad on the guest billboard for a chess opponent. When my son Ariel turned 9, I taught him the game and he became quite a good player. I will tell you the story of his participation to the Italian cadet championship at the right moment.

I can only add that nowadays, when I return home from a hardworking day, I find a lot of relaxation and peace in playing chess on the Internet with an opponent from any part of the world. When I make a mistake, the whole household witnesses my frustration and shouting and, when I win, satisfaction can be read on my face and additional points are added to my ELO rating.

End of 1943 and beginning of 1944, it appeared clear the Germans would have lost the war and the attitude of the Antonescu government towards the Jews started to soften. Those who had been deported to Transnistria were allowed to return.

In April 1944, the Anglo-Americans started bombing Bucharest and the oil fields north of the city. The first bombardment on April 4th caused many damages and deaths. At each bombardment, we went into the cellar of a nearby building, which we used as an air-bomb shelter. The old Carol Zimmer, who lived nearby, also joined us there and I remember how he would sit completely still for those few hours, watching us with reproachful eyes when we would move around impatiently.

During one of the bombardments, my grandmother Gisela suffered a heart attack. She could be taken from the shelter to the hospital only at the end of the air-raid alert. Fortunately, the doctors were still able to save her life. She still was a heavy smoker and logically was forbidden to smoke. However, she continued to smoke secretly, until she suffered a second heart attack and only then, did she find the willpower to definitely stop and live for many more years afterwards.
On 23 August 1944, the tide finally turned. Rumania's borders were under constant pressure from the Red Army, and it was clear that if General Antonescu didn't accept an armistice the country would be invaded. Antonescu, vain to the end and loyal to his alliance with Hitler, refused to yield. Young King Michael, reassured by an agreement with the allies and the support of a wide inter-Rumanian coalition, called General Antonescu to the Royal Palace in Bucharest. Upon his arrival the dictator was disarmed and arrested by the Royal Guard. Rumania announced that it was now shifting sides and supporting the allied forces.

The rumour spread within hours. It descended on our neighbourhood like a flock of birds, and a cheer rose from every courtyard and window. People were out in the streets, hugging each other, cracking jokes at the fascists' expense, singing. For a moment it was as if the days of fear were over. Fellow Jews were thinking about moving back into the homes they had been forced to leave. They were thinking of friends and relatives in Transylvania, Basarabia and Bukovina, who might now stand a chance of surviving the atrocities that their areas had been subjected to. A new dawn seemed to be rising but, as the next night fell on the cheery city, an all too familiar cry of sirens cut through the contented serenity, followed by the no less common sound of heavy shelling. This time, it was the Germans who were bombing us.

The betrayed Nazis had no mercy on Bucharest and their last burst of fury burnt the city hard and deep. During one of these bombings, when we were sitting in an improvised underground shelter, clinging close to each other, my grandmother suffered a heart attack. It took hours before the attack was over and we could get a doctor to see her. It was her second heart attack. After the first one she refused to give up on even one of her 60 daily cigarettes. After this second scare, she vowed to quit the bad habit. And yet, she never stopped pinching drags off visitors' cigarettes. She lived to be 91, regardless.

Tutu was watching the bombings from his observation post on the roof of his parents' flat on the 8th floor of a residential building. He watched the German bombers, the Stukas, emerge out of nowhere to punish Rumania for its "treason", focusing their rage on the Royal Palace and other public buildings in the city centre.

An entire family of new arrivals from Bukovina, who had escaped the invading Russian forces from Chernovitz to Bucharest and had settled in a hotel by the train station, was killed by the shells. Not one of them survived. Their youngest son was just my age, a primary school colleague of my new friend Berti. Somehow, it seemed more futile, more sad and senseless, to die in the last days of a war than in its midst; and these were indeed the very last days. After two
days of shelling the now allied Rumanian army took over the airports around Bucharest, and the *Stukas* disappeared. The war, as far as we were concerned, was over.

A new government was founded, led by nationalists, liberals, socialists and communists – practically, all the political powers, except for the fascists. Soon enough we were allowed to return to our homes, at least those of us who were lucky enough not to have had our old dwellings destroyed by bombs.

We were four sitting at the back of the class, Little Mielu, goodie-two-shoes Berti, who had only just arrived from devastated Bukovina, Tutu the son of Bucharest's most famous paediatrician, and I, always up to mischief. We were schoolmates, we were fifteen going on sixteen. After the fall of fascism, we were all welcomed to come back to the National School System, but this time we did not want to leave the Jewish school. If there was one thing we had in common with our parents in the divisive times to come, it was a deep suspicion towards the Rumanians, and a feeling that, as Jews, it would be difficult to become an integral part of Rumanian society. But while our parents concluded that, although we had to keep to ourselves to an extent, we still needed to aspire to blend into post war Europe, we, the younger generation, had different aspirations. One by one we joined a Zionist movement, *Hanoar Hazioni* ("The Zionist Youth").

Tutu was the only one whose parents were actively Zionists, and he was the first to join, encouraging us all to follow him. Both Dr. Iancu and his wife were Zionist activists, free spirited people who gave their children a liberal and less "bourgeois" upbringing. Tutu's father was a progressive *General Zionist* and his mother subscribed to *Mapai* (the Zionist Labour Party); his sister, however, ended up marrying a communist, so the house was always oozing with political debate.

Stefi remembers, to this very day, how amazed she was when she heard Tutu's older sister, one of Bucharest's famous beauties, casually tell her parents that she was going to spend the night at her boyfriend's. "Have a good time dear", was her mother's response. Stefi knew that she would never describe the scene to her own mother. But this is a story I heard later, when I met Stefi, and again, I'm telling first what belongs to later. The admiration that all our parents held for Dr. Iancu was the main thing that made them turn a blind eye on our *Hanoar Hazioni* activities, which they otherwise did not approve of much. The idea that we, good upper-middle class Jewish children, would waste our time getting all muddy in summer camps, in leaflet distribution, in sports and bonfires instead of getting on with our schooling was abhorrent for most of our parents. The dream that we actually intended to emigrate to Palestine and engage in agriculture in some Kibbutz was unthinkable for our families at that time.
Were we really Zionists? For Berti, the attraction of Hanoar Hazioni was more hormonal and social bonding. In other words, unlike school, which was boys-only, the youth movement had girls in it. Not just any girls, but girls in shorts, who would climb mountains, engage in sports and dance in the daily parties that we had in our ken (nest, meeting place).

I insist that there was far more ideology to it than Berti cares to remember, but I can't deny that soon enough my heart was devoted to one girl, the unchallenged queen: Dorotea. Dorotea was a year older than us, and she was already a group leader when we joined. She was a natural leader, beautiful, serious, conscientious, proud and well organized, and her conviction could win over the most sceptical of listeners. Dorotea's father met her mother in Rumania, when he was a young Polish student on his way to Palestine. He remained in Bucharest and married her. As a child, Dorotea was almost ashamed of being Jewish. Her home was more traditionally Jewish than any of my other friends', the holidays were celebrated and the kitchen was Kosher, but the family lived in a non-Jewish neighbourhood. Almost all of Dorotea's friends were upper middle class Rumanians, and she saw herself as a Rumanian patriot, proud of her King and country.

When the national anthem was sung in class Dorotea would close her eyes and sing loudly in her clear, pleasant voice, seeing in her mind visions of the beautiful Rumanian countryside and the beloved Monarch. Only one who loved, as truly and innocently as Dorotea could understand the pain of the blow she absorbed in 1940 when fascism overtook Rumania and Jewish children were kicked out of the National School System.

Her school friends were advised by their parents to keep away from her, and they all obliged without a second thought. From a popular, cheerful girl Dorotea turned into an outcast. Her family had to leave their lovely house in an upper-class suburb and move into a small, humble dwelling that she was ashamed of. Her father received notice that he must leave Rumania at once and return to Poland with his daughter. Dorotea did not quite know what was happening in Poland, but she knew enough to realise that she was in mortal danger. Her father ignored the deportation notification and managed to stall, rather than leave. But the sword of eviction to the killing fields of Poland was hanging over Dorotea's head, until, at some time towards the end of the war, her father succeeded in waiving off his Polish citizenship.

With her young patriotism shattered, her love for her friends rejected and her pride deeply wounded, Dorotea still held her head high. She refused to be defeated, and turned her pain into a driving force. First she sought refuge in strengthening her Jewish identity; she started attending Synagogue on a regular basis and even tried joining Benei Akiva, the religious Zionist movement.
It did not work. She discovered that while a youth movement is certainly a good idea, her place was not in a religious one. It was then that she discovered *Hanoar Hazioni*. The war was not yet over, and the activity of Zionist movements was still forbidden. The underground cell meetings took place at Dorotea's parents' neighbour's flat. She joined a few meetings and was impressed by the other members' initiatives. They used to initiate concerts of Jewish music in Bucharest's Synagogue to draw people closer to the Zionist idea, they took interest in Jewish culture, they evoked their identity in a new and exciting way. She was in awe of the leaders, who risked their lives and opposed the regime. When the war was over and the movement became legal, she joined officially as a member.

In *Hanoar Hazioni* she was a model of a devoted activist, and we were all her admirers. For many, she was mighty to the verge of inaccessibility. Stefi and Mielu vowed that, as long as she was around, they would not leave the movement. My vow was to make her mine.

On 5 October 1945 Dorotea had written in her diary that she went mountain climbing in Bushteni with Tutu and I, and a month later she mentioned having gone to the theatre with me to watch *Electra*, "a 7-hour play", as she writes with enthusiasm. She suspected that I was caught in a dilemma between her and another girl. She was wrong.
The next few weeks saw a tall, clumsy, sixteen year old sitting on the fence across the street from the private school for girls, staring hopefully at the window of one of the classes. "Dan does not study here anymore," joked the other kids at my own school, half way across town, "he moved into the girls' school now." Our French teacher, Monsieur Calmanovici once told me "Monsieur Dan, I did not realise you were still a pupil here. I thought you were now attending 'Focseneanu' school for girls, as I see you there far more often than I have the pleasure of your presence in this class."

Passers-by became accustomed to me. Everybody knew that I was waiting for the proud girl with the ribbon in her hair, which made her look a bit like an Alsatian. Her classmates giggled as they passed me, but my persistence paid off. Dorotea would let me carry her bag and walk her home. Like all the other boys in my gang, who were, at the same time, hanging out in front of the other girls' school, I never had a schoolbag of my own.

On the 10th of January 1946 Dorotea broke the official news to her diary, which she kept all through her teenage years: "I have a boyfriend!" With a "grown-up" air that only a 17 year old can have for a 16 year old. She observed: "Dan is a very capable youngster, with a vast cultural knowledge which sometimes gives me a sensation of inferiority," at the same time she wrote: "He is a year younger than I. He is chaotic and still naïve. I believe I am psychologically much more mature than him. The exact opposite of what I dreamed of, to find a person more mature than myself."

Without knowing it, I was the subject of an experiment. "What I don't like about him,"
wrote Dorotea in her secret diary, "is that he floats on big theories and ideas, on grand plans which cannot be practically achieved and which only lead to disappointment. What an interesting experience! I will try different methods and I have some hopes of bringing him back with his feet to the ground. I hope this dream transformation will occur."

I'm afraid Dorotea's dream of transforming me never materialised. At 76 I am still "floating", having grand and so-called impossible plans, and I'm not sure that my feet are altogether on the ground the way she intended them to be. But at times, and out of my love for her, I tamed myself somewhat.

On 16 April 1946 she made a triumphant declaration to her diary: "I have turned 18 and I am in love; very deeply in love. I no longer want to rationalise whether it is good or not, right or wrong. I am caught up in it. I cannot stand a day that goes by, without seeing him."

Dorotea's parents were very old fashioned and conservative. Unlike most of my friends' parents and my own, they were religiously observant. They did not disapprove of me, but they were not crazy about the idea of their only beloved daughter spending so much time with her boyfriend. They were very concerned as to what we did when we were together. Our first kiss had to wait until May, and it was worth waiting for. Dorotea wrote: "I gave him the first kiss, and it felt as if it came from the bottom of my soul. Our lips touching symbolized the merger of our hearts. I am happy. Life is so beautiful."
Nowadays I often ask Gabi, why our son Ariel needs to talk to his girlfriend for two hours on the phone when he just spent a whole day with her. But recently Dorotea reminded me how her mother would tell her off for sitting on the bench with me for hours and hours. "What on earth do you two have to talk about all day long?" she used to ask. The bench and the other drawings were a present from Dorotea for my birthday, illustrating some beautiful moments of our relationship.

The vibrant life at the Ken and the need to impress Dorotea were perfect outlets for my restless nature. Our Ken was located at Orero Street, close to the notorious prostitutes' quarter of Bucharest, another element that added to our parents' wariness as to our activities. In the flat at the back of the building lived Rabbi Guttman and his wife, with their huge congregation of children with running noses. We occupied the front flat, and despite the fact that the Rabbi was hardly a Zionist, the relationship between both flats was very warm. A few years later, when everybody became “Zionists” in order to flee communist Rumania, the Rabbi and his family, too, emigrated to Israel just like anybody who could get permission to do so.

There were 200 young members in the Ken. The youngest, between the ages of 12 and 16, were the “Makshivim” (“listeners”). The 16-17 year olds were the “Tsofim” (“scouts”), and the oldest, around 18 years old, were the Bogrim. We were divided into groups of 10-15 members. Our group was named the “Biluim”, after the old group of the late 19th century Zionist pioneers. Being a
highly ambitious competitive group of young people, the Biluim became known throughout *Hanoar Hazioni* in Rumania.

Our activities in the Ken were varied. First, there was the political and intellectual side of things, when the group leader would initiate lectures and debates about Zionism, Jewish history, and other political issues. Then there were the gatherings, every evening at 6 p.m., after the formal activities were over, for dancing and open debates.

It is surprising to remember to what depth and length we used to argue over the differences between Jung, Freud and Adler, or the nuances between Lenin and Trotsky. We were not socialists, but we had to know our rivals in order to recruit activists and supporters, and our rivals were many. About half the pupils in our Jewish school were non-Zionists and supported the rising power of the Communist Party, or the milder Socialist Party. Among the Zionists, there were 5 main forces acting, from left to right: *Hashomer Hatzair*, *Dror Habonim* and *Gordonia*, all of them socialist to an extent, and then the liberal *Hanoar Hazioni*, the religious *Benei Akiva* and right-wing *Beitar*. The size of each group, among the Zionist youth, was more or less the same, but in schools like ours, populated mainly by the affluent and well educated, the main competition was between *Hanoar Hazioni*, and *Hashomer Hatzair*. Since we had to hunt for members among the communists and *Hashomer Hatzair* members, it is obvious why we had to know our socialism.

Having to hunt souls for *Hanoar Hazioni* was probably the only thing that kept us showing up for classes at all. The teachers were just as divided as the students. The French, Latin and Literature teachers were swaying towards communism, but we had the support of the Headmaster, Mr. Littman, an enthusiastic Zionist. Political activities were forbidden in school, but we had
our own ways of introducing them. One day, just before we left for home, Mielu left one of the corridor windows slightly open. Later that night, or rather, just before dawn, our gang sneaked out of their homes, carrying large sheets of paper. Mielu, who was the smallest, climbed in through the half open window, opened the gate and let us all in. In the morning, when the school day began, the pupils and teachers were welcomed by a gigantic wall newspaper that we had prepared in advance and hung there.

The morning rose on our masterpiece, and we walked out of school and back in again, smiling under our inexistent moustaches. Pupils started gathering in front of our wall of choice, strategically placed just across the wall from the teachers' room, and looking at our creation. The newsletter was four meters long and two meters high and it had everything in it: photos of pioneers in Kibbutzim, men and women, sun-tanned and wearing shorts, news from Palestine, maps of "the land of Israel", Zionist poetry, stories and drawings. It was really beautiful, and we were bursting with unmistakable pride. Nobody said a word, but the identity of the guilty parties was evident. Bernstein, the Literature teacher, was openly furious. He was our arch-enemy: keen on the new pro-Soviet regime, mean and obnoxious. Around that time he changed his name from Bernstein to the not-so-Jewish sounding Bolden. Years later Mielu traced him on the internet in Boston. It turned out that Bernstein-Bolden portrayed himself in America as a great leader of Rumanian Jewry. He also turned religious.

But in this sunny victorious morning, back in 1946, Bernstein was still our grumpy Literature teacher, and we did not take much notice of him. We were the heroes of the day, we were good students, and we felt untouchable, at least as far as the Literature teacher was concerned.

The Headmaster was a different story altogether. Mr Littman eyed the wall expressionlessly. Later that day, in the middle of our Latin lesson, the three of us, Mielu, Tutu and I were called to the Headmaster's room. A buzz of excitement took over the class; we were going to get stuffed, no doubt. We marched apprehensively into the room, and Mr Littman looked at us severely, and then broke into a wide smile. He rose to his feet and shook our hands one by
one. "Well done gentlemen," he said, "well done." It took us a few years before we could fully appreciate Mr. Littman's bravery in encouraging our activities.

In our little group of close friends - with different temperaments and varied fields of interest - there was a healthy, competitive tension. Tutu was interested in new machinery and technology. He was a hard working student, the only one among us, and on his way to becoming a famous doctor as his father, even if at the time he vehemently denied it. Berti, Mielu and I fancied ourselves bright, and our competition was mainly over intellect and leadership in *Hanoar Hazioni*: who would say the more sophisticated thing, who would have more brilliant ideas, who would win in the next game of chess or bridge.

Berti was interested in science and mathematics and later became an engineer, I was interested only in the things that I liked: languages, history, and literature, especially French literature. I well remember a 73-page essay I wrote about the Jewish people's history, which Mr. Littman read to the students in the different classes. I could not stand sciences, and all my friends remember my laments, day in and day out, "why do I have to keep learning this horrible mathematics?" Mielu, as I, was always attracted to humanities, but he was good at mathematics too. We, mischievous four, sat at the back of the class. Berti kept complaining that we didn't let him listen to the teachers because we were continually teasing him, but he never left our back row gang. "He was the new kid in class", his family had managed to escape suffering Bukovina after tens of thousands of Jews perished in the camps there, and we adopted him immediately as one of our own. Our bonds were strong.

Mielu and I were wilder. We used to compete over the crown of the chess king of our school, but when Berti emerged we backed off with admiration. He was unbeatable.

I used to make the others chuckle by inventing unlikely quotes and nonsensical speeches in class relevant to philosophers and historians. I annoyed the history teacher by insisting that it was Lenin and not Dr. Herzel who said "If you want it, it shall not be a Dream," and made Mielu fall off his chair laughing when the literature teacher asked me about Aristo. "The important thing," I insisted "is not what Aristotle said, but what Jean Jacques Rousseau had to say about him" and then I went on with a lengthy presentation which had little to do with any of these great philosophers.

Our main occupation was at the Ken of *Hanoar Hazioni*, or on the fences across from the girls' school. We all became group leaders, and we had groups of younger scouts to take care of. Mielu and I were in charge of opening a new branch of the movement on the other side of Bucharest.

Later we organized our first summer camp. It took place in Comandau, out in Rumania's beautiful mountains. We were in charge of transport, which was not
an easy task. We needed to get hundreds of scouts on trains, but trains were scarce and the carriages were always packed. We had to secure space for our people or we would never get them to the mountains.

The mission was entrusted to Mielu and Tutu, who decided to bet on a diplomatic approach and went to talk to one of the managers of Bucharest's train stations, who happened to be Jewish. Not quite sure how to approach him, they walked around in close proximity of his office, humming an old Hebrew song, "mimromim bracha yoredet" ("a blessing descends from above"). No wonder I was not the one to take this task on: I could not sing to save my life, and I still cannot. But Tutu's and Mielu's tune caught the manager's ear after a few strolls back and forth across the platforms. He came out of his office and approached the two. "And what can I do for you?" he asked. Little Mielu looked up at him, attempting a bold stare into his eyes. "We need two train carriages to Comandau." The older man laughed. "Two carriages, indeed! That's a fine joke, and why will I give them to you?" Tutu explained sincerely, and the manager's expression became one of interest. "Fine," he said. "I cannot assure the carriages for you, but I can help you to do it for yourselves."

The next day we chose the biggest and strongest scouts from the Ken and sent them up to Triage, where the trains were put together for long trips before embarking on their journeys from their first stations. Our "frightening" pioneer scouts occupied two carriages and did not allow anybody on except *Hanoar Hazioni* members. Our biggest logistic problem had been solved; we managed to get our scouts to the summer camp.

One night I found myself on night watch with Stefi, the beautiful girl with an ever cheerful and lively spirit and a beaming smile. It was hard to believe that such a happy and strong, young creature had suffered a nervous breakdown not much longer than a year earlier. The fear of the bombings during the war, first the Russian ones and then the American "carpet bombings", got under young Stefi's skin. She wouldn't sleep at night, but walked about her room trembling and waiting for the sirens. Her parents, concerned for her mental and physical health, begged their neighbour, who had relatives in the countryside, to help them take their only child to safety. With a mischievous glitter in her eyes, despite the hard memories, Stefi told me the rest. "This ironic bastard, also known as fate, had it that our serene countryside was occupied by the Germans and there was also a camp in which Russian prisoners of war were held. The German officers, who were in charge of the camp, were lodging at the very same farmhouse in which we stayed. They knew we were Jews, but chose to ignore us. The silent threat of the Germans on one hand, and the screaming and shouting that came from the POW camp at night, on the other hand, were hardly the tranquillity which my parents sought for me. We returned to Bucharest to discover that Antonescu had been overthrown, and just in time for the German bombings. The house next door had been razed to the ground on the very last day of the war."
Stefi was for a time in flirt with Sandu, the younger brother of our group leader Sergiu, a young heartbreaker. She was later close to Tutu, whom she abandoned for Mielu and eventually ended up married, until this very day, to the unlikely, quiet, intellectual and serious Berti; apparently, Dorotea and I were not the only ones who balanced each other.

Sergiu Levin, Sandu's older brother and our first leader, was two or three years older than us, very sharp and intelligent, and the girls still insist that he was also very good looking. "Not good looking in the least," argues Berti vehemently, but 60 years later Stefi's eyes still shine when she remembers him. "He had green eyes and black hair and beefy lips, and yes, a few pimples, so what. He was always wearing a checked shirt. Most of the girls were in love with him." Sergiu's uncle realised that he was leaning towards communism, so he encouraged him to join Hanoar Hazioni, in an attempt to redirect his political zeal. It worked, but not for long. After a few years as an ardent Zionist, Sergiu returned to communism, and became a member of the Rumanian Communist Party. Maybe he had to do it in order to get into medical school. In the 1970s he managed to get a permit to leave Rumania and he came to Israel, but he did not feel at home. He suffered from depression, the reason that pushed him to leave Israel and move to Köln, Germany. He never accepted the invitations to Hanoar Hazioni anniversary events. He asked to forget.

Stefi, as confident and vibrant as she was, admired only one person: Dorotea. For years she longed to be her close friend, winning her over only decades later, in far away Haifa. But that night at the guards shed, I was trying to impress her myself. I spoke French, lectured about the revolution. I sang the Marseillaise and tried to teach her to sing Edith Piaf's "We shall hang the English on the electricity cables" in the most pitiful off-tune way. My activities against the White Paper, which limited Jewish emigration to Palestine, made me temporarily anti-British. Who would have thought, in that cold night, that one day I would make my fortune in despised perfidious Albion? "If you could have seen the future at that moment, you would have fainted on the spot," laughs Berti.

I boasted of being able to present a long lecture on any possible topic at a second's notice. "Tell me about the importance of legs of chairs in history," Stefi challenged me. Had any of my school friends being present, they would have warned her against it, but Stefi could not have known that long speeches about nothing at all were my pride and joy. I embarked immediately on a very long
speech. Half an hour later poor Stefi just had to stop me. She was freezing in the cold night, she was not properly dressed for the weather, and she was desperate to use the toilet. Years later she told me that back then, she thought I was tall, clever, and very boastful. It did not stop us from being good friends until this very day.

The summer camp was a magical experience. It was the peak of all we had worked for during that exciting year, crowning our efforts, dreams and fantasies. We built our own lodgings and huts, we went on long hikes and engaged in physical exercises, we sat in front of bonfires and taught some Zionism to our young teams. We could plan and dream of a different future in far and exotic Palestine, a place that we could only visualize from our imagination fuelled by photographs, stories, articles and geographical books.

The activity in *Hanoar Hazioni* made me the person I have become. It gave expression to my need to stand out, to put bold ideas into practice, to exercise my excitement about things. I had to deal with my weaknesses, and my only weapon against them was stubbornness. I was, still am, a big and tall man, healthy looking, but I was never as fit as others, never as good in running or climbing. Instead of making me shy away from such activities, I was the first to start any athletic game, though I hardly ever was the first to reach the target. When I had to practice crawling under barbed wire with Berti, we both ended up with wounds and worn out knees and elbows, but quitting was never an option. With the same spirit I approached everything that I have put my mind to, constructive or less so, from covering Bucharest with Zionist leaflets to eating all the melons in the village neighbouring our summer camp site.

My friends were there for me, whatever mischief I got up to. When I launched an attack on a dozen melons, during the summer camp, my friends were there to drag me back to the camp, and care for me when I was sick. They would always warn me in advance that I was getting myself into trouble, but never abandoned me to face the consequences alone.

Not all of our time was dedicated to love and mischief. We were honestly trying to envisage a future for ourselves in Palestine. One of our biggest difficulties was the need to come to terms with the idea of a Kibbutz, the utmost materialisation of all Zionist youth movements. As young enthusiastic people, we liked the idea of living and working together as a collective. But, being middle-class youngsters with a liberal upbringing, some of us found it hard to imagine themselves actually engaging in agriculture and living away from cities, cinemas, trams and universities.

In another long conversation during a nocturnal watch shift, Berti shared with me his secret utopia: a group of friends living together in the centre of a city, maybe Tel Aviv, working together but keeping a collective earning and
spending account, raising all the children together. He could not share this vision with our Hanoar Hazioni leaders, but he cherished it for a long while.

Back in Bucharest, after the Comandau summer camp, we all found ourselves involved deeply and with more vigour in Hanoar Hazioni activities. I was leading my own group now, which was called Hashachar, the Hebrew word for dawn, after Pinsker's Zionist newspaper. It made competitive Dorotea feel slightly wary. Her feelings, true or imagined, of being superior to me in maturity but inferior intellectually, bothered her. "Dan is leading this 18 member group and intends to recruit more. My group is lagging and I do not want to stay behind. I will not spare efforts, but I am lacking the original ideas of Hashachar," she wrote.

My classmate Sasha, who established himself as my second in command, would show up before dawn with a bunch of other troops to collect the propaganda posters and spread them all around town. Sasha assisted me in leading the group, and the temperament of my people worked well with my mischievous spirit. One of our "original ideas" was going out in the middle of the night to steal the British flag from Her Majesty's Embassy in Bucharest, and burning it later in the bonfire at our next summer camp.

Another independent initiative was to go on a fund raising mission for the next summer camp, without permission from the national leadership. We collected a million Lei, but the leadership was furious over my unauthorised action and decided to punish us by not including the sum we had raised in the fund raising competition between the groups. I was very upset, but not as much as Dorotea, who had her group join mine on the collection. "All the words I heard in that meeting stemmed from meanness, ambition and jealousy; they felt like knife stabs," she wrote in her diary.

These Magbiot, "collections", were a frequent activity, although they were normally authorised by the leadership. Our youth would be out in the streets pinning Jewish National Fund pins on people's coats and collecting donations. Here, too, it was not only Jews that donated. Youth movements were seen as an acceptable cause to donate to, especially as we were handing out the little pins that people liked. At the end of the day we gathered in our Ken to count our money. Dorotea hated the Magbiot. Her pride was injured by having to ask people for donations. But she felt as if it was a test for her pride, as well as for her devotion, and she forced herself, however reluctantly, to go out and do it. I never had any difficulty with fund raising of any kind. On the contrary, I felt challenged by the mission, and was proud of collecting as much as I could for our goals.

A fonder memory of 1946 is the political, musical theatrical show we gave. It touched on the war, Palestine, Zionism and the holocaust. I made the opening speech. I still remember the first words "At this very moment the bonfires are
alight on every hill in Palestine...." I spoke about the illegal settlements of *Homa Umigdal*, about the British White Paper that limited Jewish emigration to Palestine and about resisting the British Mandate. The atmosphere was very anti-British. We were also mocking Britain's sudden change of heart and support for the Arab League, which characterised the tenure of Britain's Foreign Minister of the time, Ernest Bevin.

"On our way to the theatre together people stared at us as we passed, to Dan's great satisfaction and my huge embarrassment," wrote Dorotea. I was dressed as a "very tall Arab" for a sketch on the Arab League.

But Dorotea herself was the unchallenged star of the show. She sang wonderfully a song based on the last words of Hana Senesh, who was parachuted in Hungary under the services of the British Intelligence Services during the war, captured by the Nazis, tortured brutally and executed in Budapest in 1944. "Blessed is the match that burnt while kindling other blazes; Blessed are the blazes that burnt in the depth of hearts; Blessed are the hearts that knew when to stop honourably; Blessed is the match that burnt and kindled blazes." It was heart warming to see her move from this touching lament to the loud cheer of "The lights in Paris are on again."

We were surprised by the number of tickets we managed to sell. Word was out that this was not only a political manifesto, but also good entertainment. We went on stage quite a few times. We had senior leaders of the Jewish community in the audience and even quite a few curious non-Jews.

That year we had our summer camp at Vadul Crisului. This time, our difficulties were not about transportation, but about nutrition. We were short of food and I was put in charge of getting supplies for the 600 participants of the camp. I went to speak with the head of the Province where the camp was being held. We had a few documents from the International Red Cross, which gave a certain sponsorship to the camp. I told the Head of the Province that we were 600 refugee youths and asked him for some supplies. To my surprise, he yielded and agreed to feed the whole camp.

Then Dorotea got sick. She could not eat any of the food at the camp. I wanted to go out and get some better quality food for her. The problem was that we, as group leaders, had taken a commitment to not bring food from outside to the camp for private consumption. I was, as always, happy enough to be flexible about rules and regulations, but conscientious Dorotea would not hear of it.

She was feeling worse and worse so I decided to ignore her wishes, and set off to the nearby village, which was not that near at all. I walked for miles and had to pass through a tunnel, constantly guarded by rather intimidating Rumanian soldiers.
I got some fresh bread, cheese and fruit for my love, and I came back exhausted though triumphant, only to face an unpleasant surprise: Dorotea, as sick as she may have been, adhered to her lofty principles and refused to tuck into my gift. This started a big argument. In the end I had no choice but to put her on my knees and give her a bit of my mind, by way of some playful spanking. Dorotea screamed and laughed and was eventually convinced to eat. "The spanking scene" remained a fond memory for both of us.

Our parents were far away in Bucharest; all our parents, including Dorotea's conservative mother. This was a blessed change: no more brief kisses and shy embraces on the way home from school, with proper Dorotea always fearing inquisitive glances from busybody neighbours. The nights were ours, stretching long, bright and romantic under the starry skies. We became inseparable. For others in Hanoar Hazioni Dan and Dorotea soon became more than just our first names, it was an example for deep friendship and camaraderie, and for blossoming young love. Years later, in Israel, Dorotea met a younger member of Hanoar Hazioni whom she had never met before. "Are you the famous Dorotea?" asked the other woman, "as in Dan-and-Dorotea?"

It took me a very long time to go beyond that kiss on the bench. Our relationship was more a covenant of hearts and minds, than a primarily sexual attachment. I, like everybody else, had placed Dorotea on a pedestal and looked up at her. Her mother had quite an influence on her, preaching that she should be careful, and the question of sex was a hard one for Dorotea. I was patient. My feelings for her were innocent and pure.
We often talked about getting old together. We could see ourselves as a lovely old couple sitting with our children and grandchildren near a big table on the lawn in our fishermen's kibbutz. We talked about this often. We'd be walking in the streets of Bucharest, looking at nice elderly couples walking hand-in-hand and think: we are going to be just like them.

We complemented each other in every possible way. Her cool mind and logical thinking balanced my grand ideas and sense of adventure. Her careful consideration cooled my wild enthusiasm. Her ardent idealism, her ability to put the needs of the collective first, were a helpful reminder of the fact that sometimes my desire "to do something" was not necessarily in line with the needs of the movement. Soon enough the leadership of Hanoar Hazioni noticed that useful bond, and even when we were out on different missions, Dorotea was sent over whenever I seemed to be getting out of control with adventurous enterprises.

Literary trials were an important part of our activities in the Ken, and I enjoyed them immensely. With all due respect to running around and climbing hills, my real passion was for sharpening my brain and advocating ideas. The "trials" discussed subjects like "what's behind history" or "what is the best way to educate children". Two clashing theses were presented by the advocates, and then a jury chaired by the court president would put questions to the advocates.

During our discussion about education, we lost one of our advocates mid-trial; her parents found out over lunch that she was discussing her upbringing in public and refused to let her back.

In that discussion I espoused a concept which I defined as "the logical consequences of one's behaviour". The idea was that punishment should not be inflicted, but there should be consequences derived from wrong behaviour. For example, if you break something, it has to be replaced, so there will be no spare money for you to go to the cinema or buy a new book, but this deprivation is not a punishment. I think I still believe in these ideas. I think I brought up my own son with that same liberal spirit with which my parents raised me.

I was perfectly capable of advocating something I was not completely convinced of, like the question whether the earth’s core is warm or cold, but some matters were a question of principle for me. Possibly the most interesting trial we had was "Dialectic Materialism versus Idealism". The importance of the debate went beyond philosophy. Yehuda Sha'ari, the shaliach (envoy), who came from Palestine to support our Ken, tried to get us to adopt an idealist approach in order to distinguish us ideologically from Zionist movements on the left and mainly from Hashomer Hatzair. Shari claimed that history is created by a collection of coincidences. I remember him saying: "I walk in the street is one event; a ladder falling over is another. But if I happen to walk as the ladder falls
and I get hurt and miss a meeting in which a crucial decision is being taken – that's history." Consequently, Sha'ari claimed that if the Archduke Franz Ferdinand had not been assassinated in 1914, the First World War would not have taken place.

I did not believe it then and I do not believe it now, and I advocated fiercely for dialectic materialism. I believe we won that vote. It was neither the first, nor the last time, that I had annoyed our movement's leadership.

My need for confrontation and my independent mode of action worried Dorotea. "We had a group leaders' meeting today and it convinced me that Dan cannot live in a community," she wrote in April 1947. "Even if he gets attached to a community, the community does not respond well to him. He is much too independent in his ways. In Hanoar Hazioni and in our Ken he is highly esteemed, but there is also a lot of criticism towards him, despite the fact that he achieves more than all others and he is more committed than most."

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Dorotea was very serious and "proper" in her behaviour, but she was also very jealous. In the summer of 1947 she graduated from high school, but I had another year to go. I knew that if I wanted to keep my activities in Hanoar Hazioni going and join the others for Hachshara, a preparation period before emigration to newborn Israel, I had to mollify my parents and graduate too.

I decided to take the short and difficult route. Rather than spend another year at school I would take all the graduation exams during that summer. Berti, Tutu and Mielu were also up for it, as well as a girl from a parallel class called Tita Fuhrer.

One day I went out with Tita to study for an examination by the lakes, 7 kilometres from Bucharest. It was a pleasant spot to sit and study, and it was all perfectly innocent, though naturally, some people were using the quiet and isolated banks of the lakes for more romantic purposes. Tita was a nice and clever girl, and I enjoyed studying with her. When we were about to take our bikes and start
cycling back home I discovered that my bicycle wheels were punctured. We had to walk all the way back to town, and got home very late at night.

It was only months later that Dorotea came clean and confessed that she had punctured my bicycle wheels to prevent me from going out with Tita.

The plan, of course, backfired; instead of preventing me from spending time with Tita it only made me spend more time with her on the long walk home. But Dorotea's confession made me feel closer to her, and very flattered.

I would emphasise that among the 80 students for the graduation exams, Tita graduated first, with excellent votes, and I was second.

Dorotea was also deeply hurt by a short flirt I had with a girl called Bobo, who was visiting our Ken. Bobo had survived one of Poland's concentration camps. She had escaped and travelled through many countries until she reached Rumania. Once here, despite her agonising and traumatised life, she passed all her graduation exams. I always had a weakness for brave, bold and intelligent women and I admired Bobo's spirit. I tried to spend as much time as possible with her. This had hurt Dorotea deeply. "Dan talks about Bobo all the time," she wrote in her diary, "but there is admiration in his voice, as could be expected from one as adventurous as him. What should I do?" It ended the next day with a hearty reconciliation. "Every minute seemed marvellous," wrote Dorotea.

We all graduated in the autumn of 1947, but the enthusiasm to go to Hachshara among some of us was declining. Some of my friends were disappointed to discover that the national leadership of Hanoar Hazioni had not included them in the lists of candidates for emigration. Priority was given to refugees, to families and to those who were considered seniors in the Jewish community. We were seen as vital for Hanoar Hazioni work in Rumania, so we were left behind. After a short period of agricultural Hachshara, Tutu and Berti left Hanoar Hazioni and went to university. Mielu stayed on and was sent to help out in a children's home where Jewish orphans, who had survived Poland's concentration camps, were kept. The children were studying, recuperating and awaiting emigration to Palestine.
Dorotea and I ached to stay together, but the movement was against it for principled reasons. We were supposed to be more devoted to the cause than to each other. Our small consolation was that the places we were sent to as Shlichim (envoys) were not too distant from each other. I was stationed in Bacau, Dorotea was sent to Roman, about 70 kilometres away, and Sasha to Falticeni. My mission was to assist the tiny Ken in Bacau, which boasted 6 members upon my arrival, to develop and grow. I helped them recruit youths, train group leaders and arrange attractive activities. At the height of our activities we had 90 members, divided into 6 groups, with a special seminar for group leaders and frequent ideological lectures.

The budget I got from Hanoar Haczioni was meagre. I managed to rent a miniature room in Sturza Street. Far away from home and busy with my mission, I developed an interesting hygiene policy. When a shirt got too dirty to wear I'd put it in the left-hand side of the wardrobe and take a new one from the right-hand side. And then, when I was out of clean shirts, I would start again with the ones buried deepest in the left-hand side. There was no running water in the room and I had to go out and bring water in a jug in order to wash. It was wonderful. I felt in every bone of my body that I was working for an ideal. The physical conditions did not compromise my commitment; on the contrary, my devotion only grew. I note with regret that I have become more pragmatic over the years.

Sometimes I was invited to eat at the homes of members' parents, but more often I'd get my main meal of the day at the Gordonia orphanage. That's where I met a new friend, the cheerful Rosy Goldstein. She wanted to be a bit more than a friend, but my heart belonged to Dorotea. I was grateful, however, for her pleasant company and joyful spirit.

Despite the short distance between us I could not meet Dorotea more than once a month. We could not afford the travel expenses, and the demanding work left us very little spare time.

In December 1947 the biggest and most important project of Alia Beit, the illegal emigration to Palestine, despite the British prohibition, took place. Two ships, the Pan York and the Pan Crescent, left from Varna, Bulgaria, loaded with fifteen thousand of Rumania's and Bulgaria's Jews. Naturally, there was a great demand for places on board the ships, and very little space.
The Bacau Ken was allocated six from the few Hanoar Hazioni places on the ship and I was in charge of deciding who should receive them. All members of the Ken wanted to go, and I decided in favour of the six devoted members whom I found in the Ken when I first came to Bacau. Most Ken members, despite their disappointment, agreed that it was only fair; a few others argued and begged.

One of the members was extremely insolent. He invited me to a private conversation in which he explicitly offered me the sexual favours of his famously beautiful sister, in return for a place on the ship. I don’t think there was a point in my life in which I would have accepted this offer, but I doubt if there was ever a moment in which I was likely to respond to it with such furious moral indignation. I was deeply offended by the very idea and felt as if my ideological zeal was contaminated. I don't remember meeting him ever again.

An activist in Bacau, who I was very sorry to omit from the list was Lutza Ianko, an excellent group leader whom I had recruited. Many years later I met him in Israel. This time he was Professor Lutza Ianko of the Hebrew University.

I also fondly remember the sisters Cutza and Rozica Blank from our Bacau Ken, both very pleasant and very poor, who went on the train hopeful for a new life in Palestine. I regret that I never saw or heard of them again.

The immigrants boarded one of seven trains that ran from north Rumania to Bulgaria, picking up the designated passengers on the way. I escorted my group to the station and saw them off.

Later, I was flattered when the National Leadership of Hanoar Hazioni asked me to arrange a seminar for all Hanoar Hazioni groups in Moldova, which was to take place between the end of December 1947 and early January 1948. One of the nicest things about it was that it meant a visit from Dorotea and Sasha. I used a vacant school as a venue, prepared courses, public debates, games and discussions, and even managed to stretch my miserable budget to include a night out with horse-led sledges for all 45 participants.

My tendency to argue with our movement’s leaders got the better of me this time too. I remember a major argument with a representative of the leadership, a young man named Poldi Ungarish. The dispute was over technical, organizational matters, but I wanted to impose my will and lost my temper. I banged my fist on the table and broke a wooden pencil box, while Dorotea, as always, tried to mediate.

Sasha arrived a day before the conference and I decided to take a break from the stress of organising and arguing. Typically, comfort was found at the pastry shop, spending all my savings. I took him to a café with fabulous cakes, and we swung into an "eat as much as you can" party. "Come on Sasha, you are yet to try a Savarina."
"Here, let's get some Baklava."
"My friend, you must absolutely taste the fabulous Violeta."
"Don't even think of leaving without ordering the Cataif, it is the best in Rumania."
"No, no, no, if you haven't had the profiteroles, it's as if you haven't been here at all."
And so it went on until I was out of money, the café was out of cakes and both Sasha and I were out of breath.

The following morning Sasha and I made a bet. I was to go to the fanciest restaurant in Bacau and ask them for a take-away portion of Mamaliguzza (simple, popular corn flour dish) for the very little money left. I won our bet.

The seminar went on for three days. It was snowing heavily and the town was covered in white. Dorotea and I were so busy that we hardly got to spend any time together. At night she stayed with everybody at the school and I went back to my small room. But after the seminar came the good news: Dorotea and I were to go and create a Hachshara branch in Piatra Neamtz, town close to Roman and Bacau. Before we embarked on our new mission we had a chance to go home to Bucharest for a few days off. My parents despaired when they saw the new skinny me, in my filthy vagabond clothes. I finally had new clean shirts, and I enjoyed a few days of total freedom and meetings with old friends.

In February 1948 we left Bucharest again and got to the little town of Piatra Neamț on the banks of the river Bistritza. The town's economy was based on lumber. Rafts made out of trunks came down the river to be processed at the nearby factory. We were based just between the factory and the river. The house that we rented had three rooms, a kitchen, and a few washing basins. The toilets were outside, in wooden huts, and they were not connected to a sewage system.

We slept on bunk beds; one room was for the 20 boys, the other for the 16 girls, and the third room was used as a dining hall and communal room. There were not enough beds and some of the boys had to share. The Joint organisation gave us blankets and some American tin cans. Hanoar Hazioni gave us a very tight budget, and we had to find our own means of survival, but we were happy.
The work was very hard. We were given the night shifts, which the locals loathed, and we were paid less than they were. We had to take the trunks out of the river and put them through the big saws a few times, until they would turn into planks. The wood was very heavy and the weather very cold. It was a dangerous job too, but we were lucky and had no accidents. It took four of us to lift the heavy trunks weighing 100-120 kilograms. The lighter ones could be managed by two workers. I can still smell the odour of the sawdust, feel the flying wood fragments on my face and hear the noise of the saws of those gloomy dark nights.

This type of work was not suited to the girls, therefore they were cooking, cleaning, and housekeeping. A few of them found work in town. Us, the boys, slept during the morning after our night shifts, waking up for lunch. The afternoon was dedicated to talks, discussions, briefings about the situation in Palestine that we all followed anxiously. We had a radio in the dining room and we followed breathlessly, like many other Jews in Palestine and elsewhere, the war between Jewish and Arab militia and we were eager for news, some of which we could get on our radio.

We were all hoping that the State of Israel would be declared as soon as possible, believing that shortly after, new migrant ships would be organised, and that we would board them. Our imagination yearned for the Mediterranean beaches, where our fishermen's kibbutz, Hashachar, was to be established. We had already designed the labels to glue on our canned fish products. The empty cans were placed in a respectful place in our communal dining room. They were a symbol of our future in the soon to be born State of Israel.

Sometimes people from the movement's leadership would come and visit us. I remember well the visit of my good friend Shilo Wohl, who was later, during the 1950s, imprisoned for many years by the Securitate. We couldn't even offer him a bed and he had to share mine. We slept on the top bed, on my straw mattress, each of us careful not to move too much so as not to push the other one off. Luckily, we were both very skinny at the time.

Our way of life was utterly democratic. I had no special rights or privileges as the group's leader. We were a little obsessed with our democracy, and we argued and voted over every possible issue.

Naturally, this way of life created many tensions. I vividly remember getting into a fit of rage during an argument and grabbing the neck of one of the
comrades, Avraham Redlich, a young man who came with Sasha's group from Falticeni. It is all so vivid in my mind, his face getting red, me shouting in great anger, people trying to tear me away from him; I even remember the deep remorse which I felt afterwards, and the detailed public apology that I made later that day, before we set to out to work. Ironically, I no longer remember what we were fighting about.

These moments of violent fits kept coming. I knew that I had to control my temper, but I found it very hard to deal with situations when things did not go my way. Dorotea was always the one who managed to calm me down, to steer me gently towards a compromise, to get me off my high horse. I was lucky to have made an important contribution to the group which, I believe, made the others put up with some of my misbehaviour.

The money we made from our lumber work was tight, and the work was too hard. It was when we became quite desperate that I came up with a little business venture that improved our life immensely. I bought trucks full of resin of the pine trees which grew on the nearby mountains. We cleaned the resin, built wooden crates, filled them with resin and sold them to pharmaceutical and cosmetic manufacturers. Soon enough this enterprise made us so much money that we could afford to abandon our lumber jobs.

And then the movement's leadership decided, in April or May 1948, to take me away from my Hachshara. I was sent as an envoy for Timisoara and Arad, in Transylvania, where people spoke more Hungarian and German than Rumanian. Dorotea stayed at Piatra Neamtz. My living conditions were much better than on my first mission in Bacau. I lived in the house of a family that had two sons in Hanoar Hazioni. Their mother took very good care of me; she fed me.

In the meantime I managed to develop the branches in Timisoara and Arad into large and prosperous organisations. Each Ken grew and flourished, new groups were established and group leaders were trained. I led my people from Transylvania to the summer camp of 1948, and with them I rocked the boat again.

My Kenim of Timisoara and Arad were designated to join a Hachshara of Hungarian speakers called Hatchiya ("the Revival"), which was intended to form their own kibbutz in Israel. They were supposed to join an existing, strong Hachshara group. But I had a different idea. I convinced my groups to follow me back to Piatra Neamtz and form Hashachar II, instead of joining Hatchiya. The leadership of Hanoar Hazioni responded with rage. Word was out that "Dan is doing whatever the hell he wants, once again." I was told that I would not receive any funding; "you will not get a penny! How will you get by?" they scorned me. Well, I got by. I went back to Piatra Neamtz, rented a cheap house nearby Hashachar I group, and we built a hut in the yard and worked on our
resin marketing business. We had so many orders that both *Hachshara* groups prospered.

Hungarian is not one of the languages I speak. My communication with my new group was in Rumanian and German, which they all spoke. At night we held our Hebrew classes, but we did not speak it well enough to use it as a common tongue.

In the meantime the Communist regime was strengthening its hold on Rumania. Non-communist parties were banned and their leaders arrested. The open emigration of people from Rumania was stopped. The Communist Party wanted to lure people away from Zionism, which contradicted the idea of internationalism. Therefore, the Communist Party created a Jewish organisation which was connected to the Party, the Jewish Democratic Committee, JDC. The JDC recruited Jews, promising, among other things, that Jews joining the JDC would be allowed to leave Rumania and go to Israel in order to turn it into a "communist haven".

Indeed, they managed to send a group of Jewish people to Israel while the Zionists were denied exit. We were trapped; up to the spring of 1948 we could not go because the British would not let us in. Now we could not go because the Rumanians would not let us out.

Israel appointed its first Ambassador to Rumania, the painter Reuven Rubin, who was of Rumanian descent. Golda Meir, then Head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, visited Bucharest and made a speech in the main Synagogue in front of tens of thousands of Jews who shouted and cried and waved the Israeli flag. It disturbed the Communist regime very much. In autumn King Michael, who was for so many the symbol of Rumania turning its back on the Nazis, was forced to abdicate and go into exile. Then the communists tried to arrange a "popular revolution" within the Jewish community against the Zionist movement. The idea was to create a false impression that the Jews themselves were turning against the Zionists, "the slaves of American capitalism". Indeed, many Jews were members of the Communist Party, but the founding of Israel and the prohibition of emigration increased the support for the Zionists.

The JDC recruited Rumanian workers and some Jewish communists, and launched the attack. They came out of a cinema theatre called Tomis and marched to shut down the centres of Zionist activity. The Jewish community responded with bitter resistance, and the invaders were beaten up.
and escaped. The Government realised that if it wanted to be rid of Zionism it would have to take action on its own. All Zionist organizations received official notice that they had to shut down. The centres in the cities were abolished, as were the Kenim of all Zionist youth movements. But the Hachsharots in the countryside were left alone. The Government promised that the people who were already in *Hachshara* would be allowed to emigrate to Israel. It was a false promise.

In January 1949, ten weeks after the crackdown on the Zionist organizations in the cities, the police turned up at Piatra Neamț with a few lorries in order to make us evacuate the place and go home. We concentrated both groups, *Hashchar A* and *Hashchar B* in the building of *Hashchar A* and we got ready to resist the evacuation. We managed passive resistance for 3 days and two nights. Dorotea threw herself in front of a moving lorry that tried to drive off with our belongings. She was dragged away by policemen and the lorry drove away. It was at that moment, I think, that we realised that the ideals we had worked for and the way of life we had planned for ourselves had been shattered, perhaps forever. They forced us into the trucks, drove us to the train station and sent us back home like petulant children. We were in Bucharest again, in our parents' comfortable houses. We were devastated.
My mother held a PhD in philosophy. It was unheard-of for women of her generation to have academic degrees, but she managed to become an exception, though not without a fight. Originally she wanted to become a doctor, but her mother vetoed her aspiration, so she secretly went to study philosophy as a compromise. My father was an intellectual devoid of any talent for business. He graduated as an engineer from Zurich's Technikum. Higher education was important for both my parents, as it was for all my parents' friends. When we all came back from Piatra Neamț, it seemed as if our way had failed us; it was time to yield to the route paved by our parents, go to university and become "grown-ups".

My father was working as an engineer for a governmental company called Mashinimport. He did not have a communist background, but he was helped by an introduction by one of my mother's cousins, Jet Wexler, and her husband Paul. Paul was, before the war, a big capitalist, the owner of a large textile company in Rumania, but he became a devoted communist too, as Jet.

During the years of the Fascist regime they were both underground activists. They were discovered by Antonescu's people, and were arrested and tortured by the police. Many of their comrades were condemned to death; Jet and Paul were sentenced to 25 years of hard labour. After the coup of 23 August 1944 they were set free and admitted with great honour to the Communist Party. At that time the Rumanian Communist Party had boasted no more than a thousand rank-and-file activists, and Jet and Paul were its heroes. When the Party came to power they had significant influence among its Ministers. It was Paul who got my father a job at Mashinimport.

My mother found herself a job as a secretary in the Israeli Embassy and I engaged in temporary jobs while waiting for the academic year to start. I was helped a lot by my friend, the psychologist, Emil Feder. When I was still a high school student I was sent to Feder by my parents, who were concerned for my total lack of ability to organise my working environment; my papers were always laying all over the place, my books could be found anywhere in the house. My parents were concerned that this lack of organization could damage my academic achievements. Being attentive to modern trends they hoped that a psychologist could help me to organize my "disorder".

Emil Feder was an excellent man, and he became a good friend, but now, 60 years later, my papers are still everywhere and are found only due to my good memory, and my lack of order is still the topic of almost all domestic quarrels. At least two notable advantages, however, stemmed from this therapy. The first was Feder's recommendation to my parents to get me a library in which I could organise all my books and papers and keep all his things in good order. The second was that he arranged a few jobs for me in caring for children with various problems, from Down syndrome to autism and learning disabilities.
Most of my working hours were dedicated to one child, whom I met in Israel years later. His condition improved and he was working in a shoe shop. Feder also tried to help Dorotea get a job as a kindergarten teacher. "Emil likes Dan very much," wrote the self conscious Dorotea in her diary, "but I do not know what his impression of me is." For a few weeks that same summer I opened a kiosk selling ice-creams and soft-drinks.

The Rumanian Government started around this time to allow, as promised, the individual emigration of some Jews, especially of those who already had relatives in Israel. We used to queue days and nights in order to file our requests. Dorotea applied for permission with her parents, as a family; I applied on my own. My parents did not want to go to Israel; my father would have been immediately fired from his job had he applied for an Emigration Permit. My mother had her mother in Bucharest, whom she wanted to care for. They were hoping that there was still some future for them in Rumania.

My friends and I were studying Hebrew, determined to improve our command of the language in the hope that our recent past as Zionist activists would not jeopardise our chances of being granted Emigration Permits. For some of us it was true. We were constantly torn between hope and despair. "Probably only a miracle could help us make Aliya," wrote Dorotea in her diary on 28 February 1949; "There are rumours that we will be able to leave for Israel at the end of March," she had written the next day.

But the summer came and went and no Emigration Permit was visible on the horizon. In the autumn of 1949 we started studying at the University of Bucharest. Sasha and I were in the Faculty of Economy and Dorotea in the school for social work. Mielu was studying to become an engineer. My university was a grey gigantic building in Piazza Romana. When I think back to those days I can only recall the colour grey. Our hearts were still heavy with the sad ending of the dream of Piatra Neamţ, and the university had not offered matching interest or enthusiasm.

The teaching was boring and heavy-handed. We learnt about planned economy that was not working, and about the wisdom of Lenin and Stalin, which was, apparently, endless. Years later I had an opportunity to compare this grim experience to the vitality of the campus of Tel Aviv's University, where everything is so colourful, the plants and flowers all around, the eagerness of the young students, their fashionable clothes and the fresh air. I told the President of Tel Aviv University how different it all was to my time as a student in Rumania. The striking contrast between this vitality and the greyness of my days in Piazza Romana was one of the main attractions of Tel Aviv University for me as a donor in years to come.

In the meantime I kept in touch with our friends from Hanoar Hazioni. It was not proper political activism as its nature was more social. But before I left
I managed to save some of our equipment, which was later divided among our activists for their homes. We even kept the blankets which we used in Piatra Neamț.

I married Dorotea in the spring of 1950 in the big Synagogue of Bucharest, exactly one year after Golda Meir visited it. We went for a wonderful honeymoon in a mountain resort called **Busteni**. We walked along the small paths hand in hand, contemplating our future together, never getting tired of each other's company.
Shortly after we had returned to Bucharest, Dorotea and her parents were granted their permission to leave Rumania and we faced the biggest dilemma of our lives: What should Dorotea do? Should she leave with her parents and leave me behind? Giving up the permit was madness. There was no telling if Dorotea would ever obtain it again were she to re-apply. I believed that if I could claim I had a wife in Israel my chances of getting the desired Emigration Permit would increase.

Dorotea did not want to go, but she was under strong pressure. I pleaded her to leave,. The leadership of Hanoar Hazioni was keen for her to make her contribution in Israel and her friends urged her to leave Rumania before it became too late. Her parents, who showed profound understanding for her dilemma and pain, still thought she should go with them. Eventually, she yielded. I walked with her to the station where she was to catch the train for Constanza. From her carriage window she saw me running after the train until I disappeared from her eyes. Dorotea cried all the way to the port. Strangers came from other carriages to try and console the sobbing, beautiful, young girl, but in vain. I was convinced that within two or three months we would re-unite in Israel.
Dorotea and her parents settled in the port city of Haifa. We started exchanging letters, dozens of them. I was very optimistic. About two months after Dorotea left I received a letter from the Emigration authorities advising me that I should pay a certain amount of money, prepare certain documents and get ready to go to Israel. I was ecstatic. For my parents, the news was hard to take. They lived for me and now I was about to leave them. But they never tried to stop me.

A few days later another letter followed. There has been a mistake, I was told. I am a student, the Government has invested money in my education and therefore I cannot leave. I refused to accept the bad news. I applied and re-applied over and over again, each time paying the high fees, presenting my case each time from beginning to end to expressionless Emigration officials, and attaching new documents.

One of my main arguments, in my repeating applications for permission to leave Rumania, was that my wife was living in Israel. Dorotea, eager to help, even sent over photos of her with a friend's baby and a forged birth certificate, in an attempt to prove that I was being kept away from my child whom, of course, never existed. I tried to get some help from my old mathematics teacher, Mr. Rechler, who now worked for the Government's Security Services, the Securitate, and was in charge of passport allocation. He had by then changed his name to something more Rumanian-sounding. Zamfir. He said he could not help.

I neglected my studies. I found some support from the friends who were still around, but one by one they obtained their permissions to leave and embarked on the exciting journey to Israel. It was known that families who had a student among their members had to leave in haste, lest the Government change its mind and decide to prevent its young "investment" from leaving. That's why those of us who were allowed to leave had disappeared from our lives promptly. An old photo shows Stefi, Berti, Sasha, Mielu and I at Stefi's farewell party. Some party indeed, we all look as if we are about to burst into tears. Stefi knew that her day of departure was going to be hard, but she did not realise just how hard. Years later, in the lovely house Berti and her shared overlooking the Haifa bay, she told me the story.

"I left Bucharest with my parents, each of us carrying the 70 kg of cargo which we were allowed to take with us. The whole house was in boxes: plates, cups, beddings. Whatever exceeded that weight had to be given away or left behind. The boxes would be sent to the port of Haifa and from there, once one provided an address, they were forwarded to it. The Israeli Consulate was aware of the fact that sometimes the Rumanian Government had taken young people off the ships at the last moment, so I was instructed to get on the ship first and disappear in it as best as I could. But we did not even get on the ship when we were told to remain on the train. My family was the last left on the train. The tension was unbearable."
"After two hours we were told that there was a problem with one of our passports. We were sure that it was mine, that I was about to be left behind on account of being a young person. I put on a brave face and tried to reassure my tearful mother by saying I was convinced that I would join them shortly."

"But soon thereafter the table turned; an official came over to us and said that it was not I, but my parents who were staying behind. Somebody, it seemed, had notified the authorities that my father had been a member of the Jewish Democratic Committee. That was enough to have both my parents taken off the train. 'Only Stefania is going,' said the official, 'and you'd better hurry.' The ship's siren had already sounded twice. I started crying, holding on to my mother and refusing to let go. She realised the risk of my staying on. I may never be allowed to leave again. She pushed me away gently, took one suitcase and walked away, encouraging my father to follow. A porter took my suitcase and I followed him across the bridge to the deck. 'Go Stefi, go,' shouted my mother 'and tell everybody...'. But then she realised that what she was about to say might put both of us in danger. 'Just give them our best wishes,' were the last words I heard from her before I left. I was on my own."

And Stefi continues, "My luggage was filled with garlic. Relatives in Israel would ask new immigrants to bring garlic and nuts with them. In the port of Haifa you could hear all the people who came to greet their just-arrived relatives shouting 'hello and welcome! Did you bring garlic with you?'."

"For three days I had to stay in Shaar Aliah, a transition camp where new immigrants were held in order to go through an absorption process. I was confused, frightened, and covered with DDT, a disinfectant powder with which all new immigrants were sprayed upon arrival. The first evening I tried to escape, but I panicked when I saw a soldier guarding the camp. I was afraid that if I'd get caught they might send me back to Rumania. Friedl, an acquaintance from Bucharest, showed up the next day and managed to take me out of there for the night, which I spent with my friend Ruth who already had a flat in Haifa. The next day he took me back there to get my papers, and I was free to leave. I spent the following three months at Ruth's."

Stefi's parents had to survive for six months with the contents of that suitcase which her mother had taken with her, until they were finally permitted to follow Stefi to Israel. When they finally did, they had to spend over a year in a Ma'abara (absorption camp) in Israel. In the meantime Berti obtained his Emigration Permit and came to Israel, where the two finally turned into a couple and got married. Maybe the hardship of the new land made it easier for restless Stefi to finally settle down with an old friend from the old country. Like Dorotea, Stefi and Berti ended up in Haifa; like Dorotea and many other friends, they felt guilty for not having gone to a kibbutz. "I, in fact, had been raised to..."
believe that the true meaning of Zionism was to work the land with a shovel, but it was just not what I was about", Berti acknowledged once.

Soon enough there were only four of the hardcore of our old gang left in Bucharest: Mielu, Tutu, Sasha and I. We used to get together and play bridge, or go swimming in the lakes around Bucharest, or go to the mountains for the weekend. All these innocent activities were to haunt me later, when presented as "forbidden Zionist activity" by the Securitate.

Mielu likes telling the story of one of our excursions of that time. Whenever a few old friends gather in his house in Haifa and the conversation turns to the past, he'd sit back and say: "You want to know about Dan, I'll tell you a story about Dan." He would look around, making sure that his audience was captured, and off he would go. "We went out for a boys' weekend in the mountains, Dan, Sasha and I. We spent the first night at some boarding house, and I actually quite liked the scenery, or, to be more exact, I fancied one of the girls who stayed there and was hoping to, say, get to know her better".

"First thing in the morning Dan wakes us up and says 'let's climb to the peak.' Dan, I tell him, do me a favour, leave me alone, I want to stay here in peace and there's this girl, you know. I don't want to start dragging you up the hill. I was wasting my time and I knew it. When Dan wanted something he always had his way, and I could already see how my short-lived and unconsummated affair was flying out of the window".

"Dan had an iron will, without the fitness to match it. He was slipping behind, but refused to go back. At the top of the mountain Bucegi, 2500 meters above sea level there is a place called Caraiman, where a big crucifix is placed. We got there about 2-3 hours later than we had expected. It was mid afternoon, and there was no chance we could climb down the same way we had climbed up and reach the bottom before dark. Then we realised that there was another way down; a steep narrow path that descended at an angle of 70-80 degrees".

"We asked a few hikers who were there, athletic types, Alpinists, how long it would take us to get down. They said maybe two and a half hours. Alright, I thought, it means it will take us about 4-5 hours; we could still make it before night fall".

"It got dark at 7 p.m. and we were nowhere near the end. It was pitch dark and as dangerous as hell. We could not walk in the dark, we had to sit on our bums and progress in a sitting position. It was freezing cold. Dan was certainly slowing us down. He tried to convince us to leave him there. He said he was fat, and was therefore less likely to freeze. We told him not to be an idiot. I don't think any of us realised how much danger we were in".
"We got to the bottom at 4 a.m. and waited at the train station for the first train to Bucharest that came at six in the morning. We were so exhausted that we did not even make it to the carriage, but collapsed in the little corridor which connects the carriages. Two hours later we were in Bucharest. Dan was semiconscious. I loaded him on a taxi, carried him up 5 floors to his parents flat, and delivered him to his mother, tired but intact. And then I went home and did not get out of bed for two whole days."

So, all in all, we were not having too bad a time, I was still convinced that soon enough the Government would get tired of my endless applications and grant me the desired Emigration Permit. I could not wait to be re-united with Dorotea. And then, towards the end of 1952, all the gates were shut, and all my hopes were shattered. In the Prague Trials of November 1952, The General Secretary of the Czech Communist party, Rudolf Slansky, was accused of treason and of participating in a Zionist Titoist-Trotskyist conspiracy. Thirteen other prominent party bureaucrats, eleven of whom were Jews, were put on trial on similar grounds. Eleven of them were executed and three were sentenced to life imprisonment.

This was followed by the Doctors' Trials in Moscow in January 1953. Prominent Jewish doctors were accused of a conspiracy to murder the Soviet leadership. Hundreds of Jews were arrested in the detention wave that followed. Anti-Semitism prevailed again in Russia. Stalin started implementing his plan for driving the Jews, as well as the Tatars and the Kulaks from the European parts of Russia, to Siberia and the periphery of the Soviet Union. Fortunately, he died in March 1953, after severing, in February, diplomatic relations with Israel.

In the meantime, the Rumanian Government adopted a harsher policy towards Zionism. There were no more permits to leave. The Iron Curtain was felt now more than ever. I was losing hope. I thought I'll end my life in Bucharest. All of a sudden these thoughts became devastatingly tangible. A letter arrived from Dorotea. You were the love of my life, she said, but we shall never meet again. We must start rebuilding our lives again. Please, divorce from me, set me free.

From the distance of 55 years and a happy and eventful life, I can consider myself to be a very fortunate man. But even now, when I think of that moment when I read that letter, I can feel that sharp pain and then the emptiness and loneliness without end that gripped me. I thought I would never recover from the blow. Immediately, without any further ado, I went to see Rabbi Guttman, walking through the ghost-haunted rooms in Orero Street which had hosted, a million years earlier, the cheerful hours of discussions, singing and dancing of our Ken.

Rabbi Guttman looked at my pained face and nodded. He went into an inner room and returned with the divorce papers. I signed them and went to the Post
Office to send them to Dorotea. Afterwards I did not hear anything from her for many years.

I was shocked and upset, but never angry. I understood the difficulties Dorotea must have been facing, though only years later I picked up bits of information and got a full picture. From the status of the most popular and admired girl in her peer-group, surrounded with friends, married, Dorothea was all of a sudden an immigrant in this newly founded State. As often happens to young immigrants, the roles change, and she now had to take care of her parents and fight off difficulties and financial problems. It was a period of rationing in Israel and all supplies were restricted. Dorotea, holding to her faith that the Jewish people have enough intellectuals and hardly enough working class, went to work in a factory. She decided to ignore a newspaper advertisement regarding a course for social workers, but friends had put her name down for it, and she was invited for an interview and offered a course for social workers in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was cold and estranged. Dorotea lived in a motel called "The Pioneers House", studied, and struggled to keep going. "Harder than anything," she said to a friend years later "was the loneliness." The Doctors Trials had tipped the set of scales for Dorotea. She was convinced that she would never see me again. She met another man and decided to marry him. I was hurt, but not resentful.

My spirit, however, was broken. I don't even remember how I had suddenly turned from a somewhat overweight youngster into an excessively fat man weighing exactly 127 kilos; my hormonal system had just collapsed. I was brooding and depressed, but I also realised that I had wasted the past two years of my life expecting something that would never happen. It became clear to me: I had to build a life for myself in Rumania.
In autumn 1952 I added a poem in French to one of my last letters to Dorotea, reading between the lines evokes the feeling of bad times for the future.

As the hawk in the skies,
As the son to his mother,
As the loving soul to the soul of the beloved one
I shall follow you to where the sun rises.
All I desire is to give you my strength and my life,
Dawn is awaiting us on the other side of the world.
My footsteps will tread the globe to reach you,
Even if one day you will change your place
Do not doubt I will find you
1953-1954
The task of rebuilding myself enough to start a new life was not easy. I had to
muster every bit of my famous, or infamous, stubbornness in order to keep
going. And the setting was far from cheerful. The new Rumania was not only
grey and dogmatic; it was also following the Soviet Union on anti-Zionism,
often inspired by anti-Semitism. The disappearance of Zionist leaders and
activists had become a daily event. Some would disappear for days, others were
arrested at their homes, and were not seen for weeks, months, or years.

Tutu's parents, Dr. Cornel and Mela Iancu, veteran Zionist activists, were among
the first to be arrested, as early as 1950. Doctor Iancu was detained first, and his
wife shortly after. Many people in Rumania were living under the terror of the
Secret Services at the time, and a common saying was "do not worry, this is only
a black cat passing by," when soldiers were heard creeping in and around the
buildings at night.

But when they came to take Tutu's father, they were not attempting to be
noiseless. Tutu's mother shouted, "Don't open the door!" The men who pounded
on the door told Tutu that they had a sick child with them. His father, the famous
paediatrician, could not refuse a child in need. Anyway, if the Securitate was so
adamant to take him, they would have broken-in, whether someone opened the
door or not. Tutu looked at his mother, who shook her head alarmed, and at his
father, who silently nodded. He then opened the door. In they stormed, a whole
squad with guns pointed at the family. They searched the house for a few hours
before they left, taking Doctor Iancu with them, as well as all the documents
they could put their hands on, including Hanoar Hazioni photographs.

Tutu's mother had written to a family friend, Zalman Rabinsohn, the brother of
Rumania's Jewish Foreign Minister, Anna Pauker. Rabinsohn was a Rabbi in
Israel and Tutu's mother hoped he could come to Rumania and use his contacts
with his sister to help them. He did come, in a courageous display of friendship,
and was not allowed to leave again. He was arrested later. Tutu's mother was
also arrested. Soon enough Anna Pauker was removed from her high and mighty
position, arrested and put on trial for alleged treason.

Tutu said that when he sought assistance from the Israeli Embassy, he was told
by the Israeli representative, Moshe Averbuch-Agami: "People are fighting in
Palestine too. They can spend some time in prison for the cause."

Almost anybody who was in contact with the Israeli Embassy was arrested. My
mother, who was a secretary at the Embassy, was spared, probably because she
was really not connected to anything political. The Securitate always suspected
that I was keeping contact with the Israelis through my mother.

Many activists felt bitter about the Embassy, and accused it of not having helped
us enough, abandoning us, the Zionist activists, to the terror of the regime.
Personally, I always believed that the Embassy could not have done more.
Tutu was not arrested because he was never active after the crackdown on *Hanoar Hazioni* in 1949. However the *Securitate* kept following him. They had a method of surveillance with cars that had their antennas up in a very obvious way. They stayed all night outside his house. They wanted to know if he was in charge of money distribution for people who needed to pay their emigration fees. The Israeli Embassy used to help such people. They thought that our friend, Dodi Ben Yishai, passed the role to Tutu before he was arrested. They took in Dody and another friend from our group.

Later I was to become familiar with the interrogation methods, which prevailed in the Soviet Union and were "exported" to the whole Eastern bloc as well. Political prisoners were forced to sit down and write their biographies over and over again, undergoing varying amounts of pressure. "We know all about you, no point in lying," was what we were all told repeatedly, in order to shake our confidence, make us volunteer more and more details, some of which could prove useful. More than anything else it was a method designed to break the prisoner's spirit.

My friends and mentors Avni, Shilo Wohl and Moshe Weiss (who later changed his last name to Talmon) were arrested as early as December 1952 and imprisoned for more than two years. Little was known at the time of their whereabouts, they were put on trial in secret and sentenced to prolonged periods of imprisonment. Fear was beginning to creep everywhere. Everybody seemed to be under observation. It was only a question of time as to when one would be picked up for interrogation.

Many years after his agony, Moshe wrote: "In one of the first nights of March 1954 after interrogations lasting 26 months I was forced to change one of my previous declarations, dictated by one of the security officers in a past interrogation. I asked the security officer, why I had to change my declaration that he had dictated to me word by word. His answer was spontaneous, your declaration has to prove that you, Zionist, acted against the Rumanian nation and the working class. In addition to this, you acted in tight collaboration with the fascists and American capitalists against the peace movement. As I read those sentences said by me and written by the interrogation officers of the 13th Group, I realised that the sentences that were said were consistent and basically not contradictory, as if the interrogator and the interrogatee were sitting and having a chat over a cup of coffee. Basically the truth was completely different: every word the interrogatee pronounced was after long physical torture and after many days without food and sleep. Security officials were specialised in blackmailing and hinted that our families would be arrested. After 10-12 hours of interrogation the security people pressed us to sign with the classical wording 'I am herewith making this declaration without being subjected to the use of force and/or threats.' The declaration was the result of lies and inventing 'truths' combined together. There is no need to add that not all the written declarations
were in the file. Some were destroyed and burnt in front of the eyes of the one who was interrogated."

"Even the lion, the king of the animals while being closed in a cage and suffering torture becomes obedient to his tamer. Do not be surprised that some of us surrendered. They did so due to circumstances."

"The officers who tortured us were inexperienced, but the security people had torturing techniques which they learnt from the Soviet Union".

"Beginning 1949 the arrests and the trial of the Thirteen began. The group of the Thirteen included Zionists from all political extraction. The trial started on 29 March 1954. I did not know who else had been accused, who would judge me, who would be my lawyer, and what I was being charged with (which was a common method to the communist regime). The trial was secret and the very few testimonies present were also in prison. It was obvious that they would testify against us. The courtroom was overflowing with security people. On the day of the trial a big surprise was waiting for us. Our court-appointed lawyers were also against us. Instead of defending us they left the decision in the hands of the judges and suggested they act according to their judgement. As far as I am concerned, the trial was the end of 2 years and 2 months of torture, of being locked in a small room size 2mx2mt, where I suffered physical torture, hunger and cold, and of long days and nights being denied to lie down. As a result of the trial I entered into prison with those on trial with me, who believed and shared with me the same ideology of going to Israel. During our imprisonment we were convinced that communism would fall and democracy would win in Rumania. I had hoped for the day that I would put foot on Israel's soil. For the next generation I wish to add that dictatorships come and go, but justice wins in the end. We, a few survivors of the anti-Zionist trials which took place 50 years ago, won."

In this atmosphere of fear, suspense and suspicion I tried to build a career for myself. Until Dorotea's crucial letter, and our divorce, I worked only in temporary odd jobs. I mainly taught and looked after children with learning disabilities, who were referred to my by the psychologist Emil Feder. Occasionally I took photos of friends and printed them in my small lab at my parent's place. Tutu would often come over to develop photos he had taken of his medical school colleagues. This was his way of making a little money too.

Tutu and I also used to visit the new flea market. We went almost every Sunday. Bucharest middleclass families, who were gradually becoming poorer, were the living spirit behind the market, which was not a very cheerful place. Week by week people would bring what once were beloved and carefully collected ornaments, clothes, works of art and fancy dresses, to sell them, for lack of choice, to those who were fortunate enough to afford them. On one of these Sundays, when I was trying to sell a few of my mother's ornaments at our
improvised stall, somebody offered to buy my coat. I said it was not for sale but he insisted, offering a good price. I sold it to him and stood there shivering for the rest of the day. I doubt I made a really good deal.

All this changed after the 1952 crisis and the end of my marriage with Dorotea. I was no longer deluded by the anticipation of leaving Rumania the minute I obtained my Emigration Permit. I thought the Permit would never come.

My first job was also the worst throughout my entire working life. I worked as an accountant in a Government import company for mechanical equipment. All I did was to complete forms, form after form. It was so boring that at every possible moment I escaped to the men's room, remaining there as long as it seemed tolerable reading a book hidden in my pocket. Fortunately, after only 4 months, I was to have an opportunity of turning my hobby into a job, a source of living. (The following 53 years were all filled with work which were also passions, hobbies, pleasure - not a boring moment). Even though times were hard, I was still up for some entertainment, trying to get my mind off Dorotea. I started seeing Beatrice, a nice girl, who Sasha introduced me to. She was even heavier than I was at the time, so for once I could be the cavalier, helping her climb up the mountains rather than being pushed up myself by my friends. Beatrice's cheerfulness brought some light into my life for a while, and snapped me from the depression I was in. But I did not want to get married again, and Beatrice and her family were pressuring me to propose to her. Her brother, an army officer-doctor threatened my life because I was dishonouring her, and eventually the family forbid her to see me unless I promised to marry her. I regretted having to stop seeing her, but marriage was out of the question at the time. My heart had not healed yet.

Around that time Mielu and I became involved in an exciting little adventure. Mielu used to play the pools regularly, gambling on the football results. The pools, like everything in Communist Rumania, were managed by a Government affiliated company called Pronto-Sport. One day they came out with a new game: whoever indicated all wrong results would win a motorcycle. If there was more than one winner, the motorcycle would go to the participant with the highest number of wrong results.

The first day of this new scheme I came up with a formula. It was genial in its simplicity, based on the idea that guessing the wrong results was just like guessing the right ones, only easier, as in every column there are two wrong results and only one right. The formula defined the minimum investment needed, including double and triple columns, in order to secure all the wrong results, in big numbers.

I went to see Mielu to tell him that I had 500 Lei and that if he could get 500 Lei we would invest 1000 Lei and win the motorcycle. Mielu had only 300 Lei so he borrowed 200 Lei from friends. As the football expert, Mielu filled the form. We
got 32 wrong results. The next, after us, only got 8 wrong results and we won the motorcycle; it was worth at least 30000 Lei.

We then made our first mistake. We went together to collect the prize and were photographed by a photographer from some sports magazine, who was present, and our photo was published.

The first time we played in my name, so the following week we filed a form in Mielu's name. We invested 1500 Lei, and we probably got better at it because this time we guessed 166 wrong results. We were ecstatic. A week had gone by and we did not receive a letter informing us of our win. When we inquired we were told that someone from Timisoara, who scored 177 wrong results, won. We argued. Then somebody pulled out a totally unclear form with some pigeon writing on it and we could not argue with it.

The third time we played, Mielu's gentle friend, Constantinidi Valentin, participated too, and we won another motorcycle, which Constantinidi received. Constantinidi and I kept the motorcycles, buying Mielu's share for which he received quite a nice sum of money. But Mielu wanted out. The investment sums kept going up and he feared the authorities were getting suspicious. This is also why he opposed my wish to insist on getting the second motorcycle, even though we were sure we deserved it.

I kept playing alone for a while and won another motorcycle. I enjoyed riding around the countryside on it, but it also got me into trouble. I went riding in the Fagarashti Mountain with Constantinidi and another friend called Mircea Weinberg. Constantinidi was accompanied by a girl, named Etta. Suddenly, from a nearby meadow, a large shepherd's dog started running and jumped into the road in front of my motorcycle. I fell off and was not hurt but Mircea, who was riding behind me, literally flew off his motorcycle ending up with a serious head injury. He was taken to hospital and Etta volunteered to stay and look after him, while we continued our trip. They later married and are still happy with their two children and now also grandchildren. But despite the fact that my motorcycles brought so much good luck to the love life of my friends, I still felt
that they might be too dangerous. Shortly after I sold both my motorcycles and bought a car instead. I became the owner of one of Rumania's 1000 privately owned cars.

Another way to get my mind off Dorotea was to join a course for referees in table-tennis competitions. This sport was on the rise in Rumania at the time and enjoyed a lot of public interest, mainly because a female Rumanian player, Angelica Rozeanu, had good chances of winning the world championships. I enrolled for the course and was accepted. I went through training and was about to become one of the referees in the coming world championships, which were shortly to take place in Bucharest.

On the day of the first competition I left home in the morning to go to the championship venue. It was in Bucharest, but as a referee I was expected to remain there for the whole week without returning home at night. I was standing at the bus stop, waiting for the bus. It was the 27th of March, 1953, at eight o'clock in the morning. A car crept round the corner, and stopped in front of me. Four men leaped out; two approached me from the back and two from the front. There was no point resisting. They pushed me into the back seat of the car and put dark, tin glasses over my eyes which prevented me from seeing anything. They said, "You are coming with us now for interrogation". I was not surprised. I knew that one day my turn, too, would come to be snatched up as so many friends before me. But I was frightened. Some friends had disappeared in the Securitate dungeons and their fate was then yet, unknown.

When they removed my glasses we were inside a building. They took my belongings, watch, belt and shoe laces, and locked me in a cell. The cell was empty except for a hard block of wood on which I could lie down or sit. I was told that I would be allowed to sleep when they announced that it was night and that I would have to stand or sit when I was told it was day. There was no other indication as to whether it was day or night as the bright electric light was on at all times.

A few minutes after I had been locked in the cell, I was taken for my first interrogation. There were always two or three interrogators present, asking me questions in the well-known bad-cop/good-cop technique. I had to give my life story from my childhood, over and over again. They asked the same questions repeatedly, saying all the time: "We know everything about you, but we want to see if you are cooperating with us and telling us everything."

I was taken back to the cell and was told: "It is night now. You may lie down." But a few minutes later I was taken for another interrogation. This time, when I was brought back to the cell, they said: "It is now day. You can either sit or stand."
There was a little peep-hole on the cell door and once in a while a guard would open it and look in at me. If I needed to use the toilet I had to knock on the cell door, a guard would show up, cover my eyes and take me. I could sense and hear that there were other people passing in the corridors, but I could not see them.

I got my meals in the cell, some kind of soup and a piece of not very fresh bread. The interrogators used to eat during the interrogations; they ate especially good food. I think it was intentional; the idea was to mark the difference between the prisoner and the captor.

All my answers to my interrogators were neutral. They knew many of the things I had done and there was no point in denying them. They knew what I did in Hanoar Hazioni. In November 1949 there was a meeting of the Central Committee of Hanoar Hazioni where we naively discussed the options for underground activity, if and when the movement would be banned by the authorities. We had agreed to organise cells of activists, but no serious activity ever took place. We kept meeting from time to time, but we were not interested in fighting the Communist regime. All we wanted was to leave for Israel. My interrogators knew all about this, as well as the fact that for a few months after Hanoar Hazioni had been closed, I used to send to comrades' houses, things left over from our Hachshara in Piatra Neamţ like blankets, clothes, food.

I had also received money from Moshe Weiss, who worked at the Israeli Embassy, in order to help distribute this support money to those in need.

After a few days of interrogation they made me sign a declaration saying that I will be discharged under the condition that I shall not tell anybody what had happened to me and that if I were to talk about it I would be risking life imprisonment. I signed the declaration, stating I accepted that if I was to tell anybody of my interrogation I would be committing a hostile offence against the Party and that I accepted life imprisonment as my due punishment.

They then took me out of my cell, again put the black, tin glasses over my eyes, shoved me into a car and dropped me off at the championships. I made it for the two final days. The organisers, it turned out, were not surprised by my absence. Probably somebody from the Securitate rang and told them that I would not be there on time. Even now, I do not know whether they intended to release me from the very beginning or whether they reached that decision during the interrogation.

As far as my parents were concerned, I was having a wonderful time at the table-tennis championships so they had no cause to be worried. But during the weeks following my arrest, I would wake up every night from haunting nightmares and scream in my sleep. My father was not woken by this, but my mother, as only mothers sense, was. She would come into my room, calm me
down, wipe my sweaty forehead, offer me a glass of water and words of comfort. I could not fool her. She knew something was very wrong. Eventually I just had to tell her, but I knew that I was burdening her with a terrible truth. My father never knew.

Mid 1953 I found a job as a photo-reporter at a daily German language newspaper called "Neuer Weg", (New Way). I travelled a lot through Rumania, especially in the German speaking areas. Sometimes I travelled alone, producing articles with many photos and little text. Sometimes I went out with a reporter and, in such cases, I only took photos and the reporter wrote the articles. I still remember a trip to Constanza on the Black Sea with a red-haired and red-nailed young, female reporter. Even though she was not really my type I was contemplating a flirt. My plans ended when I fell from the top bunk in the train's sleeping compartment, hurting my shoulder badly.

The job paid reasonably, according to the standards of impoverished Rumania of the 1950s, when most of the agricultural and industrial products were taken by Rumania's protector, the Soviet Union, as compensation for war damages. But one is always in need of some extra money, and I was never short of initiative. Apart from my job, I developed photography into a prosperous, freelance side-business.

Of course, free enterprise, which was not only my ideology but also an inseparable part of my personality, was strictly forbidden in communist Rumania. I found my way around it. I was even commissioned to do some work for Government Ministries. In the grand representation of Communism, it was not only the citizen who had to be enterprising and cunning in order to survive; sometimes Government entities had to swindle a bit too in order to maintain their activity in the Soviet Satellite States' System. In that period the COMECON, the economic union of the Communist States, decided that Rumania should be declared an agricultural State rather than an industrial one. The implications were that Rumania would be forced, for example, to buy buses from East Germany or Hungary, becoming dependent for industrial goods on the other COMECON countries.

Struggling against that decision, the Ministry of Industry had commissioned me to produce a photographic presentation of Rumanian Industry. Impressive Government resources were used to show a virtual factory for bus manufacturing, which did not yet exist, and I used all my talent to photograph, in the most flattering light, the made-up buses just off the imaginary production line.

My partner in this enterprise was Cramer, a fellow journalist from the German newspaper. The Ministries could not pay me, because they did not have a budget for commissioning catalogues. It was agreed that they would pay me with more photographic paper than I needed. What I did not use I sold, or used for my
other photo enterprises. In time it became clear that finding an independent source of income was invaluable.

Some time went by, and my old friend F from Hanoar Hazioni came to see me. He said that the Israeli Embassy knows all about me and my predicament with Dorotea, and that they want to help me escape Rumania and emigrate to Israel. He told me to go to Braila Harbour, on the Danube River, on a certain date and at a specified time, carrying a magazine under my arm. There I would be met by a sailor, who would take me on a boat up the Danube, all the way to Vienna.

I could not pack a suitcase, not to raise suspicion. I did not say goodbye to any of my friends, and gave no notice at work. I was about to put my life in the hands of this sailor, trusting him to get me to Vienna hidden somewhere on his boat, and to take care of my needs during the journey. My parents were the only ones I told. I had been asked not to do so, but this was an instruction I just could not follow. I had to face my mother's tears and my father's grave silence. I did not know when, if ever, I would see them again.

But all this excitement proved to be premature. I took the train to Braila, bought the indicated magazine at a news stand, and walked to the jetty. I paced back and forth for hours, constantly fearing the appearance of Securitate agents grabbing me and taking me back to prison. But nobody came, neither the sailor nor the police. I had a cousin who lived in Braila so I paid him a visit and then returned home to Bucharest.

Shortly after one of the Securitate interrogators, who had interrogated me, rang me at home. He introduced himself as "one of the people who interviewed you when you were our guest," and asked to meet me next to the main post office building, at Calea Victoria. "Be as discreet as you can," he told me. Keen to prove myself to be a useless agent, I did my best to be as indiscreet as humanly possible. I got to the post office and started marching up and down the street, glancing in all directions and waving my arms conspicuously.

The Securitate officer, who showed up just after, was alarmed. "Hush! Stop drawing attention on yourself!" he hissed at me. We went to a nearby house that was used as a meeting place by the Securitate. He was friendly and asked how I was and what I was doing. I told him I was working for the German language newspaper. He insisted: "What have you been up to recently. Come on, tell me everything, you know that we know everything about you anyway." He offered me tickets for a football match, a very rare luxury at the time. I said no thank you. I told him I was going to football matches anyway, to take photos for the paper, standing behind the goal door. It was true. Actually, after a year of shooting football photographs every Sunday I became so bored with it that I never again set foot in a football stadium.
"Who are you meeting with," he started again, "have you gone out of town at all?" I began to realise what he was getting at. "Yes," I admitted, "I went to Braila to visit my cousin." He sighed. "Look, I like you. Don't get yourself into trouble. I can see that you are a positive person. Show us that you mean well. Tell us the whole truth."

It had not occurred to me for a moment to betray F, and apart from the Braila story I had nothing to hide. I was working hard, every now and again I went to the cinema, I played bridge with my friends, went swimming on Sundays with old comrades from Hanoar Hazioni and, all in all, had nothing to report that could interest the Securitate. Nothing, except for the tale of how F sent me to Braila, which I could not tell.

I wasted the interrogator's time telling him about the films I had seen. During the first days of Communism they were still showing American films in the cinemas, and I particularly remember being impressed by "Gone with the Wind". Something about the colourfulness and brightness of the scenes seemed to defy the Communist greyness which encapsulated us. (I did not mention this to the Officer). I praised "Zoia", a Russian film about a partisan girl during the war, which genuinely impressed me. I always had a soft spot for very strong women.

The interrogator, obviously was not interested in cinema, but as he could not get me to say anything about Braila, he finally let me go. I had to sign a declaration stating that I had told the whole truth. It was scary. I was aware of all the stories of people going missing for similar offences.

Alas, I did not know that the boat from Braila was an old and overused trap for Zionist activists. Others were arrested after they had attempted to escape Rumania through Braila. Their stories were almost identical to mine, but I only found out about it years later, when I read Avni's book about his prolonged imprisonment. At the time I had no way of knowing that Braila was anything more than a well meant plan used for the wrong purpose by the wrong people.

The future looked quite bleak to me. I thought that I would be arrested again, that things would really happen like the Securitate officers had threatened me; "your bones will rot in prison". My friend, Tutu Iancu, who by then was a medical student, gave me a small bag with Potassium cyanide, which I hid on me, hoping that I would be able to take at the moment of my feared next arrest, to avoid the long tortures to which I could have been submitted.

My good fortune decided otherwise.

The Securitate agent made contact another two or three times after that. He always said the same thing: "Tell me all of it, tell me everything, we know all about you anyway."
And then F. came to see me again. He said, "We know that the sailor failed to meet you last time. It was a mess-up. You are going to get another chance. Travel to Braila again, this time the sailor will be there." I said "Forget it, never mind, I am not going." He was upset. "But why won't you go? Why? The Embassy worked so hard to arrange this for you! Why are you being so stubborn?"

I felt that I had to warn him. I said, "Look, let me tell you what happened to a friend of mine." I told him the whole story of my encounter with the Securitate as if it had happened to one of my friends. He turned pale and left immediately.

The Securitate were in touch a few more times, inviting me over for "friendly chats" and then they lay-off me. Or so I thought.

For many years I had been wondering about F, asking myself whether his story was genuine. I refused to believe that he was an agent provocateur.

Years later, when I finally reached Israel, I asked Moshe Weiss-Talmon if he knew anything about that plan to smuggle me to Israel. He was evasive, saying that he was imprisoned at the time so he had no idea of what was going on. Maybe it was so, but it is also possible that he did not want to speak bad of the dead, as F was no longer among the living.

Only in 1990 I finally got my files from the Securitate and learnt the whole, painful truth. In the files I am referred to as Puiu. F is nicknamed Sandu. On 23 September 1953, a Securitate officer summed up their relationship with me in a document. It made me proud of my then behaviour. Its translation reads:

Decision n° 272/2

Goldenthal Dan, whom we refer to as Puiu, born on 23rd of May 1929 in Bucharest, son of Alfred and Elisa, domiciled in Bucharest, in St. Vasile Lascar n°6, profession: photo reporter.

He was a member of the youth Zionist organisation Hanoar Hazioni from the year 1944. Puiu actively participated in the activity of the organisation, becoming one of the leading activists in the organisation. He was an instructor in many sections of the organisation in Timisoara, Bacau and Piatra Neamt.

Before the abolition of the Zionist organisations, Hanoar Hazioni held a meeting on November 1948, where the future illegal activity was discussed. Cells of activists would have to be formed. Puiu also participated in this meeting, becoming a member of such an
illegal cell afterwards. In order to continue the illegal activity, Puiu, like other activists, received an amount of money from the Israeli Embassy in Bucharest through Moshe Weiss, arrested previously for espionage activity.

Starting 27th of March 1953, we approached Puiu, based on compromising material against him, and proposed to him to collaborate with us in uncovering the illegal activity of the Hanoar Hazioni organisation.

From that moment until today, Puiu did not supply any valuable material, despite the fact that he has many contacts and links with the previous Zionists. He tried to avoid the assignments we gave him and lately, did not even present himself at the meetings we had summoned him to.

Our agent, Sandu, involved him in the plan of illegal immigration, initially organised by Israeli diplomats. Puiu did not mention anything to our Securitate officers about the instructions he had received from Sandu on this matter.

When Sandu once again requested from Puiu a renewed help in the illegal immigration movement, Puiu described his case to Sandu, attributing it though to an imaginary friend of his. From the way Puiu told the story, Sandu reached the conclusion that the subject was not a friend but Puiu himself.

We do not exclude that, as he told Sandu, Puiu could have betrayed us, revealing our collaboration attempts with him, also to his Zionist links as well as to Israeli diplomats.

Considering that Puiu is not being honest with our officers, that he is aware of our illegal immigration scheme and that he continues in his relations with previous Zionists, we suggest to stop any attempt to obtain his collaboration with us and have him followed by the Information Group n°13.

Signed
Lieutenant Major - Illegible name
Approved by the Service Director Lieutenant Colonel V. Nicolau
Cu propuneri de scoatere din rețeaua informativă a informa-
torului "PUIU" și luarea lui în lucră în acțiunea informat-
vă de grup Nr. 13.

GELAENTUR, DAN, conspirotiv "PUIU", s-a născut la 23 mai 1929, în București, fiul lui ALFRED și ELIZA, cu domiciliul în București, Str. Vasile Lascăr Nr. 6.

Este de profesie fotoreporter la C.C.P.S.

Sus-numitul a făcut parte din organizația sionistă de tineret "HANOAR HATZIONI" din anul 1944.

Ca membru al acestei organizații "PUIU" a participat activ la acțiunile întreprinse de organizație, ajun- gând să fie unul dintre activiștii de frunte ai acestei organizații, deținând funcția de instructor în mai multe coloective de muncă din Timișoara, Bacău și Piatra Neamț.

Cu ocazia disolvării organizațiilor sioniste, în noiembrie 1948, organizația sionistă "HANOAR HATZIONI" a ținut o ședință unde s-a discutat problema tracerei în ilegalitate a organizației, prin formarea de nuclee. La această ședință a participat și "PUIU", ulterior făcând și el parte dintr-un nuclee ilegal.

Pentru continuarea activității ilegale, ca și alți sioniști, "PUIU" a primit sume de bani de la Legația Israel din București, prin intermediul lui MOSHE WEISS, fost arestat pentru activitate de spionaj.
I was no longer a youngster when these documents reached me, but the taste of betrayal was bitter. Despite the fact that I did have my doubts all these years, I was still shocked by the written proof of F’s collaboration with the Securitate. I never exposed him, and I shall not do it now. Whatever his reasons to behave as he did, coercion, extortion or hope for personal benefit, he had taken them with him to his grave. I am still very curious to know what drove him. The file makes it clear that he had reported on other members of Hanoar Hazioni, his own comrades.

F was not the only one who reported on me regularly, but another friend, who had done so under the nickname Damian, did it in a far more benign way and was actually acting in my interest. Damian kept reporting about my diligence at work, telling how positive I was and how attached to Rumania I was becoming. He said it was evident I had given up all thoughts of trying to leave for Israel.

The last direct contact the Securitate made with me was in early 1954, and though I felt their long arm twice again, they never approached me in person again. However the file revealed to me how industrious they were in following me. In the file there are complete surveillance reports which were carried out until 1959. Including being fired in 1958 due to their request from my new work at the magazine "Rumania Today", which I well narrate in the following chapter. There are transcripts of all my phone conversations, interviews with each and every neighbour in the 7-floor building I lived in, details about all my colleagues at work and references to every letter I had ever received during this period. At the time, I had not noticed that the letters had been opened. Evidently, the Securitate was very professional.

I also discovered that they knew all about my little business. They were well informed, as Mielu feared, regarding the motorcycle scam, and they knew only too well that I was making some money on the side by selling photos privately. They kept all this information on file, but they never asked me about it during the interrogations, and they had not commented on this information in the file. It is obvious that their interest was only on the political side of things.

What still amazes me today about all of this is the excessive waste of manpower, money and energy which was dedicated to following my actions. After all, I was a very small fish, even in the narrower context of Zionist activity, and certainly in the wider scheme of "subversive activity" in Rumania. The Securitate, just like the Stasi in East Germany and other parallel organisations in the Soviet bloc, had turned spying on friends and neighbours out of greed, fear, or even boredom into a way of life for a whole nation.

The Securitate had not contacted me directly anymore, but a few months later, after my release, in 1954 I was summoned by the Photographic Editor of my newspaper. He sat in his room and flicked nervously through piles of photographs and papers on his desk. He avoided eye contact when he said "I
have been asked to fire you. You should leave immediately." I was furious, but not at all surprised, and yet I insisted on being told the reason for my dismissal. He became more and more embarrassed and repeated over and over again: "I have my instructions; it was not my decision to make."

I insisted time and time again to meet the Editor-in-Chief to get an explanation. I even sent Beatrice, who knew the Editor, to try and get the truth from him. Eventually I was summoned for a meeting. Breitenstein, the Editor-in-Chief, was a very blond man of German origin. Unlike the Photographic Editor, he looked me straight in the eyes and said expressionlessly: "You are being fired because you were seen drunk in Elisabeta Boulevard."

I might have been up to some mischief in my youth, but alcohol had never been my type of mischief. I do not drink, and I never did. Not even a glass of wine with a meal. It was just as incredible as if he had told me that I had been seen walking on my hands or taking pigeons out of a hat. But it was clear that protesting and denying were not going to get me anywhere. He just repeated that same sentence over and over again. My friends and colleagues from work were quick to turn their backs on me. Cramer, who was keen on our freelance ventures, did not want to have anything to do with me anymore. The red-haired, red-nailed female reporter pretended not to see me when I walked out of the office for the last time. The cold shoulder was almost more painful than the sacking.

After my interrogation and dismissal from work, Tutu's parents were still in prison. All contact with them was prohibited. People would meet Tutu on the street and ask "What's with your parents, are they still alive?" He did not know the answer to this question.

Once in a while a corrupt officer would call Tutu and offer to get a package through to his parents in prison. He always prepared letters and packages because he did not want to miss the chance that they would indeed reach his parents in need. Tutu later discovered that no package or letter had ever been delivered to them.

Tutu discovered that his father was alive because in 1954 Doctor Iancu was finally put on trial, together with other Zionist activists. The activists had been divided by the authorities into a few groups. Tutu's mother's trial had already taken place. The time and venue of all these trials were kept secret. Later, Tutu was to discover that his mother had been put on trial in a group which included Moshe Weiss-Talmon, who supported her through this ordeal. He literally had to hold her up so that she would not collapse to the floor. Tutu's mother went to jail weighing 65 Kilograms and when she was released in 1956, years later, she was half this weight.
The day before Tutu was to marry his girlfriend Daisy - a small moment of light in the dark and burdening years he was going through - a man rang him, introducing himself as a lawyer called Popescu. "Are you Cornel Iancu's son? I have been appointed to represent him at his trial tomorrow. He is accused of being a Zionist. Could you please explain to me what a Zionist is?"

Tutu did not have too much faith in Popescu's legal talent or in his chances or intentions of beating the Rumanian State in a secret trial, nonetheless he went to see him, paid him money, and explained to him what a Zionist was. The one good thing that came out of the meeting was that the lawyer told him where and when the trial was to take place. It was at the same place where the office that announced the sentences was located.

"The next day I walked in and asked about my mother's sentence," Tutu told me. "I was told that she was to be imprisoned for 20 years and that her property was to be confiscated. I went into the toilet rooms and hid there for two hours and then sneaked cautiously into the gallery above the big hall. A group of prisoners had been herded into the room to await their trial. Both the gallery and the room were half darkened and it was hard for me to recognise anybody. I knew all of them, but they were hardly recognisable; they were all skinny, weak and half drugged after years of interrogations and detention. They were surrounded by many Securitate people." Tutu continued, "Finally I recognised my father. He just sat there gazing at the floor. I made a step forward. I wanted him to see me so that he would see that I'm free, that I'm alive, that I care. But the imprudent step drew the attention of the Securitate, who leaped up to the gallery and grabbed me. My father's head was still bent down when they reached me and dragged me out of the gallery. I was brought before a Colonel-General. I thought I was doomed."

"They said 'Here, we caught Iancu's son. He came here to spy for the Americans on what we are doing'. I looked the Colonel-General in the eyes and he looked back at me. Suddenly we recognised each other. He was Rudi, the Jewish guy who was with us in the labour camp in the summer during the war. Back then he tried to flirt with my sister. 'What have you seen?' he asked. I said I was in the toilet after having received my mother's verdict. He sighed and said 'If you tell anybody what you've seen here today you shall never see the light of day again. Do you understand?' I understood. I walked out of the room, directly to the Registry Office and got married."

Coming back to my recollections, around that time in 1954 my mother and I celebrated my father's birthday. I had a surprise for him, a Baltica radio made in Russia, that he had been eyeing for a long time. Beyond his joy of receiving the gift he wanted, I felt that he was also proud that I had managed to save enough money through my odd jobs to purchase such a luxurious present for him. My father was not an easy man to please, and I rejoiced in his response. But shortly after the birthday my family was struck by another calamity. My mother, who
was gradually recovering from the shock of my interrogation and the fear that I could be grabbed and detained again, was in for another blow. One morning she woke up and found my father lying next to her, dead. A thin line of blood was still trickling from his nose. I called Tutu and an older doctor friend of the family, Bubi Kahane, but they could only acknowledge that he was dead. My father suffered from high blood pressure and was a heavy smoker. A brain-stroke in his sleep caused his death. From that moment on I had to support my mother and my two grandmothers. Finding a new, regular source of income had turned into an immediate necessity. The fear of another arrest was still hovering over me; an arrest that would have meant total disaster to everybody dear to me.

Israel Military Decoration awarded Dan David for his part in the struggle for the establishment of the State of Israel
1954

Over the years Mircea Ferester, a schoolmate from Cultura, became a photo reporter. He worked for the daily paper Bucharest Information, and one day he called me in a state of high excitement. "Listen, Dan, they're starting up a new magazine, a monthly for foreign readers. I know the editors. I can introduce you."

The magazine was to be called Romania Today. It would be printed in English, French, Spanish, German and Russian. Its aim was to become a sort of Life magazine, with emphasis on photography. I joined a department with 8 photographers, led by Ion Hananel, a Jew of Spanish origin, and his assistant, Cecilia Nicolau, who dealt with the administrative work. The Romanian Government was not pinching pennies on this venture, and I received the best existing equipment. I had a huge Linhof 6x9 camera, a smaller Rolleiflex, and a strobe / flash unit Mecablitz which weighed more than 10 kilos.

We got our assignments from Hananel, sometimes going out on our own and sometimes with a journalist. My first efforts were of standard quality. The pictures were not bad, but they were not photo-journalism because I lacked that specific experience. Patiently, Hananel taught me how to use my imagination more in order to surprise, and so impress the readers. I was eager, learnt fast and worked hard. Within a few months, I became one of the best of the team.

At the same time I somehow tried to restart a personal life. Along with my friend, Mircea Weinberg, we left for an excursion to the Bucegi mountains. During the climb, we met two nice girls, Silvia and Irina, with whom we started flirting – I with Silvia and Mircea with Irina. I had never considered flirting tiresome, but this time I did, as we were all breathless, hiking up the steep trails leading to the highest point of the mountains, at 2.550mt, while trying to arrange a rendez-vous at the same time!

Our efforts were rewarded however. We had an appointment to see each other back in Bucharest. Silvia, a very sweet girl, was a government employee, divorced and mother of a sweet three-year old daughter. We started going out together but, after a short period of time, she told me she really wanted to find a husband and a father for her daughter quite soon. However much I liked her, I was not in the mood to remarry in the near future, so we thought best to stop seeing each other.
A short time later, I started dating Beatrice Cearnes. She was cute, although very overweight. Beatrice worked as a nurse and her brother was a doctor for the famous Securitate. Her father was one of the last to still resist in private economy and, for the moment, his business was still doing well, but would be closed soon after.

Beatrice and I got along quite well. The only “problem” was when she would accompany me during the weekends on my excursions to the mountains. Beatrice was not fond of exercise, but came along so we could be together. She would immediately become tired and breathless due to the great physical effort, her weight not helping, so I often had to help her by literally pushing her up the trails. These funny situations would make us both laugh, although we were aware my friends were making fun of us behind our backs, but we accepted this good-naturedly.

Unfortunately, after a short while, Beatrice fell pregnant. I say unfortunately because, although I love children, I felt that neither the time nor the person were right. Her brother, aware that Beatrice was pregnant, came to see me and threatened me to marry her. It was a choice I instantly rejected and which I would not have to take into consideration seriously as, fortunately for me, Beatrice suffered a natural abortion only a few days later. Alarmed by the close call and being confident I had no wish to remarry yet, I decided it was best Beatrice and I should no longer see each other, and officially announced to her family that we had broken up.

Beatrice insisted to see me sometimes, for us to enjoy moments of intimacy, without her family’s knowledge and pressure, but it wasn’t a situation that could last for long and our relationship slowly ended completely.
Meanwhile, all around me, my friends started getting married one after the other; Sadi Parpar with Clara, Gaston Pollack with his beautiful wife, and so on. I still remained determined not to remarry. My instinct to refuse the marriage institution prevailing, after my first sorrowful experience.

One afternoon I was standing in line at the administration office, to hand in my expense account when a woman pushed me aside. She was young, blond, blue-eyed, and had a lovely figure. "Permit me to steal your turn Comrade", she said, (that's how you approached people you didn't know in those days), "I am in a hurry." I stepped aside, she finished her business and rushed out without another word, leaving me very curious as to who she was.

I found out that her name was Mia Fischer. She was a freelance journalist who also worked for the magazine. I quickly discovered she was brilliant, talented and clever, and wrote on a variety of subjects. We chatted from time to time, but I was looking for an opportunity to get to know her better.
I suspect Hananel knew and even approved. So one day we ended up on an assignment together, Mia for the text and I for the photos. It was on King Lear at the National Theatre, with the most important Romanian actors on stage. At the end of the play I walked her home. While strolling along in a public park, with the night, the moon and the stars as accomplices, we exchanged our first kiss. We did not rush things and at first did not get much past the kissing stage.

Mia lived alone with her mother, Leontine Fischer, who was a domineering puritan. Mia's younger brother had died in 1940 and her father four years later. All of Leontine’s love was for Mia.

The Fischer family was well known in Bukovina and in general in Romania, mainly due to their properties, which included a glass factory and lots of land. Before World War I, Mia's uncle, Moki Fischer, managed agricultural lands that he rented from the rich Romanian nobles who preferred to live in the capital Bucharest, close to the King's palace and to political life. To pay for their luxurious lifestyle, the “Boyards” always demanded more money from their Jewish tenants and this made life ever more difficult for their farmers and labourers. In 1907, there was a major riot on the lands Fischer managed, that spread throughout Romania. The army intervened and the riots were quelled only after the death of 11,000 peasants. Fischer kept his lands, but the riots themselves became a pretext for new anti-Semitic legislation, including a law that restricted the access of Jewish students to universities.

Mia was already divorced when I met her, after 6 months of an arranged marriage that quickly turned sour. There was a lot of anger and many plates broken on her husband's head. I suppose it was natural that Mia's mother guarded her cub like a tiger, to protect her from further pain and disappointment. Mrs. Fischer's brother, Aurel Schuller, was equally protective. He belonged to the Jewish Romanian aristocracy. Aron, his father, who was close to politicians and other powerful personalities, had even participated in the peace talks held in Versailles in 1919 after the first World War. Many Jewish students felt indebted to Aron Schuller for the generous donation that enabled the creation of a Student Hostel for those who had no other lodging solutions.

Despite the surveillance, the feelings Mia and I shared grew stronger. We were deeply in love with each other. We kept seeking ways to cheat our watch dogs. We worked together, we went to the cinema and even read the same book: when I was halfway through it, I tore it so Mia could start reading it from the beginning. We decided to study law, while still working as journalists, as I had the responsibility of my mother and two grandmothers and Mia had to look after her mother.
At the end of the second year, for the first time in my life I failed an exam: Roman Law. Discouraged, I gave up studying law. Mia continued her studies and became a lawyer, but never practised. In order to stay close to her, I followed courses in history, psychology and pedagogy.

That summer, while we were courting, Romania Today sent me to a medical congress in Bulgaria, fruit of a collaboration between both countries. Mia was to come with me. Getting an exit permit from Romania was always difficult, and we prepared everything in advance. Passports were ready; anticipation and joy were at their peak. The day before our departure, Mia told me she could not find her passport. I immediately suspected her mother, who did all she could to prevent us from being together, and away from her watchful eye. Mia could not come and I was furious, because she even denied the possibility that her mother was the culprit. I was so angry and vengeful that I had a short, passionate affair with a young woman who worked for a Bulgarian magazine. She toured Sofia with me and we travelled also to Plevna, site of the famous historic battle where the Romanians and Russians fought against the Turks in 1877. I never thought I would see that lady from Sofia again, until one day she surprised me with a visit to Bucharest. I had to shake her off and confess my Bulgarian escapade to Mia, who did not speak to me for a whole day, but then we made up.

At that time, COMECON, the economic union of the Communist States, decided that Romania should be declared an agricultural state rather than an industrial one. The implications were that Romania would be forced, for example, to buy buses from East Germany or Hungary and generally become dependent for industrial goods on the other COMECON countries. However, the Romanian Prime Minister, Gheorghiu Dej, supported national independence and did not wish to comply 100 per cent with the Russian "requests".

Struggling against the COMECON decision, the Ministry of Industry secretly commissioned me to produce a photographic presentation of the Romanian “bus manufacturing” industry. This was a big professional challenge. Impressive Government resources were used to show a virtual factory manufacturing buses, which did not yet exist, and I exercised all my talent to photograph, in the most flattering light, the virtual buses just off the imaginary production line. The results were perfect, very convincing. The Ministry could not pay me in cash, because they did not have a budget for commissioning catalogues. It was agreed that they would provide me with more photographic paper than I needed. What I did not use I sold, or used for my private photography ventures, not 100% legal in our wholly State-regulated economy. This brought in quite a good profit which I shared with Hananel, my boss at the magazine. He was my partner in this and following enterprises, and this gave me more freedom of movement.

Finding a source of independent income allowed me to become one of the one thousand private car owners in Romania. I sold the two motorbikes I had won at the lottery, to complement the money I made, and bought a beautiful Moskvitch car. Choice was limited at the time. You could buy the Warburg, which was produced in East Germany, and of course a Trabant, that was more of a joke than a car, due to its particular two-stroke motor.
The big fancy cars, like Zim or Volga, were only for the powerful people, meaning high-ranking officers in the Government. The Russian-made Moskvitch was in much demand because it was sturdy and reliable, and I was lucky to get one.

I had a car, but did not have a licence to drive a car (only a motorcycle one), which was much easier to get. I stared learning theory, which was not difficult, started taking driving lessons with an instructor, but I knew that the practical examination would be tricky. I convinced Hananel that it could be interesting to make a reportage on the driving licence examination. He liked the idea and so, with my heavy equipment, I spent a day photographing the examiners and the candidates, the enthusiasm of those who passed and the disappointment of those who were rejected.

On the day of my examination, I arrived with my reportage, with a pack of photos to distribute to all the examiners and, who knows why I easily passed my examination.

The car gave me a lot of freedom of movement. There were no parking problems and I could travel all over the country, even though the roads were bad. Sometimes Mia joined me, especially on the trips I made privately.

Meanwhile, my work for the magazine continued.

Once, singer Yves Montand and his charming wife, Simone Signoret, came to Bucharest and I covered his concert tour. I was enchanted by his personality and impressed by his professionalism. He went into every detail and repeated every phrase several times until he was satisfied. He was a real perfectionist. At that time the couple Montand / Signoret were dedicated communists and asked a lot about our life, and I always had to confirm that I was happy with my life, with my work and with the society I lived in. The concert tour was a great success and it was not even easy to get a ticket for Mia. After each song, the audience gave him a standing ovation as a way of thanking this marvellous artist, also out of love and affection for his country, France - whose culture was deeply rooted in Romania - and naturally for the way he performed. As a person who had never left the borders of Romania, except for Bulgaria, I became attached to this artist whose songs lit up Paris for me, making it become the city of my dreams. "Under the skies of Paris", moved and awoke in me my yearning for a city that I knew I loved before ever going there.

On another occasion, a German journalist and I toured the Bukovina monasteries in my car. In those days, my German was not as rusty as it is today and I could communicate and work well with him. I admired the rich architecture, the beautiful icons - pieces of art in their own right. Mia, who spoke German at mother-tongue level, joined us for part of the trip. As the German journalist's trip was ending, I bought the journalist's tape recorder for Mia. It weighed 12 kilos, and used 20 cm magnetic tapes. Nowadays, such an unwieldy instrument would be ridiculous, but then it was not only a very expensive purchase, but a real coup, as it was difficult to find one on the local market.
After we left the German journalist, Mia and I went to see her old home which, together with its huge garden and the glass factory, had been nationalised by the Government. Everything was neglected and we were not allowed to enter. Yet, despite the sorrow in our hearts, we were happy to have seen what there was to see of the place where Mia had grown up and lived until 1940.

The magazine assigned us a wonderful task; to photograph and write about the Danube delta, which I believe to be one of the most beautiful natural sites in Europe, not very well-known. Before flowing into the Black Sea, the Danube branches into three main arms. We travelled down all three on a small-sized ship, then stopped and left the main arm on a smaller boat, passing through lakes, marshes and very small channels, which crisscross the whole area of the delta. It is covered by a very lush vegetation, and populated by over 300 species of birds, as well as 45 species of freshwater fish. Mia, who was a better writer than I, was able to put on paper the words to describe the beauty surrounding us, but my photographs competed and were a perfect match to her words.
During that whole year, I also photographed football games. I knew all the players by their first name and each Sunday I stood by the gate to greet them. Before becoming a photographer, I had been a big football fan and had to fight to purchase a ticket, which cost a fortune, to watch a game. However, as a photographer, it was my job to be there and I began to lose interest. Ever since then, I never again bought a ticket or went to see a football match. Today, when they broadcast an important match on television or announce the results of the League, I listen with curiosity, but without great enthusiasm. On the other hand, my love for the theatre and the opera are never ending: when I was young, there were Saturday mornings when I was already part of a long queue at 6 o’clock, waiting to purchase a cheap ticket to enjoy an opera from a seat up in the top gallery, or even standing. To my great joy and pleasure, I was even sent to photograph opera performances and I knew most of the singers who were on stage. At a social event nearly 40 years later, I met a famous opera singer from those days and I complimented her on her Aida, in the presence of her fourth husband. She angrily denied that she was on stage, in that role, in 1955.

"Why, Mr. David, how can you say that? You’ve mistaken the date. I sang that Aida in 1965."

I did not argue with her because I sensed the delicacy of the situation. I only knew for sure that in 1965 I was no longer in Romania. A lady, and in particular a prima donna, sometimes hesitates to unveil her real age.

I was always in a hurry and, one day, running towards a streetcar station (I did not always use my car in town), I fell and instinctively tried to stop my fall with my right hand. By doing so, my whole weight fell onto my shoulder. The pain rushing through me was incredible and I realised that I had dislocated my shoulder. Fortunately, my friend Mielu’s father happened to be passing by and helped me to the nearby hospital, Coltzea, where an excellent surgeon, Dr. Bitsa, took care of me. He tried to put my shoulder back in place, but only managed to do so after putting me under general anaesthesia.

I thought everything was over with but, in the following months, I dislocated my shoulder twice more; once playing volleyball and once just sleeping in a train compartment.

So Dr. Bitsa decided to operate my shoulder, implanting a piece of one of my ribs in my shoulder, which would impede my arm from sliding out of its socket. It was a difficult month for me. Part of my chest was bandaged and it was complicated for me to write, to eat and even to shave.

The whole ordeal became worse when I became ill. I was diagnosed with Hepatitis B, which I had caught at the hospital due to the injections with needles not properly sterilised. This lengthened my convalescence, but the operation was a success and my shoulder never gave me problems again.
It was 1956:

Khrushchev had won his political battles with his Government and the party and rejected Stalin's policy against Tito by establishing new relations with the Yugoslav Government. On his way back from Belgrade, he visited Bucharest with his right-hand man, Nikolai Bulganin, and I was in charge of covering his visit in Romania. The atmosphere in Romania seemed to announce better days to come.

This was the year Khrushchev made his famous speech denouncing Stalin at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party. The speech caused an earthquake in the Communist countries. The Romanian press did not report much on it, but the news spread like wildfire by word of mouth. I wanted to read his entire speech, and I needed time alone to do so. I advised my editor that I had to develop some colour photographs at night. In those days developing a single colour photograph was a difficult and time consuming operation. I had to expose a very small piece of paper for processing in four different chemical baths, and according to results, co-ordinate and change the filters. For a whole piece with colour photographs, I needed hours. During those hours I opened the cupboard where the precious copies of foreign newspapers were kept and so I was able to read Khrushchev's complete speech as published by "Le Monde". I was astonished when I read it. All I had thought of Stalin (that same Stalin in honour of whom we stood and whose name we had to shout), Khrushchev had clearly stated as the truth. It was a truth we all suspected, but we had never dared to express our abhorrence for his insensate cruelty. Stalin had murdered millions of people, among them those who were very close to Lenin, victims of the endless thirst for power of that little man from Georgia.

It had been rather difficult for Romanian Prime Minister Gheorghiu Dej, to share Khrushchev's "melting snow" ideology, or more consumer-oriented economic reforms. Nevertheless, there was a slight improvement in Romania's economic situation and the scent of freedom was in the air. The idea of living in complete freedom in our own country was still a very distant concept. I used to dream of freedom. Night after night I would dream of going anywhere, doing anything I wanted to do. My most recurrent fantasy was that I'd buy a caravan, fit up part of it as a laboratory, live in the rest, and travel all over Europe taking photographs.

Anyway, back to Krushchev's visit. The Soviet Premier remained perhaps for two or three days. I stuck as close to him as the tight security surrounding him allowed, while he visited showpiece factories or farms or even patted babies' heads; the article had some very good pictures.

Meanwhile, at the magazine I was appreciated more and more, even becoming indispensable. I now knew what I was doing and was able to organise my time more efficiently, so I could allow myself the luxury of creating a book for children composed mainly of photographs. This was for me, not for the magazine. The story was about two children and their cat. The cat breaks a jar of jam, is spanked and so runs away from home. The two children, a girl and a boy, accompanied by their dog, leave for a long journey to search the whole city for the cat. After a long and tiring quest, full of happenings, they return home empty-handed and there, in front of the door, they find their
sweet-toothed cat, hungry and thirsty, but happy to see them again. One of the photographs was displayed at a photo art exhibition in England, and won the Queen Elizabeth Prize. In that particular photograph, the children are breaking their piggy bank so that they'll have enough money for their search. I was invited to England to receive the award in person, but... "the Powers That Be" did not allow me to leave the country.

In 1957, ten years had passed since I had finished high school and a classmate reunion was being held at my old school, to celebrate the anniversary. When we arrived there was a first moment of commotion as we exchanged effusive greetings, as many of us had not met again since school days. Some of our old teachers and the high school principal were also there and jokingly summoned us to be quiet and be seated. We looked at them sheepishly and quieted down, but it was all part of the friendly charade, as we were no longer students. But being back in our classroom with old friends and teachers did make us feel as if we had gone back in time. We went to our desks, almost automatically sitting down in our old places. Each teacher questioned a few of us or their favourite pupils on old subjects, still wanting to test our skills, sometimes remembering funny episodes we had shared and each of us told the rest of the “class” what he had done during the last ten years. Although a small number of our ex-schoolmates was not there, having left for Israel, we did not mention this nor did we mention many other relevant things we normally would have, as we were very conscious of the fact that the Securitate could be listening, even on such a small and seemingly inoffensive event. Well, that was the atmosphere of restriction of those days.

End of 1957, beginning 1958, I successfully participated in many photo art exhibitions.

I did many and varied picture stories in those days: I still remember walking through the streets of Bucharest, for *Love at All Ages*. Two babies kissing each other; an old couple sitting on a public bench in the park holding hands; a mother making faces at her baby in a pram to make him laugh; the shadow of a young couple beneath a streetlamp.

I travelled from Bucharest to nearby and distant villages, photographing *Country Dances* where the blaze of colours in the regional costumes of the hardworking people dancing to the pleasant music helped them forget their daily struggles and difficulties.
At the end of summer 1958, a very critical event took place: the magazine received a request from Western Germany asking that I cover a very important event there. Immediately we started wading through all the bureaucratic red tape in order to obtain all the necessary permits. Those permits had to include an authorization from the Securitate and here they bumped into my past files. They immediately advised the magazine that not only I would not be allowed to leave Romania but that I should immediately be stopped from working at the magazine, that I should be dismissed as a dangerous individual. The editor called a general staff meeting during which the Securitate "requested" everybody to denounce me and my work. They presented me as a snake, as one insinuating himself into a decent and honest framework, hiding his treacherous past and thus betraying the loyal communist workers. Hananel managed to avoid being part of it. He travelled to West Berlin instead of me and therefore did not participate in my shameful lynching dismissal.

I was humiliated. I was furious. I was wretched. I loved working at Romania Today, taking pictures, meeting people, using my imagination and my talent to create a photojournalism whose images stuck in people's minds. I know they did, because they told me. I had many friends at the magazine. For sure, some genuinely swallowed the party line and wanted nothing more to do with me, but many of them got in touch after that meeting, mumbling their apologies. They had no alternative, I knew that, not if they wanted to keep their jobs, not if they wanted to support their families.

Just the same, this nasty episode turned into my great good luck. Under the "Family Reunion" policy, after six years you were allowed once again to apply for an exit permit, provided you had family relatives in the West. I could not have applied while working at the magazine. I asked a family relative, Mr. Micu Zipper, my grandmother's brother, who had left Romania for France at the beginning of the century before World War I, to send me an invitation to come and live with my reunified family. The invitation arrived and that same evening, whole night long, my mother, two grandmothers and I stood in a long line on the footpath opposite the Ministry of the Interior in order to be among the quota of 50 people a day to be granted presentation of their requests. We were laden with the heaps of documents that we knew, in advance, would be requested. Some of the documents were not easy to obtain and large sums were invested in order to bribe the different clerks to expedite handing them over.

However, we still had to live and I was out of work, so I created a service cooperative that was partly official and partly not so much. In that period there was no private enterprise officially and since I had been dismissed, shamefully thrown out of my job at the magazine, no official government office would have opened its doors to me. Mia and a few friends were my partners in the cooperative.

Cooperatives providing services were authorized. We had to be not less than five workers, paying income tax and then sharing the after-tax revenue of the cooperative. The active members were Stefan Seuleanu, who belonged to the Seventh Day Adventists, observed Saturday as the Sabbath, and, as his beliefs required, neither drank nor smoked. Then there was Jean Benedict, a very honest man who had suffered the terrible experience of being jailed for many years. He had been arrested because he was married to one of the
Shmuelly sisters who had been arrested under a fake espionage charge when working at the American Cultural Centre in Bucharest. Mia and I were also active workers. There was another non-active partner, who was happy to lend his name to the project and enjoy membership without working. In return, 50 percent of his income reverted to the other partners.

So what did we do? Well, our first job was a catalogue featuring different products. We photographed ceramics, carpets, leatherwork and straw handicrafts manufactured by other cooperatives, each specialising in their particular field. The resultant pictorial catalogue of their products was printed and distributed to various Romanian and foreign institutions or customers. Naturally our cooperative belonged to the Union of Cooperatives and we also got a little help on the side. Vlad, a journalist working for the Union, helped us get the order for the handicraft catalogue and other, further jobs. I used the available shares of the profits of the non-active partner to pay Vlad a commission for each job he got us. Once the jobs for the Union were finished we, the four active workers, started to travel with my car to small villages, often difficult to reach on the unpaved roads. In those villages, we met peasants who had never heard of a camera and we photographed them and their families. This “new” discovery that came right to their homes gave them great happiness and they paid for it gladly. The customers received an official receipt bearing the letterhead of our cooperative. I still well remember how Mia and I, after such a day's trip, would sit on the steps of our home, removing from our clothing and shoes the kilos of mud we'd picked up, arranging and counting the dirty bills we had received.

I turned a small storeroom in my flat into a photo laboratory, printed the pictures and, within two or three days, we would return to the same village to give the pictures to the happy peasants. Sometimes we rented a little boat and went rowing on the lakes around Bucharest, photographing the rowing lovers or amateur fishermen, and getting paid by those who wanted to receive the pictures.

Mia and her mother also asked for a permit to leave Romania for Austria. Mia's father had been an Austrian officer during World War I, and had fought against the Italians during the famous battle of the Piave. Mia was born in Vienna so they both did not need a relative's letter of invitation for family reunion.

Time passed, and neither Mia and her mother, nor I and my family received the requested permission to leave. Obviously, every passing day, my love for Mia blossomed and deepened. Her mother was not happy with our liberal relationship, not formally sanctioned by marriage, so she never stopped scolding us or preaching against what she considered our immorality. I loved Mia dearly, but was hesitant. The experience of the past had frightened me. Dorotea's story was still with me and I was afraid that politics would ruin what we both aimed for, which was to get married and live together.
We either went alone or with friends. No matter the degree of difficulty, we were always ecstatic to reach the peak of a new mountain, look down at the landscape stretching out before us, feeling we were on top of the world.

On weekends, when we did not tour the villages to photograph the farmers, Mia and I continued to enjoy going on our hiking trips in the beautiful wilderness of the Romanian Carpathian mountains, sometimes taking the easy trails and other times the more difficult ones.

We would then relax and enjoy our picnic lunch, and afterwards stroll down unhurriedly.

I also sometimes went with my mother, on easier paths.

One hot day in June 1960, under a splendid sun, I left with Mia and Jean Benedict for the Bucegi Mountains to participate in a field orientation competition. We had maps, a compass and instructions. We had to find the fastest way from location to location, one after the other, to reach the secret destination. That same evening, as we returned red-cheeked from the mountain’s fresh air, I found a postcard advising us that the Dan David family had been granted permission to leave Romania. My joy at the news of being allowed to leave this country, that had become a huge prison for 20 million inhabitants, was immense.
Once more, we started the long and difficult odyssey through red tape, collecting documents, permits, certificates, all the scores of papers the heavy bureaucratic system demanded. We could take with us no more than 20 kilos of luggage, and specific items like books, paintings, or even trinkets had to be stamped for export approval by the authorities. Each of us could also take $10 out of the country, purchased from the Bank of Romania.

We had to pay many different taxes for the authorities’ approval of our emigration, and since we had to return our apartment to the State, we had to leave it in perfect condition, painted and renovated. This included the room conceded to a co-renter - the apartment was considered too big to be occupied only by our family, so we had been sharing it for years.

Fortunately, money was not a problem for me. We had made profits in the cooperative, and I had more than what I was allowed to exchange for the permitted $10 per person. I sold my car, and with great joy I sold clothes, furniture, crockery, and even my photographic equipment. We sold many items at the Sunday flea market, but since people had heard of our imminent departure, they kept coming into our flat, examining, touching, bargaining.

In contrast to my mother who, like most women, was attached to the house, to its belongings, to the memories of the 40 years she’d lived there, I did not feel any sadness. Adrenalin was pumping through my veins. I sold and sold without any feelings whatsoever, as I was so happy to get out of there, whatever it took. Everything went, the pictures, the family silver, the furniture. However, we were all sad to leave our beloved cat, and also leaving my beautiful library with my prized books made me feel a part of me was also being left behind.
We left my mother's jewelry with her sister. Years later, after the fall of Ceausescu, it was returned to us. My wife Gaby has a diamond and sapphire brooch that belonged to mother. Also one of the paintings, a still-life by Vermont, a famous Romanian artist, and a few books were returned to us, but the rest is all gone.

Train tickets for the 48 hour Bucharest – Paris trip were purchased.

At that time the official exchange rate of the dollar was 6 Lei. On the black market, obviously illegal and therefore dangerous, you could get between 40 to 60 Lei for a dollar. Many of us had relatives in the West who were willing to help: I started to contact some of those friends, giving them my Lei in order to receive dollars in France at the local black market rate.

The day of departure came closer. At the railway station, the Customs Officers checked the contents of the suitcases. They checked very thoroughly, but a carton of cigarettes helped speed up the process. They did not weigh the suitcases to check whether they were overweight, and so, on the 25th of July 1960, six weeks from the day that the wonderful postcard arrived, we got on the train to Paris to start our journey towards freedom. There were additional controls when we got on the train; we were warned sternly that at the last city before the border, there would be an additional check and that there would be no hesitation in sending us back, if we did not fully comply with the instructions.

I was astonished that Mia had not come to the station to see us off. I sat down in our compartment with a very heavy heart. The train departed. All of a sudden, Mia walked in from another carriage. It was a big surprise which made me so happy. Of her own initiative, she had bought a ticket to Brasov, a three-hour trip to the border, for us to spend this additional time together and to say good-bye. It was heartbreaking for us to separate after our five-year love story. We couldn't know what the future had in store for us.

After Brasov, the closer we got to the border, the tenser we became. We had a little more than the permitted 20 kilos each and my mother's and grandmother's eyes were blinking nervously. I opened the train window and started throwing out some shoes, clothes, pots, anything that could jeopardise our way to freedom. I sometimes wonder whether our belongings were picked up, who picked them up, and whether other people had done the same as they too approached the border. In the end, they did not weigh our luggage at the border; we were requested only to show our travel documents and our passports. Our passports were confiscated as we lost our Romanian citizenship the moment we crossed the border. Thus we left Romania behind us: our memories, our friends, our home. We continued towards the FREEDOM we hungered for.

Our first meeting with the tastes, the colours, the scent of freedom, was in Vienna. We felt light-headed. We got off the train. We looked around us. People's faces were different and strange. The shops and what they offered the passers-by were so tempting. We spent some of our 40 precious dollars on a sandwich, and even its taste seemed different. We bought a bottle of Coca-Cola. We had heard of this drink, but such a classical Western symbol could never be purchased in Romania. We sipped it slowly, slowly, but we did not fall in love with it; it took me a few years to develop a taste for coke!

We reached Paris, the city of my dreams. The language was not a barrier for us because we all spoke perfect French. I had read about Paris and knew each stone, every
monument, every historical site; the names of many streets were not strange to me because I knew the cultural or historical importance of those they were named after. Now I wanted to see with my own eyes, to identify, to absorb all that I had read on Paris. I would drink in its culture and history.