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Solomon Sapira: O living legend - Moinesti

Moinesti over time

Solomon Sapira: "Those little stetlah in Moldavia, forgotten by God, have always been a well of culture."
From the forerunners - To the Jews of today

Those unforgotten Jews, too often forgotten...

VIRGIL MADGEARU: "...the small oil distilleries belonging to the Jews are part of the history of the Romanian oil"

Now, in 1999, when from the old community it leaves only a small community, with **only five Jews**, we feel more than ever obliged to remember some significant elements from the history of this community. Thus attesting- also in this context -, the real role the numerous Jews from Moinesti have played in the economic life of the country. • 1840 -1880. B. Scheffler, Manase Haimsohn (creators of big wood exploitations); Alick Leib, Alter Schwartz, S. and Herman Bernstein, Simon Bernstein, D. H. Grinberg, Nathan Zilberman, Herman Theiller (wood exporter), Isac and Matei Grinberg- founders of a state of the art timber factory. • 1860. Wolf Lazarovici - "the first distillery from Moinesti". • Iosif Theiller "was the first in the country to obtain a license for exploitation of a oil well with modern equipment" (**Solomon Sapira**), with "American-style pumps". He published the study "Idei economice". He used the "first systematic saw in the woods of Moinesti and Solont". He was elected local councilor. "Mister Theiller, who became a Romanian citizen, is the first founder of the gas and paraffin factory in Moinesti..." ("Fraternitatea", 1882). Moses Frischhoff was exporter of oil, automobile oil, etc. • Moritz Solomon - he introduces, for the first time, the electricity in Moinesti. He founded the first cinema. We should also mention here the contributions of some exceptional engineers, mechanics, energetic and IT specialists (more recently), many of them with studies abroad - Iulian Cohn, Zicmann Moreno, Berthold Grunwald, Iosefina Kohlenberg, Liviu Leibovici etc.

What were the occupations of the Jews from Moinesti?

The love for books:

The most parts of them were of course artisans in different domains: jewelers, dyers, shoemakers, tailors, braziers, strap-makers, barmen, millers, welders, tradesmen etc. (Buium, Nusen Sapira, Z. Stoler, Avram Ratacitorul, Moisa Punam, Leib Chijner, Sloime Schneider, Iancu Jidov etc).

Among them- and not just a few- there were also professors, teachers, Melameds: Roza Ghita, Fani Strulovici, Iosif Lazar, Cahane Isidor, Tudic, Max Grunwald, Pinhas Strulovici, Manase Haimsohn, Ilie Grinberg, Neti Haimsohn, Pinchas Strulovici, Katz, Feldman, Leon Abramovici, David Jurescu, Iancu Wurmbrandt (Hebrew-language teacher, schoolbook author), Moses Mincu, David Juster, Nussem Schapira; Berthold Grunwald; Gruber Charles (university teachers); Rabi Aizic, Idel Melamed, Mose Melamed (Melameds).

By remembering all those names, we also mention that many of them - as the late Moses Rosen said in his memoirs - "lived in dire poverty... the tradesmen - as much as poor... the water carriers, the shoemakers, the tailors (...) and all the other artisans... Many of them were hungry... In the late evening, they stayed in the synagogue continuing to learn, because «that was, really, their life»".

DOCTORS

• Burah (Butu) Zeilig; Halperin, doctor settled in Moinesti, in 1914; A. Flacs - he was the organizer of school conferences, literary circles; Naftalis Rosenthal; David Bernstein; Lavi A. Clain; Eli Eliav; Hary Hertanu; Zev Median; Tova Zusman; Leon Scheffler (Canada); Lieblich; Max Steiger (dentist); Nathi Silberman; Babeth Rabinovici (b. in 1934) - immigrated in Israel (1962); Pinchas Sapira (pharmacist), Isac Wolf etc.

Dr. BURAH (BUTU) ZEILIG - "doctor of the poor" - a veteran of the war of independence, he was described as "a library from Moinesti". He contributed with "Hasmonaea", "Adam", "Orientari" with studies: "Despre evrei", "Viata sociala la evrei" etc. He makes translations from I. L. Peretz, Mendele Moier Sforim etc. For the "Umanitarismul" magazine - said Relgis -, he brings, "for every modern idea, the Jewish equivalent".

Dr. DAVID SAFRAN: "Let's not forget that, at the foundation of Israel, the Romanian Jew has an important contribution"

• "Tinerimea Dr. Theodor Herzl" (President Pincu Leventer); • "Mizrahi"; • "He - Halut"; • "Poalei Sion" (president - Solomon Grinberg, secretary - Leon Leventer); • "Hasomer Hatair" (leaders: Solomon Sefler, Segal Misu and Sica Smaer); • "Betar" (Arnold Gartenberg and Beca Meselsohn); • "Ishuv Eretz Israel" (1897); • "Menasheret Sion" (1898); "Gordonia" (guided by Sulam Haimsohn); • "Hanoar Hationi" (founder Iacov Lavi, born in Moinesti; leaders: Herscovici Motel, Iancu Grinberg - representative to the Basle Congress, in 1897, to the Congresses in 1903, 1905, 1912 -, H. Theiller, Mordehai Smuel Gutman etc). • 1874 - The first Romanian

Jews from Moinesti organized themselves to make Alia, with over 22 years before the Basle Congress, and the Zionist program of Theodor Herzl is being published.

A city that went into legend

"... my little hometown, in the north of Moldavia, near the Tazlau valley, between Osoiu and Magura mountains... went into legend through that initiative of organizing the first groups of Alia towards Eretz Israel and, thus, it became a well-known name in the country and in the world". (**Solomon Sapira**)

"... there are modern people, more educated, who love their freedom and they care a lot for their dignity. That's why the immigration to Palestine found such a strong echo in Moinesti". (**M. Schwarzfeld**)

"Taking care of improving the life of all the citizens, regardless of their faith or status, because the state laws offer them tolerance and protection. We found out with great happiness that the Jewish people try to cultivate themselves by gaining the useful knowledge and adopting the formulas able to rise their morale and to invite to social relationships". (**Nov. 15, 1847. "Ofisul lui Mihail Voda Sturdza**)

Synagogues

• There were five prayer houses. • On September 9, 1967, was inaugurated the newly built edifice of the "Elias" synagogue (the board committee: Avram Eger, Sandu Berman, Jean Rosen, Iancu Danil, Burah Cojocararu).
• RABBIS, PASTORS, GABAIS, HAHAMS: Iosef Arie Cohen (in Israel, he was Rabbi in Rosh Pina settlement); Iehosua Falk Wolfsohn (born in 1835, in Moinesti); Mendel Adelstein, Manascu; Rabbi Menase; Rabbi Gaon Ghidale Westler (the great-grandfather of the present leader of the Moinesti community, Mr. Kohlenberg) - he shepherded between 1873 -1904; Avraham Arie Leib Rosen (the father of the late Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen, born in 1870, in Galitia); Iaacov Natan Sapira (he came in Moinesti in 1897); Hers (Zwi) Landman; Samuel Grinberg (1879-1959) - the first Rabbi confirmed by F.C.I. Bucharest and by the Ministry of Cults; Fisel Cohn (Gabai); Calman Sohet (cleric); Strul Soihat; Israel Scheffler (it seems that he was a model for the painter St. Luchian); Mordhe Smil Gutman (Haham, brother of Rabbi Gutman, from Bucharest); Itic, Moise, Favel - Hahams.

Presidents of the community; Secretaries

• Mose Frischhoff (1900) took part at the Galati Congress, "to allow immigration". He was the first president from the creation of the community. Ancelovici (1910); Alter Schwartz (1916); Alick Leibu; lawyer Solomon Leibovici (1928 -1941) he was also deputy mayor, he made Alia; Benjamin Haimsohn (1952-1964) he immigrated in Israel; Leon Leventer; Enghelberg Marcel (1964-1984). From 1984, the leader of the small community, of only five Jews, is RAPHAEL KOHLENBERG, great-grandson of Rabbi Ghidale Westler. The only Jewish man in a once prosperous community, trying with his permanent efforts that "Moinesti not to be forgotten".

From Moinesti- towards literature and art

• Sarina Kraus, artist, exceptional performer (in "The Anne Frank Journal" and "Masenka") on the stage of the Jewish theater in Iasi • Iosef Marcus-Ami, he translated in Romanian-language the works of Salom Alehem ("Ispasitoarele sau greva pasarilor) • Pic G. Adrian (Pincu Grinberg), poet, plastic artist and art critic, settled in Barcelona • Smuel Grimberg, poet, precursor of the "Poalei Sion" movement • Dinu Hervian (Dutu Herscovici), journalist, publicist, former director of Agerpress. He had a real contribution in editing the Moinesti newspaper "Cuvantul nostru" • Carol Litman, fine translator of H. Bloch ("Povestiri hasidice") • Ana Bronfield, custodian at the Museum for the History of Jews in Bucharest.

Societies, Media, Typographies

• Mutual aid societies: "Ahavat Ahim" (Fraternal Love); "Degel Haava" (The Banner of Love); "Malbis Neurim" (for poor students; Isidor Iosepovici- president) • 1899. "Hibat Sion"- Zionist musical society • Societies for women: "Alinarea" and "Sprijinul" association (guided by Sali Frischhoff). • "Lumina" society - organizing in schools "Sunday's lectures" • 1895. Has been established "«Unirea» economic society".

• Typographies. Towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the typographies start to appear in small towns. "Isac Gartenberg" typography published works edited by "Poalei Sion" literary circle and the first translation from Salom Alehem. In 1900, in "M. Rabinovici" typography has been published the brochure "Statutele Societatii de economie «Unirea» din Moinesti. Jud. Bacau - Despre scopul, durata si conditiile de admitere a aderentilor", edited by lawyer Herman Grinberg • Subscribers: Martin Edelstein, Herscu Wolf, Noe Bilderman, Smiel Meselsohn, Manes Segall, Daniel Budu.

• Media. "Cuvantul nostru" - newspaper published in 1936, in the typography of Jean Avram. Bimonthly publication of "Dr. B. Zeilig circle" (with the intention to "offer expertise «to the multiple local needs», to contribute to "the development of the town»). There were only two editions.

• Journalists: Trotusan (alias Hahamul); Dutu Herscovici (Dinu Hervian); Ofer Tehila - the daughter of Isac

Grinberg, from Moinesti; vice-president of "The International Association for Feminine and Familial Press"; member of the Israelite Press Council; she took part in the liberation of Negev.

- Librarians: Iancu Keyla, first world war hero, with the library "La invalidul de razboi".

- Libraries: "Ahad Haam"; a library bearing the name of Dr. Burah Zeilig: "The Jews from Moinesti laid the basis of a library... «Hatechia»..." (**Solomon Sapira**); "Cercul de lumina Poalei-Sion" library (1906).

Through Moinesti Towards Eretz Israel

The idea of colonizing the agrarian lands in Eretz Israel spread quickly among the Romanian Jews, but the Jews from Moinesti have that particularity that inscribes them in the book of Alia, as founders of the first settlements. In 1875, has been established the "Ishuv Eretz Israel" society ("Societatea pentru Colonizare Agricola in Eretz Israel). A turning point in the new movement of the Jewish national revival took place with the Focsani Conference, on December 30 -31, 1881 and January 1, 1882"(**Carol Iancu**). At this conference, meant for supporting the Jews that wanted to leave for their ancestors' land, took part Moinesti Jews Bucsester, David and Mendel Grinberg.

- 1881 - some 50 families from Moinesti decided to immigrate on foot, out of "love for the Holy Land", but also with "longing for their native places" (**O. Bucsester**).

- 1882 - the Moinesti delegate, **Mose David Shub** (Mose David Iancovici), Haham, veterinary doctor, leaves to Palestine to buy land for colonization. • The year 1882 marked the beginning of the Jewish colonization in Eretz Israel. A group of 36 families from Moinesti leaves on foot and with the "Thetis" boat towards the Promised Land; Jews from Bacau and Galati followed them. The natives from Moinesti settled on the lands "named Geauni from the eastern Galilul" and established the Rosh Pina settlement (21 iulie 1882), named "the mother of all settlements in Galil" ("Ima mosavot haGalil"), meaning "cornered stone", after the verse of the Bible: "The cornered stone overlooked by the builders became the cornerstone". Here has been created the first elementary school in the country (1884), with Hebrew - language classes. The first forms of protection. (The list of the colons and of the people from Moinesti that made Alia is included in the cited volume "O legenda vie - Moinesti", by S. Sapira). President: Mordehai Motel Katz; secretary - David Shub.

- 1882, December 6 . Zichron Iaacov has been established, a settlement supported by the baron Edmund de Rothschild, regarded as "the base of the future Israeli State".

- June - July, 1900 - the movement of immigration on foot - "Miscarea drumetilor" - was given a new impetus.

- 1900, June 9 . A group of immigrants leaves from Moinesti. Supporters: Mose Frischhoff, Rabbi Mendel Adelstein, Natan Sapira. They launched a manifesto: "Vocea pribeagului. Manifest al emigrantilor din Moinesti", of the "Concordia" group. • Inspired by these immigrations, Octav Bancila paints "Emigrantul" and the Jewish painter Nicolae Vermont created a painting bearing the same name.

- 1900, July 14 the 100 people-strong "Concordia" group leaves under the leadership of Altersohn. • Leaflets: "Ramas bun", "Vocea Pribegilor"

- 1914, June 1900 - the last manifestation for the immigration on foot.

Three generations

"The first - that of Iosif Lazar, a true Moinesti native, who graduated the Faculty of Mathematics, came back to his home town, as math and Yiddish teacher, at the Israelite School. The second - that of Faibis Phoebus Lazar, the son of Iosif Lazar, who graduated the Superior School for Economics and Accountant from Vienna; after returning in the country - he was secretary of the Jewish Community in Galati. (Between 1940 - 1944, he was interned in a camp). And the third - that of Professor Osy Lazar, the son of Faibis Phoebus, descendant from Moinesti natives, president of the Jewish Community in Bucharest.

AVRAHAM ARIE ROSEN

He was the father of the late Chief Rabbi Dr. Moses Rosen. He guided the Jewish community in Moinesti for 16 years. "How I remember him? Which is his first image, deeply engraved in my soul? Holding me in his arms, dressed in a long clerical robe, with his bright eyes steered on an opened book, inviting me to repeat after him: Alef-Beit..." (**Moses Rosen z.l.**). He elaborated "Halahic" studies (of Jewish legislation), "Responsele", the volume "Saagat Arie" (1912), "Pirkei Sosana" (1920), Talmudic commentaries etc. From 1951, he rests in Jerusalem in Synhedria cemetery.

People for eternity - Dr. MOSES ROSEN (1912-1994)

He was the son of Gaon Avraham Arie Rosen. He was born in Moinesti; he was buried in Jerusalem. In 1948, he was elected Chief Rabbi of the Mosaic Cult, and in 1964 - president of F.C.E.R. In October 1956, he founded "Revista Cultului Mozaic" (in three languages); in 1979 - The Museum of History for the Romanian Jewish Community; he inaugurated a cycle of weekly conferences. In his 46 years as the leader of Jewish community in Romania, almost 400,000 Jews made Alia, and also 3,500 Sefer Torah rolls. He spoke against the xenophobic

attitudes and against the inter-ethnic hatred. Numerous distinctions in the country and abroad, in Israel, paid his efforts. He was elected an honorary member of the Romanian Academy (1992). In 1982, he visited the Moinesti community on the 100 anniversary of the establishment of the first settlements in Ros Pina and Zichron Iaacov.

CHARLES GRUBER

Lawyer and university teacher, he was born in 1912, in Moinesti, taking his license in philology and philosophy, and his license and doctorate in Law, he was also a member of the Ilfov Bar. For a time, he worked with Dr. W. Filderman, and then he settled in Paris, in 1948. He was professor of international commercial law with the Institute of Commercial Practice within the Faculty of Law in Paris (1960 -1971). □He is author of various articles published in specialized magazines. Rewards: officer of "The order of academic palms" for "services brought to the high education in France".

HERSCU GOLDNER

Herscu Goldner (d. 1905), typographer, librarian - he published the works of Creanga. He offered his house and typography "to the 1848 movement". He was decorated with the golden medal for "loyal service".

ALEXANDRU SEVER

Silberman Solo, born in Moinesti, in 1921, he immigrated in Israel, in 1990. Member of the Israelite Writers Association of Romanian - language, he received the 1991 Prize for Literature of the Jewish Agency (Sochnut). In Romania, he published novels, short stories, drama, and critical essays. He was rewarded the prize of the Union of the Romanian Writers and also the prize of the Association of the Writers from Bucharest. "... a double root; for an authentic talent, soaked in the magic waters of such a spiritual complex, this can't be but the reason for an exceptionally fertile creation" (**Alex. Sever**). He evoked the Jewish community in Bacau - in stories published in the volume "Memoria durerii".

ALPHONSE SATTINGER

Painter, sketcher, he was born in Moinesti, in 1930. He was member of the Union for the Plastic Artists and of the Plastic Forum (1968). He settled in U.S.A., where he starts great publicity campaigns. He is renowned as landscaper and portraitist. Rewards: The Golden Prize (1987), offered by "New Graphics". He formed himself as a designer, at the age of 14, in the "Hasomer Hatair" Zionist organization.

ABRAHAM CLAIN

He was born in 1907 - doctor, poet and publicist - he wrote the poem "Prin Moinesti spre Israel". He translated from Eliezer Steinberg, "Cantarea Cantarilor", Bialik, Kipling, Arghezi, Evtusenko etc, but also the novel of Franz Werfel, "Musa Dagh". In 1940, he made Alia. He received the Zion Prize of the "Israelite Writers Association of Romanian-language". He insisted that: "The tongue of the country is Hebrew. It should express the original energies" (**A. Clain**). □*"My dull town □How dear you were to us □And how thirsty we are □of our old friendships"*.

JAN STEIGER

Journalist, born in Moinesti, in 1931, he became noticed in the Romanian - language Israeli press. He was correspondent for Radio Free Europe in Munich.

B. ELVIN

E. Bernstein, he was born in Moinesti, in 1927. Critic and essayist, novelist, he was editor at the Youth Publishing House, E.S.P.L.A., Viata Romaneasca. Today he is editor-in-chief with "Lettre Internationale". He made from writing a way of living.

RATES NESTOR

He was journalist, politics specialist, and radio commentator. He was born in Moinesti, in 1933. He graduated the Faculty of Philosophy in Bucharest. In 1973, he settled in U.S.A. He worked, for 18 years, as correspondent for radio "Free Europe". He wrote his first book, in English, about the Romanian revolution in December 1989, "Romania - revolutia incalcita".

HARY KULLER

He was born in Moinesti, in 1929. He graduated the Faculty of Philosophy in Bucharest. Ethnic-sociologist, with a philosophical formation, he published numerous volumes and specialized studies: "Sociologia cunoasterii", "Cunoasterea sociologica", "Presa evreiasca bucuresteană", "Opt studii despre istoria evreilor din Romania" etc. He coordinated the volume "Contributia evreilor din Romania la cultura si civilizatie" (1966).