

was an intentional act. Nathan's funeral in the Jewish cemetery Filantropia was attended by a very small circle of family and friends, as befitting an outcast of the regime. But the family remembers well the graveside eulogy of Rabbi Zvi Gutman in honor of the deceased and his good deeds. Under the circumstances of those days, of a regime of fear and intimidation, the eulogy was a daring act.

Nathan Klipper's family, his wife and two children, remained in the Socialist Republic of Romania in difficult circumstances for nearly a decade, until they were allowed to emigrate to Israel in 1959-1960.

Nathan Klipper did not have the privilege of leaving behind his own comprehensive testimony about his efforts in saving Jews, in aiding and alleviating the suffering of his brethren during the Holocaust, as did many who toiled like him. His work in this realm was performed primarily in underground conditions. It can thus be assumed that many of his acts will never be known. His only public statement in this regard was made in 1945 during the trial of the first group of Romanian war criminals (which will be discussed later). The author of this essay has tried to gather the bits of information about those acts which left traces, in the few documents which have survived and are available for study, in recorded testimonies, and in some of the recollections of his family and friends, and to set them together into a comprehensive picture.

Bucharest

The Klipper family's home in Bucharest, after they had settled there in the autumn of 1941, was always open to anyone in need. Frequently Nathan was asked to solicit the authorities on behalf of a relative who had been arrested on suspicion of "communism." This "crime" was attributed not only to actual communist activity, but also to various forms of activity which displeased the regime, such as Zionist activity. Frequently, it was a matter of fabrication, provocation and false accusation. Mere suspicion of communism, even if not accompanied by hard evidence of the alleged "crime", was sufficient for harassing those implicated, and for having them arrested and brutally interrogated.

Family members remember that among those who turned to Nathan Klipper was Rabbi Rosen from Falticeni, regarding his son Moshe, who was suspected of being a communist. In later days, with the change of the regime in Romania, the young Rabbi Moshe Rosen was elected Chief Rabbi of Romania, through the support of the communist party which remembered his sympathizing with communist ideas as a youngster.

One episode which has been documented, typical of the many others which remain unknown, was that of Dov (Berl) Schieber. He, too, was from Dorna, and at the time was the leader of the underground Zionist youth movement HaNoar HaZioni. The account was included in Berl Schieber's testimony to Yad Vashem.⁵

“In the summer of 1942 I was arrested by the police, after one of the members of the Bucharest branch was caught with a suspicious letter. She divulged that I was her contact. Although she had torn up the letter, the shreds had fallen into the hands of the secret police who pieced them together. I was held for several days in the *prefectura* (the Bucharest police headquarters). A wealthy Jew from Vatra-Dornei, who had very good connections with the authorities, managed to keep me from standing trial. I was sent to Vatra-Dornei as a suspected communist, and thus I reached the city whose Jews had all been deported nearly a year earlier.” (After a brief time Berl was brought back to Bucharest. Fritz Klipper, Nathan’s brother, was instrumental in bringing Berl back.⁶)

Another instance of the cooperation between Berl Schieber and Nathan Klipper was in the arrangement for a young woman from the HaNoar HaZioni *halutzim* (pioneers) to work as a maid in the Klipper home. That young girl, M.K., the daughter of a family from Czernowitz, was rescued from the ghetto in that city and brought to the capital. Among Berl’s roles in the movement was to take in and find shelter for movement member refugees who reached or were smuggled into Bucharest from more dangerous areas.⁷ With the help of Nathan Klipper, the young girl was provided with a valid identity card and a legal Bucharest residence permit. It can be assumed this was not the only instance of his arranging legal residence permits for Jewish refugees in this city.

As was customary, the young woman was given an attic room adjoining the apartment. However, it turned out, this caused the Jewish neighbors in the building unease and even moments of fear. M.K. was deeply involved with a group of fellow movement members, and it seems her room served as a meeting place for this group. The activity around M’s room aroused the attention of those in the vicinity. One day, the Romanian landlord appeared at the home of one of the Jewish families in the building, telling them he was convinced the room had become a communist “nest” and declaring he had to inform the police. (At that time every landlord was accountable to the police for whatever took place on his property, including reporting on temporary residents.) This of course caused panic among the Jewish residents of the building. They explained to the landlord the serious consequences at the time of suspecting Jews of communism and they begged him to drop the idea of reporting the matter to the police. After much persuasion he agreed to their pleas. However, the girl was severely warned against bringing her friends to her room again.

Escapees from trains to the death camps in Poland who were smuggled into Bucharest in the years 1943-44 were hidden by Nathan Klipper in the homes of his relatives. Children from Dorna who had been orphaned in Transnistria also found temporary shelter in the Klipper home after the authorities permitted them to return to Romania at the beginning of 1944. The Klipper home also provided shelter and support to relatives who had returned from Transnistria, to those who had escaped from the Czernowitz ghetto, and to those who had been evicted from their apartments

under the laws of nationalization, the “Romanization” of apartments belonging to Jews.

After the government in Romania was overthrown in August 1944 and communist prisoners of the previous regime were released, Klipper helped equip released prisoners with shoes and clothing. Immigrants to Palestine received charitable loans from him.

In the realm of his community activities for the general public, we note the funding of the construction of a public bomb shelter in one of the public parks next to the Klipper family home, which was intended for use by area residents and passers-by.

Of the activities that took place in the Klipper family home in Bucharest in the years 1941-44, the numerous comings and goings in the matter of dispatching money and letters to Transnistria deserve special mention. This complex activity was essentially illegal, and thus involved risks which required measures of caution. Mr. Itzchak Arzi, a public figure among expatriate Romanian Jews in Israel, who in those years (then known as Itziu Herzig), was a member of the Aid and Rescue Committee affiliated with the underground Romanian Zionist executive, described how he would deliver money and letters to Nathan Klipper for dispatch to movement members in Transnistria: he would wait outside the house until he received a signal to enter. (The subject of the aid to the Transnistria deportees will be expanded upon later.)

Efforts to Relieve the Situation of the Jews in Czernowitz

Bribes to Major Stere Marinescu

Documents from the first trial of Romanian war criminals, held in Bucharest in 1945, reveal the efforts of a small group of wealthy ex-Bukovinians residing in Bucharest to alleviate the injunctions against the 16,000 Jews of Czernowitz who remained concentrated in that city’s ghetto, after more than 30,000 members of the community had been deported to Transnistria. Nathan Klipper, who was part of this group, testified at the trial. The others were Sumer Wolf and Salo Schmidt. The matter was about the continuous payment of bribes to Major Stere Marinescu. This man served as chief of the military cabinet of the Governor of Bukovina, General Corneliu Calotescu, and headed the government’s “Bureau 2–Jews.” In these roles he was responsible for implementing the decrees against the Jews ordered by Governor Calotescu, including the concentration of the Jews in the ghetto and their deportation to Transnistria. He became infamous primarily for his brutal implementation of the second expulsion from Czernowitz in the summer of 1942. It seems that Marinescu was among the most greedy, corrupt and cynical of those officials who were responsible for the fate of the Jews. An excerpt from his indictment reads: “The establishment of the (Czernowitz) ghetto and the deportation provided a tremendous source of illicit income for those who ordered (the directives) and those who

implemented them. (The man) who was most prominent in this unfathomable organized looting and who brought terror on the population of Czernowitz, was the defendant Stere Marinescu.

“Stere Marinescu extended his antennae towards the Jews and made them believe at first that for large sums of money he would be willing to ease the tortured lives of the Jews of Czernowitz and particularly (he would be willing) to recommend abolishing the (order) to bear the Jewish star (badge) and extending the period of (permitted) movement in the city. One after another, different Jews fell into the trap of his spider’s web, which he spread with devilish skill, believing that for large sums of money and jewelry they could ease their life and existence. In this manner the witness Nathan Klipper, Sumer Wolf and Salo Schmidt came into contact with the defendant in the autumn of 1942, at his apartment in Bucharest. The witness Nathan Klipper declares he gave the defendant a sum of 500,000 lei every month for six months [in his testimony before the court Klipper stated “at least three times.” Z.E.] and a (monthly sum) of 200,000 lei for two (additional) months.”

It appears that those paying the bribes to the man eventually felt that he did not fulfill his part of the deal for the large sums he was paid. Thus Nathan Klipper provided incriminating evidence against him. In his testimony before the court, Klipper confirmed the main facts presented in the indictment, but added to the reasons specified in the indictment for his appeals to the authorities over the fate of the Jews of Czernowitz another goal: “to halt the deportations, for the Jews of Czernowitz were living the entire time under the fear of the resumption of deportations to Transnistria.”⁸

Material Aid to the Community and Individuals

The efforts of a group of ex-Bukovinians living in Bucharest to alleviate the material distress of the Jews of Czernowitz in the years 1941-1944 and to assist in maintaining community institutions, are reported by Dr. Manfred Reifer, a Zionist leader and one of the leaders of Czernowitz Jewry, in his book *Death’s Journey*.⁹ According to Reifer, thanks to these efforts, “it was possible not only to maintain the community institutions, but also to add new ones (... and in addition to that ...) individuals were sent sums of money every month for their sustenance.” This group also employed means of appeal in Bucharest, which were successful, he states, “for thwarting mishaps on more than one occasion.” According to Reifer, the head of this group and its main contributor was the industrialist from Czernowitz, Berthold Sobel, and its members included Nathan Klipper as well as Dr. Sigmund Bibring, Joachim Landau, Isidor Schwarz, Itamar (Sumer) Wolf, Salo Schmidt, Dr. Adolf Neudorfer, and others.

Sumer Wolf, Berthold Sobel, Salo Schmidt and apparently other members of the group also cooperated with Nathan Klipper in aiding the Transnistria deportees, which was the most important arena in which he worked in his efforts to help his brethren in distress during the Holocaust. He spoke about this subject in the