

Introduction

"MY JOURNEY" is the true story of my life, and also of many other lives — with their hates and loves, selfishness and sacrifices. It is a chronicle of what has passed, and also a reminder of what may come — a future which could be the best of times or, if we fail to learn the lessons of the past, the worst of times.

It is a story distilled from 67 years of close and rich experience in both Romania and America.

My journey began on a farm set in the beauty of Romania's Transylvanian Alps, where I luckily found the path to education: From a one-room school in a small village in the Banat district, to high school and college in the town of Timisoara and then to the start of my medical studies, in Cluj.

This journey has taken me through World War II as seen by the people of Romania in Nazi-occupied Europe, and the communist occupation, with all its awful consequences. I felt the terror of the secret police and narrowly escaped the *Securitate*, the dread Romanian KGB, only to fall into the hands of Yugoslav communists who pressed me into slave labor in their coal mines.

Here I tell of my final escape to freedom in the West, of my life as a laborer and medical student in France and Canada, a physician and educator in Canada and the United States, and as a five-times-returned witness to the devastation that is modern Romania.

Every step of my journey as I relate it to you is based on facts which I have seen and lived. It shows the worst and the best of two very different worlds: communist Romania and the democratic United States. And yet, there are some similarities.

What you will see here does not always reflect the prevailing wisdom of the mass media. Some of the conclusions I offer may be controversial, but I leave them for you to judge.

Now Romania, bent to the limit by tyranny, has begun to break the communist grip in the bloody Christmas revolution of 1989, which overthrew the cruel Nicolae Ceausescu.

Here you will see how the suffering of the people finally sparked that explosion. But here, also, I invite you to walk with

me in the world of a physician, and share both its joys of healing and the agony of loss. Here you will meet those who suffer, some with heroism, others with cowardice; some with determination and good sense, others with foolishness and stupidity. Their stories are inspiring, or funny, or sad. But all are very human.

My journey is full of rare experiences, some of which I chose but many of which were visited upon me by a fate whose workings are beyond imagination. I have set down this account for both the young, who I hope will find in it inspiration, and for those whose own journeys are lengthening, who amid its pages may find a time for reflection.

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