

OFFICER ȘTEFAN DEMETRESCU
SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF HIS SON,
FIGHTING TO SAFEGUARD HUMAN DIGNITY
AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN ROMANIA

Lucian Ionel MERCEA, Ps. PhD(c)*
Nicolae Iorga History Institute, Romanian Academy
Pastor & Director of Education Department of
Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Romania
lucianmercea@yahoo.com

Abstract: The present study aims to bring forth, from the perspective of oral history, based on the interview, how the new religious faith of Seventh-day Adventists managed to reach the Romanian territory through foreign missionaries, who arrived in Romania and passed on to some Romanian believers. Officer Stefan Demetrescu was one of those who, amidst spiritual turmoil and concern, comes into contact with Adventist believers and missionaries who shared their beliefs. The study is based on an interview with his son, Stefan Demetrescu-the son, an interview in which he describes how his father's converted to Adventism and his contribution to strengthening, defending and spreading the new Adventist faith in Romania.

Keywords: oral history, interview, religious freedom, Adventist, believers, religion, war, conscience

This present paper aims to bring new elements about the person and personality of the officer Stefan Demetrescu and the impact his conversion had on the spread of the Adventist faith in Romania and his role in defending the religious rights of the Adventists, all narrated by someone who knew him best, namely his son that bears his name: Stefan Demetrescu¹. His son left Romania shortly after the death of his father in 1973, and moved to Paris, taking with him the memories and personal

1 Interview with Dr. Stefan Demetrescu, born. 1923 in Focsani, Vrancea County, of Romanian nationality, denomination Christian Sabbatarian; Education: Faculty of Medicine (class of 1948), medical specialization in Paris (1973)...

experiences he had with his father, feelings and impressions shared decades later, during the visit he made in Romania, with the occasion of participating in celebration of 60 years since graduating from Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest. Over time, several short biographical presentations of Ștefan Demetrescu were made and by Corneliu-Ghiocel Fitzai,² Neagu Adrian³ and Dumitru Popa⁴.

In the current research, we consider that the oral history interview may have notable advantages for a better understanding of issues that are often overlooked or neglected in the classical historiography, but also some disadvantages, among which the subjectivity of the witness as a natural result of the process of perception and distortion of information, caused by the passage of time since the events are remembered decades later. However, combined with archives and other historical sources, we can observe and assess the accuracy and reliability of the information provided in such an interview. In this study, the main source that we used, the interview given by Ștefan Demetrescu- the son about his father, also named Ștefan Demetrescu, interview that was verified against several contemporary and archived documents.

Son relates that his father, Ștefan Demetrescu, was born on June 24, 1882 and was the eleventh child of poor peasants family from a village in Arges County, Stoilești. The father⁵ was a good singer in the church. At the age of four, Ștefan Demetrescu was taken by his father to church and asked to sing, recite the pray Our Heavenly Father, the Creed etc. His father was very pious and Ștefan often observed him and paid attention to his gestures. At home he often sang the Psalter and Ștefan sang it also. He graduated primary school, five classes, with excellent results, in a small village from Valcea and his teacher, having parental

...After graduation he worked until 1973 as a physician at Fundeni Hospital in Bucharest in 1973 he emigrated and practiced medicine in Paris. Interview conducted in June 2008 in Bucharest by editor John Paicu. Interview kept as audio media in the personal archive of Mercea Lucian.

2 Corneliu Ghiocel Fitzai, *Mișcarea adventistă de ziua a șaptea din România*, Honterus Printing, Sibiu, 2009.

3 Adrian Neagu *Istoria Bisericii Adventiste din România și impactul ei asupra societății românești 1870-1932*, unpublished PhD thesis, presented in 2013 at University of Bucharest.

4 Dumitru Popa, *Pagini din istoria Bisericii Adventiste de Ziua a Șaptea din România 1870-1920*, vol. I, Viața și Sănătate Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008.

5 Grandfather of the writer.

consent, sends him to Curtea de Arges, namely to Bratianu⁶ family, to live at his father who was a priest in the village, in order to prepare and send him afterwards to the seminary in Curtea de Arges.

But according to those reported by Stefan Demetrescu-the son, the plans of his parents rapidly took another turn when, after the first winter spent by Stefan at Bratianu family, when following the thawing of water from a river, a female corpse had emerged from the riverbed. This led to the arrival in town of a judge, a prosecutor and a coroner. They were accommodated during their stay at the local priest. Stefan was eleven then and helped with household chores in the priest's house. Judges used to sit on the porch and during the morning when he washed their hands pouring water from kettle and judge Zlotu asked him all sorts of questions to test his comprehension. At one point, after being informed about the identity of the child and the family intentions, he calls for the priest and tells him: "You must be kidding, this is a smart boy, not suitable to make him a priest, you'll only spoil him⁷."

Given the fact that the judge had no children, he asked the priest to send the boy to him by autumn in Pitesti, because he intended to send him to Pitesti at secondary school. Therefore, in autumn Stefan travels to Pitesti, to Judge Zlotu and starts attending secondary school. About this stage his son remembered that his father told him that he used to live with the servants and help in the kitchen, chop and carry wood. At the end of the school year spent in Pitesti, Stefan was first in his class. At the same time the judge had been promoted president of the court in Constanta. And because in Constanta there was no secondary school judge Zlotu leaves him in Pitesti, under the care of Manu, the prefect of the municipality. At the end of the school year Stefan was again the first in his class to the satisfaction of the prefect and his wife.

Telling more about his father, Stefan Demetrescu – the son remembers that during this period the government was changed, and the prefect who was conservative, lost his position and moved to Bucharest. He leaves Stefan in Pitesti under the care of his teachers, who used him to help them by offering private lessons to other children, and at the same time Stefan also earns a scholarship. Upon completion of secondary education in Pitesti, with the support of the judge and former prefect,

⁶ Today Brăduleț, Arges County.

⁷ Interview with Stefan Demetrescu (the son), conducted in Bucharest in June 2008.

Ștefan will go to the Military High School in Craiova, an elite high school that was also called “the high school for the officers’ children.” Although it was not the son of an officer, he was admitted to this school because he had good results and a scholarship. At Craiova he will graduate from Military High School, first of his class. From Craiova he will go to Bucharest to attend Officers’ School, the only school for infantry and cavalry officers. This happened in 1901 and he will graduate in 1903 as valedictorian, being invited to the Royal Palace at graduation. During his studies, as valedictorian, he will collaborate with other valedictorians, both older and younger than he was among, which Marshal Ion Antonescu and future general Nicolae Ciuperca⁸.

His son describes his father as a very pious man and becoming interested in spiritual life. After graduation, before being dispensed, he met with a colporteur working for the British Bible Society, who had opened a large store in the Romana Market place from Bucharest, a store upon which frontispiece were written with big letters the word Bible. This shop served as a center of distribution and sale of Bibles. From here Ștefan Demetrescu will buy a Bible and read it. He will be dispensed in Ramnicu Valcea, to the 21st Infantry Regiment as an officer. His son tells about him that “during his years in Ramnicu Valcea, he didn’t beat the soldiers from his regiment, on the contrary he established rules without resorting to beating. He used to take them on Sunday to church and during the return trip he asked them to comment on what they heard at the sermons.”⁹

A turning point in his life will take place in 1906, when in his regiment arrives a so called “teterist”, i.e. a medical student who came to fulfill military service for a “reduced term”. That student was young Peter Paulini, of similar age they became close friends. When Peter Paulini saw officer Demetrescu reading the Bible, he says that he knows a teacher, in Bucharest, who keeps a Bible study circle and explains the prophecies of the prophet Daniel and asked him if he is interested in participating. That being said when, Petre Paulini, got his first permit, he traveled to Bucharest with Ștefan Demetrescu, where he met a certain Adventist named Simionescu, who stayed with them at Paulini family. While describing his father’s contact with Adventists in Bucharest, the son

⁸ Interview with Ștefan Demetrescu (the son), conducted in Bucharest in June 2008.

⁹ *Ibid.*

told us: “And they got a visit from an older gentleman, called Dimitriu, who was a professor at Gheorghe Lazar High School, an Adventist like Paulini. They started a Bible Study circle that will be attended by another Adventist, namely Nicholas Jelescu, a musician who played in the royal orchestra. My father remained pleased with the discussions and participated in church worship programs somewhere at Radu Voda near Cauzasi, where there was a German pastor named Hinter. The sermon was in German, but my father understood German Language and was pleasantly impressed by hearing it.” And from there on, he accompanied Petre Paulini in his free time, participating in studies and church services, where he will be baptized in 1907, becoming an Adventist.¹⁰

Another moment that marked his life was as described by his son when officer Stefan Demetrescu took part in some military maneuvers. “By taking part in such maneuvers he got ill and developed an infection, osteomyelitis. He is hospitalized at Coltea Hospital, where he received the awful diagnostic that his thigh might need to be cut off. Stefan Demetrescu prayed, “Lord, if You spare me, I’ll dedicate my life to You.” And he was spared. He was operated by famous surgeons for that time, namely Constantin Dimitrescu Severeanu and Dimitrie Gerota. Following those great operations, he remained with a slight limp. He returned to the company in Ramnicu Valcea, but couldn’t resign from the army at the time, especially because he was an excellent student, a valedictorian. Then, Admiral Nicolae, aide-de-camp of King Carol I, whom he knew from Pitesti, takes him to meet the Queen Carmen Sylva¹¹ and he requests her to be allowed to resign from the army. He was introduced to the Queen as a good mathematician and she found the solution: to send him to Berlin for studying, being impressed by how well Stefan Demetrescu spoke German. “Go there to the Polytechnic School from Berlin,” the queen said. This was the help that the queen offered him in order to leave the army, not by means resignation or illness. He was a retired officer, having his salary paid in advance for to three years, in full. His salary as an officer was huge¹² told Stefan Demetrescu the son, “when he was hired as an Adventist minister received somewhere

10 Ibid.

11 Carmen Sylva was the pen name of Queen Elisabeth of Romania (1843-1916).

12 Ibid.

in the tenth of the pay of an officer”¹³. Once in Germany, he would also enlist at Friedensau Adventist Theological Seminary, where Paulini had already arrived there four months before him. Then he would enroll in the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Bonn and Göttingen. After two years of distance learning in Friedensau, he was employed in Germany as an assistant minister at Göttingen and Bonn. In 1910 he returned to the country as a preacher in Ploiesti¹⁴, then in Pitesti, Braila (1914), the place where his first daughter was born (1916).

Afterwards, as his son recalled, following the administrative organization of Adventist believers in Romania, he was elected secretary of the Romanian Conference¹⁵ together with Petre Paulini who he was elected as president. In 1917 he arrived in Bucharest to replace Paulini, who had been mobilized to the front. Then he would work as pastor at Craiova, where it contributed to the establishment of the Adventist Church in the city, and from there he worked as Adventist pastor in Iasi. Here in 1922 he would establish Moldova Conference, based in Focsani where he would open the first Adventist missionary school in our country, with professors that came from USA. “At Focsani at Missionary School, was the place where I was born in 1923¹⁶” recalls Ștefan Demetrescu-the son. From Focsani he would be assigned to organize the Transylvania Conference, in 1925, based in Sibiu, at Rosenfeld Street no. 2, the place where Ștefan Demetrescu-the son recalls his first visual memories of his father preaching and quickly running from the pulpit to join the choir to sing. The son remembers his father as a great lover of music. At home, before the daily prayers, the family sang together two-three songs. While a student at Friedensau, he translated and adapted from German religious songs used by Germans believers and then brought to the Adventists in Romania, thereby contributing to the enrichment of Adventist musical repertoire and liturgy in Adventist churches from Romania.

Thus, at the Adventist congregation from Berzei Street, Bucharest, in 1907, besides the usual songs sung in German Language, the first religious Romanian songs will be performed under conductor Nicolae

13 Interview with Ștefan Demetrescu (the son), conducted in Bucharest in June 2008.

14 ANIC, Police and Security Directorate General Archive, 1910 file 116, tab 18.

15 *The Conference* for Adventists is the legal entity that includes all Adventist churches on its territory. The role of the Conference was to engage and coordinate pastors to oversee, coordinate and boost church activities, to establish and manage church properties etc.

16 Interview with Ștefan Demetrescu (the son), conducted in Bucharest in June 2008.

Jelescu, a musician in the royal orchestra. In 1910 Stefan Demetrescu brought to Romania the first collection of 45 hymns that were to be translated by him together with P. Paulini. Thus, comes the first songbook with hymns for Adventists in Romanian Language, followed in 1912 by another edition with 100 hymns. After the war, in 1926, he would contribute to the printing of the fourth edition of Adventist hymnbook, first edition that contained musical notes with a total of 418 songs.

The son remembers that “in those years, in many places in the country, there was a great persecution for the Adventists believers. They were troubled when gathered to worship, Bibles were snatched from their hand, trampled because they were from the British Bible Society and not from the Patriarchate and gendarmes would arrest the Adventist believers and take them to the detention.” As country head of the Adventist Church and representative of the department of the Adventist Church that deals with the promotion and observance of religious freedom, “he went to the country in places where there were reported abuses and seek to settle conflicts and where he failed, he would hire lawyers to represent the Adventist believers, that were wrongfully accused. But he was often dissatisfied with these lawyers stand, because in the court they were defended as following: *“Mr. Chairman, you see, these people are poor people. They don’t understand much, but if they believe so, leave them be, because they do nothing wrong to the State.*” “My father was discontent with such efforts, that applied to the mercy of the judge and not the righteousness of the law stemming from the freedom of conscience guaranteed by the Constitution. And this dissatisfaction leads him to enroll at the Faculty of Law in Bucharest. He was 46 years, in 1928 upon enlisting. At the same time, he joins the International League for Human Rights in Bucharest, the place where he meets a great humanist, the founder of the league, namely Constantin Costa-Foru, becoming close friends. He will often accompany Demetrescu in front of authorities to obtain religious freedom for Adventists. But despite all their efforts, persecution and arrests continued, many believers being tortured and chained¹⁷.

Wishing to represent the Adventist believers before the courts, as a lawyer, Stefan Demetrescu enlisted in 1928 as a student at the Faculty of Law in Bucharest. In 1932, Stefan Demetrescu having graduated from

17 Ibid.

Faculty of Law, will join the bar association and practice as a lawyer. In 1931, before becoming a lawyer, he hires a lawyer by the name of Stanciu, who was a young lawyer and member of the Romanian Parliament at the age of 26. The two will become close friends, Ștefan, the son, recalling that “lawyer Stanciu was often in our house, and in 1936, when he went to Paris to study forensics, he brought all his library and all his documents to be stored in our house, all his papers, and he even brought his father’s sculpture to us and we used to keep it at the entrance. Even myself, when going to France to study medicine, in the 70s, I kept hearing about Stanciu. I went to Paris after both my father and my wife’s father, Pastor Constantin Popescu, died. One evening my wife tells me on the phone about some Stanciu. I called him he said to me: “*How come that the son of my best friend would not come to see me?*” I arrived at his place, where the moment he saw me he hugged me, and the first thing he does, is going to the bookshelves and takes out a Bible. He said that he left many things in the country, but he could not leave it, namely the Bible that my father gave him, a small, gilded, wrapped in skin, Bible. He continued saying that he wished to show me something else my father left him and pull out a piece of paper that read: *General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*. Below it was also written *Subdivision Southeast Europe*. And there was a recommendation which included the following paragraph: “*I’ve known Mr. Stanciu from Bucharest, a renowned lawyer and a defender of freedom of conscience, of Seventh-day Adventists in Romania and he deserves our gratitude.*” Then Stanciu invited me to the Faculty of Law in Paris where he taught, and where he had established a new department, victimology. When everyone only deals with criminals and villains, he set up a section in which law students were trained to deal with victims. And there in front of students, he introduced me like this: “*His father was a great defender of freedom of conscience and human rights in Romania, during difficult times. His dad, he said, was how to say, like a Patriarch of the Adventists in Romania*”. This was the manner that he introduced me”¹⁸.

Ștefan Demetrescu-the son remembered the lawsuits his father attended as a lawyer between 1934-1935, a total of about 119 lawsuits only during these two years. Colporteurs and Adventist believers were arrested, beaten, imprisoned preachers, children expelled from school because they were Adventists. He remembers his father that used to

18 Interview with Ștefan Demetrescu (the son), conducted in Bucharest in June 2008.

run from one lawsuit to another in the country. He did not remember his father would ever take a vacation. Son reported that “we often went to sleep, and, in the morning, I heard father passed by home during the night, and left me to typewrite some appeal that I had to file to the court in the morning. From the age of 10 he taught me how to typewrite and go to court to file various documents.” In 1937 son remembers that the lawsuits had decreased in number in the country because there is a new ministerial decision¹⁹ with offered greater freedom for Adventists. And with these changes, Stefan Demetrescu was appointed professor at the Biblical Institute Stupini-Brasov, as son remembers, where they lived for three years.

In 1940 son remembers that Legionnaires gained political power, and among the first things the government that came to power on September 4, a few days after installation, on September 9, the minister who was in charge of churches, a legionary gave a decree according to which Adventist, Baptist and Evangelical Christians churches, were brought outside the law, despite the fact they were authorized before²⁰. In addition to this all goods belonging to these churches were confiscated. As a result of this new reality, Stefan the son, surprised the reaction that his father had by describing what happened “my father quickly came from Brasov and went directly to Antonescu, who was his former comrade in Military School. Antonescu immediately issued a degree that cancelled these laws, before the first decree even came into force²¹. Afterwards, as Stefan Demetrescu-son remembered “during the war, in 1941, after the Romanian soldiers crossed Dniester River, Bessarabia and Bukovina became a military zone, with military government and a military governor, being a special area. And there began the enormous persecution at the instigation of the priests, who said that Adventists are communists, Bolsheviks etc. Then began some huge arrests. Entire communities of believers were brought in chains directly from church

19 It's the decision 4781 1937 View ANIC, MCA archive, 1 of 1937 file f. 1-13.

20 This occurred through ministerial decisions issued on the same day: Decision no. 42,352,178 (see ANIC, archive of Ministry of Religions, Department of Education, file 1/1939, f. 17), Decision no. 42,353,179 (see Official Gazette, Part I, no. 216, September 17, 1940, p. 5437-5438) and Decision no. 42,355,180 of September 9, 1940 (see Official Gazette, Part I, no. 216, September 17, 1940, p. 5438-5439).

21 It the Ministerial Decision 43. 931/19 September 1940. See ANIC, archive of Ministry of Interior Office, file 410/1940, p. 159.

worship to the martial court of Chernivtsi. Stefan Demetrescu acted as their advocate.”²²

Regarding these lawsuits, Stefan, the son remembers, “They were sentenced brief, without charges. The prisoner being brought to trial was asked: “*What are you?*” And the prisoner replied: *Seventh-day Adventists*. The judge responded: “*seven years of hard labor! Next!*” This was the conduct towards all Adventists.” He remembers that his father jumped up stating that it is not a proper lawsuit, it should have prosecution, defense without which one cannot sentence a person.” After returning (to Bucharest), he made new representations to Antonescu, chief of state, bringing to his attention what going on. He served as defense lawyer in several lawsuits, one of them being for the Chairman of the Conference of Moldova, named Popov. He was eventually sentenced to 25 years in prison and hard labor. He was without rest serving as a lawyer. One of those day the lawyers from Chernivtsi said to him: “*Please be alert because tomorrow, we heard there is a plan to charge you with civil unrest. And the plan is to arrest you and sentence you in open session.*” Stefan Demetrescu ran away, arrived in Bucharest, hiding in the house of friends of Adventists, behind the Commercial Academy, Comet Street, or the Fall of the Bastille as it is now known. There was the place where I brought clean laundry for him.”

At home we received telegrams announcing the arrest order for him and that Stefan Demetrescu is sentenced in absentia, for life imprisonment, to be brought and surrendered to authorities. Stefan Demetrescu, the son, reports on this issue as following: “I had the same name as my father when the police commissioners arrived, I sometimes told them I was the one, other times that I was not him, but they were looking for my father. They usually left. During this time my father told me: “*Go to General Ciuperca*” a general who was valedictorian in 1902 before my father, whom he knew well. He was Minister of War in the government of Octavian Goga, and this Minister of War was army general and commander in chief that crossed the Prut River, into Bessarabia and, after this event, continued to come to my father and every time he came to us, my father prayed with him, and the General used to kneel... This is the General who during the autumn of 41 had asked Antonescu to stop because the war became unpopular, but Antonescu replied: “*I cannot, I*

22 Interview with Ștefan Demetrescu (the son), conducted in Bucharest in June 2008.

promised Hitler that I'd go with him to the end". He sent me to this General who already heard something about what happened to my father. Finally, General Ciuperca told me: *"Alright, I'd go to the marshal"*. And he went to the Marshal, and said the following: *"Sir, next year we celebrate 40 year since the class that Stefan Demetrescu was valedictorian. Everyone in his class are now ministers, prefects and their valedictorian is arrested? It cannot be."* *"I cannot do anything,"* Antonescu said, *"because the sentence is without appeal, but what I can do is to give an exceptional appeal in Cassation."* Antonescu gave this provision: exceptional appeal in Cassation. When I visited General Ciuperca he told me: *"He cannot report to court for appeal in cassation as a free man. He must go and report to a military unit, they would arrest him, put him in chains and handcuffs, and bring him in front of the court. The order for him not to be arrested can only be issued by the governor of²³ Bucharest. And I talked to him "*. He also knew my father. *"You go to him,"* the General told me. *"I went to see him, he received me well, was happy to meet me and was surprised that I share the same name with my father. He immediately called the secretary and gave the paper to my father that he could present himself free to trial. I thanked him and went to my father, and I gave him the paper, and in a few days, he stood for the trial, where the President of Cassation, who knew my father as a lawyer, overturned the first court sentence. And then he was free again."*

Interlocutor speaks of people that history often present them only in contrasting colors: black and white. But Stefan Demetrescu the son, when asked about them, presented another angle of which one can perceive Antonescu. Stefan Demetrescu remembered how his father viewed Marshal Antonescu: *"He was a blunt, but very fair man. Just"*.

After the change of regime, the son remembers that his father was called by the prosecution in the major lawsuit of war criminals in which was also brought the Colonel who had sentenced him at Chernivtsi. When seeing my father, he said to him: *"Sir Demetrescu, I did a great nonsense, please don't hold it against me now..."*

Regarding Marshal Antonescu, Demetrescu the son, has a unique testimony to say: *"At his trial, my father was unable to attend. But when Antonescu was in custody at Jilava, with the help of some connections that he had, he gave the Marshal some books. The titles were Steps to Christ and the Bible. Probably also the Parables of our Lord or another*

23 A reference to the prefect of Bucharest.

book. And he was able to send them with the help of someone. When Antonescu was removed from the cell to be led to execution, some guard came to gather his things. Antonescu took the books sent my father and gave them to one of the officers saying: Keep them, they may help you someday. Afterwards he went before the firing squad."²⁴

His son also recalls the time of war. After August 23, 1944 he remembers his father at the first meeting of Adventist believers who were again legally constituted, worshipping in the Labirint Church, somewhere in September. During the years when Adventist belief was forbidden, the Labirint Church was transformed into a tailor shop for the army, sewing machines had been installed at the balcony. Here, where it used to be the headquarters of the Adventist Church from Romania, Ștefan Demetrescu gave his first sermon after the war and sang a hymn in tears at the end of the sermon.

Ștefan Demetrescu the son, recounted memories of Tudor Arghezi, a good friend of his father. They became friends in the days when his father was in Pitesti. Quite often Arghezi came into their house at the time when they lived in Bucharest, at Labirint.

Regime change did not mean for Ștefan Demetrescu the high hopes and desires he had. Not being accustomed to yield easily the son remembered his father "often came in conflict with the Committee of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and in 1957 his pastor authorization was revoked, no longer having the right to preach and that meant an enormous blow for him." Then his son remembers two personal searches that were performed by Securitate when they discovered Adventist Review, American edition, that he received through various friends, and that translated and published in Romanian spiritual messages for the Adventist church in Romania. These were confiscated. Even when his father was 88 years old, his son remembers that he was taken one night and interrogated by Securitate. In 1973, at 92-year-old, son recalls how his father "passed away" after all his life struggled with low blood pressure. "When going through a flu or something I ran to Fundeni Hospital where I worked and brought him infusions and drugs. One day he said to me: Just let me go, I'm tired. For me it is best to go and get some rest. Better you come here with your children and pray. And we gathered and blessed us. And he stayed like that for a couple of days, but not in a

24 Interview with Ștefan Demetrescu (the son), conducted in Bucharest in June 2008.

coma, because he was fully conscious. The day he died he received visits from several Adventist believers who prayed for him, and he prayed for them and they sang the hymn composed by him, *Cerurile 'nalte (High Heavens)*. And so, he died.

As a conclusion, one can say that the stories told by the son about the officer and lawyer Stefan Demetrescu complement and enhance with new aspects the facts that were known about him by Adventist historiography. As a child, Stefan Demetrescu was endowed with a brilliant mind and great organizational skills, skills that could not have gone unnoticed by those who interacted with him. First his teacher, who sent him to Bratianu family, where his father was a priest and his brother a teacher to be prepared for the seminary of Curtea de Arges, then we find out how Stefan Demetrescu was diverted from this destination and sent towards a military career by judge Zota's intervention who took him to Pitesti and from there to prefect Manu. As a valedictorian and a scholarship student, he attends the Military High School in Craiova, from where he will head towards Officer's School in Bucharest. Here he will meet exceptional military persons with key roles in the development of our country's history, himself being a brilliant student, a valedictorian.

His leaning towards studying the Bible, the contact with the medicine Adventist student - Peter Paulini, who arrives in the company that he commanded, for military service and the subsequent friendship that interconnected them, made Stefan Demetrescu get in contact with members of an elite Adventist group from Bucharest, where he attended Bible studies and became an Adventist in 1907. He leaves military service with the support of the Queen, studying Adventist theology in Germany at Friedensau and after that he worked as an Adventist pastor in Bonn and Göttingen. Then he returns to Romania to work as a pastor because the German origin pastors who worked in Romania but did not have Romanian citizenship were expelled²⁵. He helped establish Adventist churches in various places in the country and the organization of new administrative entity that is required with the increase in number of believers and churches. He was entrusted by national leadership of the church to promote and protect freedom of conscience of believers in the troubled years that her country was in the process of national consolidation. Unhappy with the performance of lawyers hired to defend

25 ANIC, Police and Security Directorate General Fund, file 116 1910 f. 2.

Adventist believers that were persecuted, in 1928 he enlisted in the Faculty of Law in Bucharest, whose graduate will be in 1932. Then he will join the Lawyers Council and advocated for freedom of conscience of believers in many courts in the country, being always on the road.

Chernivtsi was the place where he was framed for an arrest and convicted for life, but he is informed in advance of his peers and he will hide in Bucharest. From there he sent his son, to report these incidents and to make the necessary arrangements with influential people of the time that knew Ștefan Demetrescu, namely General Ciuperca, Antonescu and the prefect. All three work together to solve this situation in a proper manner, to avoid having Ștefan Demetrescu to appear chained in court. The order for arrest and his conviction will therefore be canceled by the intervention of the Marshal, Ștefan Demetrescu being free once again.

Ștefan Demetrescu also brings a special contribution to Adventist theological education from Romania, helping in the formation of new local pastors first in Focsani, then at the Adventist Theological Seminary from Stupini-Brasov. He translated and composed hymns for Adventist believers in Romania, helping to enrich the repertoire and liturgy of Adventist Church from Romania. Meanwhile his friendships with elite people from contemporary Romanian society such as lawyer and deputy Stanciu, the writer Tudor Arghezi or journalist and lawyer Constantin Costa-Foru. He uses every opportunity he has to spread the word of Scripture and speak about the Adventist message even in the most unexpected places and to the most surprising of people. He succeeds due to his relations to slip into his old mate cell, Ion Antonescu while he was arrested, a Bible and other religious books with Adventist specific message, that were appreciated by the Marshal and handed over to the officer that was guarding him, before being executed.

However, the freedom that came together with the end of the war and regime change was overshadowed by the cooperation between the new leaders of Adventist Church with those in The Ministry of Religious Affairs, who long wanted the removal of such a man considered uncomfortable from the leadership of the church, which will take place in 1957, year in which he would lose his authorization as pastor and the right to preach. He will often be harassed by the Securitate, being subject to searches, religious literature and personal documents confiscations. He died as faithful Adventist aged 91, in 1973.

Bibliography

- ✦ Fitzai, Cornelius Ghiocel, *Mișcarea adventistă de ziua a șaptea din România*, Honterus Printing, Sibiu, 2009.
- ✦ Neagu, Adrian, *Istoria Bisericii Adventiste de Ziua a Șaptea din România și impactul ei asupra societății românești 1870-1932*, unpublished PhD thesis, presented in 2013 at University of Bucharest.
- ✦ Popa, Dumitru, *Pagini din istoria Bisericii Adventiste de Ziua a Șaptea din România 1870-1920*, vol. I, Viata si Sanatate Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008.

Archives

- ✦ ANIC, *MCA archive*.
- ✦ ANIC, *archive of Ministry of Interior Office*.
- ✦ ANIC, *archive of Ministry of Religions, Deptment of Education*.
- ✦ ANIC, *Police and Security Directorate General Fund*.
- ✦ *Official Gazette*.

.....Interview with Dr. Stefan Demetrescu, born in 1923, in Focsani, Vrancea County, of Romanian nationality, denomination Christian Sabbatharian; Education: Faculty of Medicine (class of 1948), medical specialization in Paris (1973). After graduation he worked until 1973 as a physician at Fundeni Hospital in Bucharest, and in 1973 he emigrated and practiced medicine in Paris. Interview conducted in June 2008, in Bucharest, by editor John Paicu.