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Author: Lascăr Zamfirescu

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Memories

Whether I am a nobleman or of noble origin? What I can say is that I had noblemen in my family, so to say, in the ancestry...

Lascăr Zamfirescu¹

More or less important noble families in his ancestry and in the ancestry of his wife: Ghica², Năsturel-Herescu³, Manu (Manno)⁴, Cornescu⁵-Greceanu⁶, Filipescu⁷, Rosetti-Bălănescu⁸, Pârâianu⁹, Otetelișanu¹⁰, Bălcescu¹¹, Mandrea¹², Mincu, Stolojan¹³, Zamfirescu¹⁴.

There Are Noblemen and Noblemen...

A child wandering about the world

I was born in Berlin when my father was for the first time on a mission there.

I attended elementary school together with my brother and sister at „Sacré-Coeur de Jésus“ in The Hague. The nuns were excellent teachers. My brother and I were the only two boys in a girls' school. We did a lot of cheating upsetting the nuns. My brother would put beet on his knees so that they might think he was wounded and send him home. We would go by bike to school. We had an English governess, Miss Roger. She raised us. She was adorable and got on very well with our Doda from Oltenia¹⁵. On Sundays, we would go by bike to Leiden, 40 km away and would have tea there in a tea-house. We had to be obedient the whole week to be able to go there. The legation was in 5 Amaliastraat, one hundred metres from the Royal Palace. The house we stayed in was typically Dutch. It had four storeys and three-four rooms on every storey. Its façade was only faience-coated and it was washed every week.

At a certain point, we all left for Brazil. My father left earlier by the *Cap Arcona* ship, about whom a film was then made because she sank just like the Titanic. We all joined him later on. We sailed by the 20,000 ton *Neptunia* ocean

liner, that also had a tennis court. We made stops over in Naples, Algiers, Gibraltar, Dakar, Recife, Pernambuco, Bahia, and got to Rio de Janeiro. At 5 a.m. when we woke up and looked out of the portholes, we had a bird's eye view of the city. It was impressive, like a mirage: the gulf, the rocks as if they were surging from the sea, the cable car linking them... There I attended *Ecole des Français*. Three years later, we, brothers each went our own way. I came back home, Duiliu remained in Lisbon, where my father was assigned then and Sanda went to Paris for studies. We kept meeting back home in summertime.

Till I was 14, my father had taken me along wherever he was sent as a diplomat. Until that age I had been to Germany, Holland, Brazil, Portugal, Italy, Poland... As to my birth place, I was born in Berlin on May 23rd 1922. And when I was 14, and was in Lisbon, he told me: „Stop dogging my steps! Go back home and continue your studies there! „I went back home and lived with my grandmother. My brother and sister remained with my mother and father. They were more „precious“... And they joined their parents wherever they went, they were not sent home to learn as I was.

Class mate and friend of the Great Prince Mihai: cars-a common hobby

One year after my father had sent me back home, I enrolled in the king's class („The class of the Great Prince Mihai of Alba Iulia“), whose close friend I became. He was fond of me... I was among the 13 musketeers in the 5th grade (they were not three). We were class mates for three years, between 1936 and 1939.

The King would spend part of his summer holidays at his mother's, Queen Elena¹⁶ in Florence. Meanwhile I was in Rome where my father was ambassador. King Mihai asked for my mother's permission that I should join them too for a while. First, I stayed with them in Sparta Villa for two-three weeks and the next year, I went with them to the Brioni islands, on the Dalmatian Coast. We visited museums, went for a drive or by bike...Bikes were in fashion. Mihai would carry his mother on the handle bar and I had to carry the queen's sister, princess Irina of Greece, who was also there. The Queen would spend a lot of time with us; she was kind and gracious...

Sometimes we would go to the Peleş Castle in Sinaia¹⁷. We would often go for a drive by the blue Jaguar. The king had several cars but he liked the latter best. It was a two-seat, very low car with a very long bonnet and was extremely comfortable. We would go hunting crows. In winter we would go to the barracks at Băneasa where the ground was covered by ice as clear as crystal. The king would step on it, then he would turn round all of a sudden and the car would turn round several times until it reached the end of the platform.

I've been driving myself since I was 16. I had a driving license. At that time, you got one only if you had connections. I remember going to my father's during the summer holidays, wherever he was on mission. One summer, I went to Warsaw, where he was our minister, just when he was being transferred to Rome. Every year he had a new Chrysler, he was a Chrysler fan. He would change it and get a new one every year, paying some extra money. My father had already left for Rome and I stayed with my mother and brother in Warsaw. And we left Warsaw and I drove all the way to Rome. I was 16. The roads were good. We passed through Prague, Vienna, we entered the Venice plain and we stopped in Mestre, before reaching Venice. We left the car there and went for a walk... And then, we drove on to Rome. We also had another car. We had

two cars at that time. The second one was a two-seat red convertible Ford. It had red leather upholstery. It was so beautiful! I remember having a chauffeur in Rome whose name was Amedeo Tocacelli. Father made Amedeo always join me when I was driving. But he only caused me more trouble because I would take a young lady for a drive, my cousin's friends...Amedeo would always sit upfront and he was appalled by my driving. As since then I've been driving pretty fast. (But since I had an accident, I've driven normally. I think a good driver-it's a joke, of course-must have an accident to drive normally because he gets rid of the speeding craze, that is of the instinct to step on it.)

In the 7th grade, when we went for a drive, I got into trouble. We were returning from Snagov¹⁸ and the King, Costache Malaxa and myself engaged in a race. I was driving a sport BMW borrowed from Costache. I was on slope by the Miorița artesian well, I wanted to avoid a car which had popped up my way and, because of the wind-driven water on the pavement, I lost control. The car was driving off at speed, over 100 km per hour. I succeeded in avoiding that car, but when I wanted to straighten out my car, I reached the end of the slope. I didn't have enough time to give it some thought, I tried to straighten it out but it slipped. And it turned round four times and ran into the tree behind the well. There were trees in the middle of the road then, lining up two alleys, both ways. And I ran into the second tree. My thighbone was broken, going out through my trousers. I kept those trousers for three years...I had my leg in plaster for eight months.

Then, in the eighth grade, I attended the St. Sava School. It was after that accident and I passed my baccalaureate on crutches. Then I became an engineer, as my father used to say: „The future belongs to the engineers! „ A big mistake! Yet, he was right. During the communist regime, engineers could get a job more easily in towns.

I've learned many foreign languages since I

was a boy. I can speak French, English, German, Portuguese, Italian... Having a good ear has helped me a great deal. As I was a boy and traveled to foreign countries, I picked up foreign languages more easily and could speak them better.

A romantic marriage with unforeseen follow-ups

My wife, Elena (whom everybody has always called **Linica**) is the daughter of Nicolae **Rosetti-Bălănescu**. They were also called Bălănescu to be different because there were four Rosetti families: Rosetti-Solescu, Rosetti-Roznovanu, Rosetti-Tescanu and Rosetti-Bălănescu. Actually, they are all related. From the viewpoint of her noble ancestry, she's extraordinary because it doesn't impress her at all! She's got such modesty that I've only seen with this kind of people.

We got married in 1945. She had been married before to my cousin, Dan Simionescu-Râmniceanu. And when she divorced my cousin, then I met her she had a small child.

When I moved to my wife's, I had only my shirt on, so to say. I came to her place having nothing and for five years, my folks didn't want to see me. They were upset, because she was much older than I was. But, at that time, she looked younger. Well, that's it. They „punished“ me until our first child was born. Then one day, my father dropped by, stopping by the fence and looking over it... We lived in Eminescu Street and we had a wooden fence. I saw him and told Linica: „Look, isn't father there?“ She was in the basement, where there was a window overlooking the entire courtyard. „He is, dear. Now, get dressed and go and open the gate for him.“ Five years on...

An engineer's life during the communist regime

In 1946, I graduated from the Polytechnic Institute. I became an engineer as my father had thought it out. So, that's what I can boast of

now, my engineer's profession. No design would leave the institutes where I worked without my approval. I had always worked with the Technical-Economic Council, checking and approving designs. No design left the institute until I had signed the designs. But I couldn't become at least chief engineer. I had a lot to suffer because of my relatives living abroad: my brother settled in Belgium, my sister (e.n. Sanda Stolojan) – a great dissident in Paris, my son in America.

I was an electromechanical engineer. First, I worked at Malaxa¹⁹ for seven years. It was then called „August 23rd“²⁰. I made drawing of engines, motorailers, Diesel engines, test stands for engines...

I made all kinds of tools. Then I worked at three institutes in a row for four years at each of them. In the end, I returned to the Machine-building Institute.

I worked in the light industry. I designed spinners. I made designs for Bag-O-Matic type rubber presses (a British license) at Danubiana²¹.

I also worked in the glass industry. I designed automatic machines making 30 thousand bottles a day. A bottle came out every three seconds. A big, 1 liter bottle. Do you know how those outfit works? Shall I explain it to you? There are two uniselectors, two vertical axes spinning round so that when meeting in the middle, they go the same way. And they move on by 30 degrees. Click! Click! Click! They have a Malta cross underneath, on the axis, driven by the mechanism below. And at every station, they do something. The first one sucks up melted glass from the big tank. It is a tank three times as large as this room (e.n. a room of about 10-12 square metres), full of warm sand and 22 materials that are melted at 1700 degrees. And there, at the first station, there is a mouth, which by vacuum, sucks up the melted glass. And then, at the next station, a vertical tube comes down and makes a hole. And there follows the third station. And that's the way it goes to the end. And in the middle it passes from the sixth station to the first

station in the next. And hardly there does everything end. So, it takes 12 stations in all to make a bottle. And if you go to Azuga²², where there is a glass factory, and pay attention, you can hear it out loud: piip, piip, piip... Day and night. When you don't hear it, it means the automaton stopped. And that's serious because the oven stays heated in vain.

So, I worked in the light industry too and then, I went back to hot sectors, to machine-building. I went back to the Institute in Olteniței Avenue. And I was there for 14 years. I had become a councilor, but I couldn't get further promoted. There I had to do with the Securitate (the communist political police). When I was to go abroad the first time, a guy came up to me. I hadn't left the country until '81 or '82. And he came up to me and said: „Sir, now, you must make the automatic hall for the treatment of pumping rods in Câmpina“. Do you know how the pumping rods are like? At the Canadian pump? They are 9 m long pieces, with some thread here and a coupling here. And they are attached to each other and can form a 6 kilometres long chain. Every 9 metres. 9 metres, 9 metres, 9 metres... 6 kilometres long rods fastened to the end of the Canadian. And the Canadian pumps. It goes up and down. And down, at the end of it, in the oil-wall, it has a piston, which is like a bottle with a broken bottom. And it has a plug inside, which is bigger than the hole. When it pushes the piston into the liquid, the plug goes up and when it pulls it up, the plug covers the hole. You lift a bottle and lift a bottle and take out a bottle. And the entire column is tight against that piston. This lift of 45 cm, raises the entire 6 km long fuel oil column up. Have you seen how the Canadian pumps work in the field? The rods are made of chromium-nickel steel undergoing a very precise heat-treatment. If they break, the wall is thrown away. At that time, in the '70s, a 9 metres long rod cost 40 million lei. And you heated them by induction. At one end, there is a thickening, threaded outside and at the other end, there is a thickening

too, but with a threaded hole. And you put this. And those rods are processed automatically. The rods run like trains in the hall. Just imagine such a 9 metres long piece heated red, at 1000-1200 degrees. And when it is taken out, in the Soviet Union, there were four workers, at the furnace-tunnel, naked down to the waist, which were gripping it with some big tongs and were putting it aside. Before starting to design the thermal treatment line, we were sent to Baku, with three Securitate officers trailing behind us, to see how they were doing it. As I said, the treatment there was quite primitive. It was deadly there, it was hell. I didn't do it this way. As I conceived it, there was just one man by a panel in the entire 200 metres long hall. I worked on its design for three years. My patent dates back to '74. (We had a very good manager, Claudiu Ștefănescu, a professor at the Metallurgy Department. He is currently in America with his son. He was an excellent guy. They all left, I mean those who were smart...) The rods would enter a 9 metres wide and 12 metres long oven. And they would move on, 30 cm, 30 cm... They stayed in the oven for about 45 minutes. It was a 2000 kW electric oven. With the transformers in the hall. There were two men in the entire hall handling everything on the control panel... The rod would come in at one end and would come out at the other. I had an invention patent for this outfit. They gave me a patent but they didn't give me any money. Since I had to cede the invention to the state. And they sold the patent in America and took all the money. They took all the dollars. I have 7 patents, which are mine. But I didn't get any money. OK. Rubbish. You pay for your foolishness. There were also some cunning fellows. They made an invention and they did nothing afterwards. And they lived all their life on that invention. As far as I was concerned, it was foolishness...

Roots and beginnings...

I'd start the story of my paternal root starts with **my great-great-grandfather: Ion Zamfir**

Lemnaru. Ion Zamfir came from the Vrancea forests and had a saw-mill and a big timber shop in Focșani. That is why he was also called Ion Zamfir the Carpenter. It is from him, from Zamfir that the Zamfirescu name comes.

Ion was married to Zoe Lascăr. Hence the legend, according to some and I say it is a fact that all the members of this family have been people with a great talent. There was a whole story about one of the Lascărs, namely that the Lascărs came from Niceea in Macedonia when a revolution was under way because they were afraid to remain there. They claimed they descended from emperor Laskaris himself²³. And that was the reason why at a certain point, they pulled Duiliu's leg. He claimed that but he only had the letters that Lascăr woman talked about. When my father wanted to get the letters from her, she said that her brother had taken them out of a drawer where she had thrown them and had burnt them... OK, that's a story, I can't say it's doubtful, but still, it's groundless.

Zoe Lascăr had another brother, whose descendant was Anastasie Lascăr, Duiliu's uncle, who studied medicine in Vienna. There, jointly with Nicolae Bălcescu²⁴ and somebody else, he issued the Romanian review *Fama Lipscai*, I think it was called. It is at the Academy. They somehow started the '48 revolution. The Lascăr family had descendants, some of whom still live in the country.

Ion Zamfir Lemnaru had three sons: Lascăr, Dumitru and Gheorghe.

How the building of an estate starts...

Lascăr, my great-grandfather lived there in the area. He had a little house near the Simionescu family's house. He was an unassuming man as poor as a church mouse. He got land on lease to make both ends meet, as he was a poor clerk at the town hall. Nevertheless, he had general knowledge, which you didn't know where it came from. He was an educated man. He could speak Greek very well and had quite a

rich library at Faraoanele. He became a councilor in the Focșani Council. That was the highest position he held in his life.

Lascăr was married to **Sultana Mincu**, the youngest child of the Mincu family that had four sons and two daughters. One of them was architect Ion Mincu²⁵. There was another sister, Ana, married to a fellow named Constantinescu, who had large estates, a wealthy man. Ana was the mother of Lina, famous in Focșani. Lina was married to Simion Lungu, who was then named Simionescu-Râmnicănu, and who became an academician²⁶. Lina had a nice house and entertained at her place every two weeks, alternating a musical soiree with a literary one. Her son, Marin Simionescu-Râmnicănu was the first husband of my wife, therefore the father of Matei Simionescu, my step son, so to say.

Lascăr and Sultana had nine children. Duiliu and two other brothers, one who became a colonel, were the only ones to make it out of Focșani.

Lascăr had two brothers, Dumitru and Anastasie and a sister.

He started out in life as a poor man, but then he had lots of vineyards. Why do you think Duiliu was born in the Plăinești-Cucu village? (It is currently called General Suvorov²⁷ or something like that. The statue of Suvorov on horseback stands there, on the brink of the highway, on the left-hand side.) It is there that Duiliu was born and he is registered at the village hall there. They did not live in the village, but his father had a huge vineyard of about 200 ha on lease there. They lived in Focșani but they would go and stay there for vintage and wine-making.

A diplomat and writer who became a classic of Romanian literature

Duiliu Zamfirescu, the writer²⁸, my grandfather was a career diplomat. He only made it to the position of second secretary. And that was due to the fact that Dimitrie Sturdza²⁹ didn't fancy him because in his youth, Duiliu had writ-

ten an article about the wealth of the crown. And this so-called failing pursued him all his life. As at that time, it was a bad thing to deal with the wealth of the crown and criticize it, why one should give the king and not the people. It is true, at a certain point, he was even foreign minister for a short while.

Duiliu was secretary at the Legation in Rome, Italy for 18 years and there he married **Enriquetta Allievi**. Enriquetta Allievi was the daughter of the president of the Italian Bank, Antonio Allievi, whose wife was Countess Bonacina Spinni. There are statues and photos of Bonacina Spinni in all towns in Italy. She was a heroine of Italian *Risorgimento* and a friend of Luciano Manara³⁰, who was the hero of Garibaldi. He participated in the Rome battles for driving Austrians out of Italy. And he even died by the walls of Rome. I have a volume including Luciano Manara's letters. Bonacina



Duiliu Zamfirescu

Spinni was from Milan, she had a group of women called „the geese of Capitol“. The ladies were all nationalist fighters.

My grandfather Duiliu was the first man in the country to have a car in 1902, 1903, I don't know... He had a six ton Delage. It had back seats, flap seats... And if he left it somewhere in the mud, its wheels sank into the ground.

My father wrote the book „On Southern Roads“ and in its preface, in ten pages, he wrote how it was when he had come back home, after he had been announced that his father had died. At the customs, he got down in the station and bought a paper. And he saw the paper didn't say anything about Duiliu. Duiliu was foreign minister at the time. And at a certain point, he turned another page and saw a big, black-framed announcement about his father's death. My father adored Duiliu. And that is why, my father wanted to give every child he had the second Christian name of Duiliu. „Even if you're stupid, you will be less anonymous that way“, he said.

I'm sorry that up to this day, Duiliu Zamfirescu doesn't have a memorial house in Romania.

A supporter of Henri Coandă³¹

A brother of my grandfather, **Alexandru Zamfirescu** became a colonel. He had attended the Saint-Cyr Academy in France. I've read in a magazine how he funded Henri Coandă's testing his first jet plane in the Cotroceni military field, where the barracks³² stood. There was a big ground there. There are still some buildings of the barracks there.

The racecourse in the countryside

One of Duiliu's sisters, **Marcela, married Slăvescu**, lived in Cotești, where she had a big mansion. She was a French teacher in Cotești. Her husband, Stefan Slăvescu had a very nice estate in Cotești. He had a horse and sulky farm. He would send his crews to participate in the

trotting races in Bucharest. And he also had a small racecourse there. I remember going from the vineyard by dogcart to aunt Marcela's. She was a fantastic person. She was one of the persons in Duiliu's entourage playing an instrument. Practically all brothers and sisters played various instruments. She played the violin. Sometimes, they made up a real family orchestra. They played classical music both at home and in the house of Lina Simionescu, who was their neighbour in Focșani. The Simionescus had a big, one-storey house. It was called „*The Window House* „. A house that endured for a long time. It had become the property of Duiliu's brother, then of his daughters, who are still alive. And during the communist regime, they sold it under a contract providing for its transformation into a memorial house. And the communists bought the house and after three months, they pulled it down and raised some blocks of flats like ours.

Aunt Marcela had two sons: Gheorghe and Ștefan, whom the family called Mierliță and Tenenică respectively. Tenenică lived for a long time, until a few years ago. He died all by himself, burnt, in his room in Focșani. He went to bed in the evening leaving the oil lamp on and at night he overturned it.

All three children of Duiliu studied in Paris.

A reliable man of Nicolae Titulescu and vigneron, hosting chit-chats in his own wine cellar

My father, Alexandru Duiliu Zamfirescu³³ came with three degrees from Paris in: law, letters and political science, one of them finalized in a PhD. He left Paris in 1912 or 1913, when the campaign in Bulgaria took place. He came as a volunteer. He came from France wearing patent-leather shoes and a little tie as it were and arrived in Bulgaria, where the war was going on and typhus was wreaking havoc. In the beginning he suffered a great deal because he couldn't speak Romanian too well. He was a very courageous fellow, though you thought little of him

when seeing him so³⁴. He was a society man, a womanizer, a boozier... But he had general knowledge. Actually, that was required from a diplomat at that time. One did not send a pharmacist to be Romania's minister in London...

Just like his father, Alexandru Duiliu Zamfirescu was a career diplomat too. But my father was a diplomat who spent his entire life in diplomacy.

My father would come back home quite often, as he came to the ministry for more orders. He was Titulescu's reliable man. Maybe his closest man! Titulescu had the following method: he would send my father three or four months before he reached a capital city. For instance, when my father was in Berlin the second time (I was 6 then, but I was born in Berlin, when he was first sent there), he was suddenly assigned to the Legation in the Hague, where he had to go in no time. Three months later Titulescu was supposed to come there. He took over the entire Legation and had to prepare with the Dutch government the whole affair regarding the famous Conference on Germany's debts after World War I. It was the economic plan for a cut in the Germans' debts, which were reduced and were further reduced until the Germans no longer paid anything. He wasn't plenipotentiary minister yet. He was *chargé d'affaires*. But he wasn't given funds for the Legation's spending. Titulescu advised him to get a loan from a bank in Amsterdam to cover the Legation's spending (salaries, upkeep and so on). As long as Titulescu lived, he paid his monthly installments, but when Titulescu died, my father was in debt, he had to pay with the money he got from the sales at the vineyard and still, that money was insufficient. He borrowed about two million guildens. At a certain point, Antonescu paid one of the instalments.

My father covered all the stages in diplomacy, you know, in diplomacy it's just like in the army. There are ranks. I think he was a councillor (adviser). Then he was sent to South America to set up three legations: in Brazil, Argentina and

Chile. I stayed in Rio de Janeiro for three years.

My father would spend his holidays back home. He would often drive his Opel to Faraoanele³⁵. He had a small Olimpia Opel. He had previously had a Ford, a „moustache“ Ford (we called it like that because of the long handles near a relatively small wheel, which was less common at that time). It was a very high car. At that time, there was no bridge over the Milcov, you had to cross through the water. Lots of cars got stuck there. Ours would always pass very proudly, with no problems and would proudly climb the steep banks.

Later on, he suffered his own ordeal, at a certain point, when he was dismissed by Antonescu³⁶ from the ministry, with no reason, no justification. Most likely because he had been the man of Titulescu³⁷. He gave an order one day and dismissed him from the ministry the next day. And he no longer had any income, they took it all. (But eventually, they gave him a pension during the government of Groza³⁸.)

And then, the next day, my father became a big *vigneron*, as they say, a wine grower. He would stay at Faraoanele for weeks on end. And he made it. For a while, he had a cellar in 47 Griviței Street, in Bucharest. There was an old, long courtyard there, with wagon-type houses. At the back there was a house you held cheap, but if you went in, there was an enormous cellar full of barrels. You went downstairs. That cellar stirred my mother's anger. He would entertain there and had a chat, there was a big party there, but he didn't earn too much money. Aunt Elena would laugh at him: „You spend my money there, in Bucharest...“

For half a year, we lived in Modrogan Alley. That happened after we had returned from the Hague and before leaving for Brazil. The pictures of my father's step sister hang on the walls with extraordinary landscapes from the surroundings of Faraoanele, with the atmosphere of the forests there. Then he had a row with my mother, who kept telling him that he had better build a house at home. He didn't want by any

means to build or buy a house: „No, a good diplomat doesn't have a house in his own country. If diplomats stay at home, it means they are bad diplomats“. Theories put forth by the then people...All his life, he went from one post to another. Always present.

Actually, my father was a very bizarre man. He had foreign knowledge, but he was consumed by his country, he had a great passion for it³⁹. Proof thereof is that when the clock was set back, when the communists came to power and lots of diplomats went abroad, he remained in the country. He said: „No, this is our place!“

He lived until '66. My mother lived for another ten years, she died in '76.

A stupid duel and a premature death

My father had a brother whose name was **Lascăr**, who was therefore **my uncle**. My name is Lascăr, just as my uncle's name and my great-grandfather's name were. The Lascăr name is rather scarce nowadays. It is a Greek name, of course, just like many of our Greek words and names. A real drama unfolded with that uncle, which made headlines at the time. (I still have them!). He died in a duel, aged 26. My uncle was, God forgive him, a great bore. He had successfully majored in finance in Paris and at 26, he was head of a department at the Marmorosh Blank Bank⁴⁰. He was what you may call a very good fellow, a serious guy, but rather a bore.

He had a fight with a general's son at Capșa⁴¹. But it wasn't for a woman or for something serious. Well-off young people used to dine at Capșa. And at a certain point, prices went up at Capșa. Then, Lascăr took along some of his friends and moved to Athenée Palace⁴². One day, he was at Capșa where he would come now and then. Maican, a general's son⁴³, who was quite intoxicated, sat at a table nearby. And Lascăr was trying to talk his colleagues who still dined at Capșa into going to Athenée Palace too, so that they might force the Capșa guys to reduce the prices. Well, those were calculations of

a chartered accountant. And at a certain point, Maican got up and ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong, he came up to his table swinging and tottering: „I say, Lascăr, you're a fool to deal with such trifles! This is nonsense!“ And Lascăr, who more often than not flew off the handle, got his monkey up: „You're a fool! Mind your own business at your table there! Unless you stop it, you'll come to Băneasa⁴⁴ tomorrow morning!“ That guy was drunk. They all gave statements in this respect afterwards, at the police station. And as he was drunk, he carried on. And then, Lascar got mad and challenged him to a duel. He told him: „Tomorrow at 5 a.m. we're fighting! Unless you come at 5, you're a pig!“ And they came there at 5. Lascăr shot upwards but that guy aimed accurately and the bullet went through the hat and even the hat felt went into the wound. As there were no antibiotics at the time, the wound got infected, he suffered agonies for 11 days and, on the 12th day, he died. A brother of my father-in-law witnessed the duel. I learnt that later on, during a chat in the kitchen. He told me everything. Lascar shot upwards and that fellow shot him in the head. I must say that my father's brother was a very decent and kind and good man. And that drama happened in '21. Duels were still practiced at that time, behind the trotting racecourse by the avenue.

After that, my grand father couldn't recover any more. It had got into his head that Lascăr had learnt the pistol thing from him. Since Duiliu was always involved in duels. I have a lot of letters he wrote to his sister calming her down and saying that he hadn't shot his adversaries in the head, he hadn't killed them... He had some pistol boxes in the garret. And he thought that the boy had learnt from him to challenge to duel. That was his supposition. But Lascar was not used to fighting duels. A caricature in a paper (I think I still have it) features Duiliu Zamfirescu, who was foreign minister at the time, saying underneath Zamfirescu Duel. He was called like that, it was his nickname. He had this habit of fighting duels. He was very tough.

Lascăr's death consumed him so much that six months later, he died too. It upset him. He died relatively young.

Lascar had an extraordinary funeral in Focșani, with planes flying in the sky because he was a pilot. He had taken part in the war as a pilot. And all his fellow pilots of the squadron took off from Clinceni and flew to Focșani to attend the funeral. They performed flights just when the funeral was taking place. There is a tomb whose cross says: Lascăr Zamfirescu, the father, dead in 1910, I think, then, it writes Duiliu Zamfirescu and then it says again Lascăr Zamfirescu. There are two Lascărs and one Duiliu on the cross.

The Sighet tribute and the meeting with the Bălcescu branch

Just like the three children of Duiliu, **Henrietta**, my father's sister and **my aunt**, studied the Letters in Paris. She was first married to Nicolae Lenguceanu, a lawyer from Galați. And she had two children: Alexandru, Bebi, who was my first cousin and Ileana. Ileana died young at about 18; she suffered from a brain ailment. And Alexandru, Bebi, as we called him, died in Sighet, after twenty years in prison. He was a member of the Black Coats. His mother never knew where they had imprisoned him and if he was still alive. But I found out watching a TV programme in the series „Memorial to Grief“, when they mentioned all those who had died in the Sighet prison. They mentioned name after name and at a certain point, I saw Alexandru Lenguceanu. And that is how I found out that he had died there. And then, I learnt from somebody else who had been his cell mate. Bebi was a very good friend of mine.

Then, Henrietta had a second marriage. She was married to the only Bălcescu man, descending not from Nicolae Bălcescu, but from his sister. After her marriage, her name was Henrietta Mandrea-Bălcescu. Mandrea-Bălcescu, her husband, was a great lawyer. They had a mansion at

Bălcești, where they stayed in summertime. The rest of the year they lived close to the Athenaeum, in Bucharest.

Nostalgic memories about Faraoanele...

I have a brother who is one year my junior: **Duiliu Constantin Zamfirescu**. When my father sent me to continue my studies at home, Duiliu remained in Lisbon, where my father was assigned. He was a sort of sentimental favorite of my mother. The war came. They sent Duiliu to Vienna, where he studied engineering for two years. Back home, they recognized his two years of studies only at the Faculty of Agronomy and

tennis court. There was no tennis court any more; what was left was only its base, which still exists. Big weeds had grown there, from my grandfather's time. The children would play a game called *running away from him*; three-four year-old children would run and at a certain point with a shout, they would lie down on that big grass and only Duiliu would be left standing and he would start crying. He would yell, shout and hide under Doda's skirt. The famous Doda was a healthy peasant from Gorj, which my mother had taken as a nanny for my sister Sanda Stolojan upon my grandmother's recommendation. She lived with us, in our family for 75 years



Costache C. Cornescu (Greceanu)



Elena C. Cornescu (născută Manu)

so, he majored in agronomy.

He fled the country during the communist regime and currently lives in Brussels.

He wrote a book in French, which has also been translated into Romanian, *The Oak Trees at Faroanele*. The book begins with the description of a scene at the vineyard, on the so-called

until she died. She was a four year elementary school graduate. She joined us in Rio de Janeiro. Actually, she raised us. Certainly, mother raised us too but Doda was always with us.

In his book my brother writes about his youth, how aunt Elena ran the vineyard and all the affairs at Faraoanele...

Of late, president Bănescu has given him a decoration. At last.

Bought from the communists

My sister, Sanda, married Stolojan⁴⁵, was born in Bucharest on March 4th 1919. Shortly afterwards, she got to Rome, where my father had his first assignment as a legation attaché. She attended elementary school at „Sacré-Coeur de Jésus“ in The Hague. She was a remarkable student.

Sanda was then sent to the „Le Manoir“ boarding-school in Lausanne, Switzerland. And

Danube and go abroad, but they were caught and imprisoned. Vlad’s mother divorced Stolojan and married a great Frenchman. The latter helped them get out of prison later on. He paid and got them out of the country. Vlad went straight to the airport, without going home any longer.

Sanda was a bizarre, emotive person, a poet by her nature. And she was very mystical. She believed in myths. She was quite charming, rather hard on those she didn’t like. That is why, she had many enemies. For sure, of all three children, she inherited the grand father’s talent. I went to visit her several times during the com-



Eliza N. Rosetti-Bălănescu



Nicolae Rosetti-Bălănescu

then, just like all of us, she attended *Ecole des Français* in Brazil. Three years later, Sanda went to Paris. She lived alone in a rented apartment. She took her degree in letters. Then, she came back home and married Vlad Stolojan-Filipescu, Nicolae Filipescu’s grandson, on the mother’s side. She adored Vlad. They wanted to cross the

munist regime, but I was always „trailed“. She was mad at me and always scolded me for not remaining there. But that never crossed my mind. Neither did Linica ever seem to want something like that.

Sanda published her diary, her memoirs... Whoever wants to find out more about her can

read them. They are written with refinement and sensitivity, with an extraordinary spirit of observation of the world.

The Oltenian maternal vein

As regards the maternal roots, on my mother's side there is the **Pârâianu** family tree. There are two Pârâieni villages in Oltenia, on the bank of the Olteț. They were Oltenians. They were related to the **Otetelișanu** family. The Otetelișanu family gave my grand mother, my mother's mother, Eliza Gărdescu the Pietroasa estate of 1800 ha forest. I've been given back now what was left of it. 200 hectares were left of it. There were two expropriations and part of the estate was sold. 400 hectares were donated by my grand mother, who was an angel, to people. They were called *the freeholders of Pietroasa*.

Noble old roots...

The genealogy of my wife is much richer and more exciting. Maybe the oldest and most important vein is that of **the Herescu-Năsturel branch**. The portrait of Ecaterina Herescu-Năsturel is on the wall in Linica's room. Ecaterina married Alexandru Scarlat Ghica, nicknamed Red Beard⁴⁶, whose portrait hangs in my room. Linica's father was the son of Eliza Cornescu, who after her marriage was named Rosetti-Bălănescu. Eliza Cornescu was the daughter of Costache Cornescu and Elena Manu, who in turn, was the daughter of Ioan Manu and Anica Ghica, from '48, the 1848 fighter. She was a well-known woman in history, who got married to the great magistrate Ioan Manu in 1827... Anica was the daughter of Ecaterina, born Năsturel-Herescu... All of Ecaterina's ancestries are from the Herescu family... Somewhere, where the family tree begins, there is also Udriște. Ecaterina's brother was General Constantin Herescu. So, with Ecaterina, the Herescu family joins the Ghica family. My wife descends straight from those families; she has their blood

from father to son. Linica's ring carries the Năsturel-Herescu blazon.

On the gate of the castle at Herești, there is also **the old blazon of the Herescu-Năsturel family**. I saw the blazon when I was with Linica to the museum. And she told me that it was the blazon of the Herescu-Năsturel family. It was made of iron. But a guy from Paris came by car and took it away, pulling it out of the spikes. His name was Năsturel, but he wasn't from the Herescu family, because he is not featured on the family tree. Well, I found that out from the people at the museum...When Linica heard that, she got excited feeling linked to that house through her family roots, although it no longer belongs to the family now.

The Stolojan family had got back their properties at Herești. They had fought to get everything back, but they only got the Stolojan house and the forest. They have already sold the forest. **The Cornescu-Greceanu branch** is no less old. The Cornescus descend from the chroniclers. I have a book by George D. Florescu called „The Genealogy of Some Girls“ or something like that. The Cornescus are actually the Cornescu-Greceanu family. In the beginning, their name was Greceanu coming from chroniclers Radu and Stefan Greceanu. And at a certain point, their name became Greceanu-Cornescu, which remained for 150 years. And then, they dropped Greceanu and kept only the Cornescu name. But they do come from the Greceanu family. The descent in this family has been handed down through women.

I met **Eliza Cornescu, Linica's grandmother**, who raised her. She was an adorable woman. She said that in her youth they would go to their estate at Budești in summertime. So, Budești was their property, inherited from Anița Filipescu. There is a picture of the Budești mansion in Linica's room.

Mansions and mansion life

The Mansion at Faraoanele

Faraoanele is a village near Focșani. There was a town hall there before. The name doesn't come from „pharaoh“, but maybe from the gypsies because they were called pharaohs there. But there are no gypsies in the entire village. That is strange! Our vineyard was there too. It was right on top of the hill. And in the middle of the vineyard there was the mansion, a big house with about eighteen rooms. It exists nowadays too, but without the famous terrace which was pulled down. The terrace at Faraoanele appears in several books by Duiliu Zamfirescu, the place where he used to go with various personalities. The Zamfirescu family was like the lords of that place.

Lascar, my great-grandfather, had two brothers, one of whom bought small pieces of vineyard from peasants and thus formed the estate at Faraoanele. At the Museum of Romanian Literature, there is a file containing those purchase certificates, written in Slavonic letters, but in Romanian.

The other brother of Lascar, Duiliu's uncle too, was a man of the world, but he didn't have too much common sense. At a certain point, around 1840 or 1830, he borrowed money from a usurer from Focșani, whose name was Tănase the Confectioner. He couldn't pay the debt when it was due and so he pawned the vineyard at Faraoanele. And that is why, in the next 50 years, the vineyard at Faraoanele was called in all institutions the „Tănase the Confectioner vineyard“. This entire affair of his uncle losing the vineyard consumed Duiliu. And when he came back from Italy, well, better-off, to the amazement of everybody in Focșani who had forgotten the whole story, he went and bought back the vineyard. This vineyard lay at the far end of the village, close to the forest and everybody wondered: „What got into Duiliu to buy that vineyard over there?“ Then the word spread. He had kept all the papers about the vineyard hid-

den in the garret. The loss of the vineyard had been considered a shame of the family... And my grandfather replanted American vine in the vineyard because in his time, phylloxera had wreaked havoc.

It was a vineyard stretching over some thirty hectares. That was its area in my father's time. Then, he sold about ten hectares in Brăila, when the communists came to power, because he was hard up. Right! Now we have got back what he didn't sell then, that is 22 hectares. But it's very difficult to take care of it unless you live there. My children are away...

It was there, at Faraoanele that I spent my holidays. It was so beautiful... It was very beautiful there! Every summer I used to go there. And there is a large terrace wherefrom you get a bird's eye view first of Râmnicu Sărat. On rainy days, I saw the Măcin Mountains across the Danube from that terrace. On the left-hand side you can see Odobești. In the evening, there is a garland of lights, like pearls. From right to left, you can see as far as the Danube. You can see across the Danube. You can imagine if I saw the Măcin Mountains... that is the Măcin hills.

Whenever I went there, aunt Elena would rent a horse for me from a villager who had some very beautiful horses, riding horses. He had riding horses and all riding stuff, saddles and the like. She would rent a horse and keep it there for a month, while I was on holiday. I knew the entire vineyard area very well. And I would ride across that vineyard... I had a gun, a rifle... And I would shoot blackbirds, hares... Blackbirds are good to eat, just like pigeons. You can cook *rizoto* with several blackbirds. Lots of blackbirds came to the vineyard. And hares. Once, I had a terrible row...As I was only an occasional hunter. But I was a good shooter. And without realizing, I shot a doe hare with cubs. I had a row with aunt Elena: „How was that possible?“ „But what could you have done with those hares? You would have eaten them all right“, I answered.

I would also go there for vintage. That

happened when I was 12, 13, 14-years old. At that time, things were very well-organized. One of Duiliu's sisters, Elena, who was a spinster, lived at Faraoanele and ran the entire household, including the vineyard and the wine sales. She was a heroine. All this is very well explained in my brother's book. I have a brother who lives in Brussels and who wrote a book in French that has also been translated into Romanian. That book exists. He tells about his youth, how Elena ran the vineyard and all the estate affairs. She made the administrative decisions on the estate. She was an educated woman. And she sent my father all the incomes.

They made wine and sold it. My brother writes that that's the way things happened and he is right. They had a woman,, who was rather a gipsy, but very smart: Mrs. Ianoliu. Looking at aunt Elena's coffee cup, she would tell her what customer was coming to get her wine. And then there were discussions and quarrels because that woman would tell her " I can see an A „and my aunt said: „Leave me alone, dear! That is Alexandrescu from Brăila. He's not this one! „And that woman said: „Hold on! Let's have a look. I can see a B too“. „No, not this one! That is Bălănescu who comes over every year. I want another one!“ It was fun. All right, these are details.

Things were very well-organized. Every family in the village had a plot of vineyard. And that was how things stood for years on end. And they were like owners, that is when working at the vineyard, each of them would come with his brothers, his grandchildren, his uncles...That's what I know, from my childhood. But maybe it was like that in my grandfather's time too. I don't know.

And I remember the vintage... We had a sort of opened dining place for the non-permanent workers in the vineyard. Actually, there were some long boards, surmounted by other boards. And there were two ovens where they made borsch. In one of them there was a huge pot sunk into the earth. And they cooked a big polenta. It was cut with a string. It was nice... It

was a dream because, as I told you, everybody had his own plot of land and they would come with their wagons and two-handled tubs. And there was a tub at the end of the vineyard line and wooden pails on this side. And they would put the grapes in the pails and then throw them into the tubs and a fellow would lift the tub and put it in the wagon. And when the wagon was about to go with the tub, we would sit on a long, protruding piece of wood at the back of the wagon, you know, a long axle which made the wagon longer or shorter if the back wheels were moved. We would sit quietly on that axle and we were taken high up to the wine cellar. The wine cellar was at the end of the vineyard, high up, near the house. And that was big fun. Well, that was when we were children. We were 7-8 years-old. There was a very strict order there. At a certain point, everybody would come by wagon, go up and throw the grapes into the tank of the press, for we had a French press. And they took that away too! My grandfather had brought it; it was from 1918 or something like that. It was a terrible press! It made three sorts of unfermented wine. And in the end, it threw out the husks of grapes, as dry as straws. After throwing the grapes, they would move on and after the last wagon, they would stand in line waiting to be paid. There was a wine keeper there who paid them. Aunt Elena would sit on a small chair and smoke. She was always having a smoke. I've got her photo... And then, people would go away singing. First, they would wish good health to my aunt and she also wished them something, I don't know what. It was an organized thing in its own right. And it ran smoothly with no scandals.

All kinds of people worked in the household. There was madam Ianoliu. Then there were village girls coming over, who were trained by my aunt. And I remember having an expert at the wine cellar to take care of the wines, a wine keeper so to say. In addition, there were three-four other people. It was a very good wine of various sorts. The wine keeper had three lovely girls. The name of one of them was Mărioara

and I liked her; I would go after her on horseback. Then, there were the people at the stables, as we had a carriage and six horses for it. But we also had a garage, for the Ford.

The mansion was generally furnished in Romanian style. But at Faraoanele there was a drawing room furnished only with Chipendale furniture. Its woodwork was very beautiful, dark-brown, almost black and its upholstery was of red leather. And there was a similar table too. It was the front drawing room, overlooking the terrace. And on this side, there was the so-called big drawing room. There were a big drawing room and a small drawing room. And from the small drawing room you went into two guest rooms, which were upfront, at the house façade. And at the back of it, the house was extended like a wagon and at the back, there were the family rooms, the servants' rooms... Then, there was the dining room with an entrance to the big drawing room. And on one side, there was a verandah, which my grandfather had meant to be a painting studio for the daughter of his wife, who died young. That is my father's mother. She had previously been married to one of the great Italian painters, Amedeo Scifoni, who was a portrait painter and *peintre de genre* that is of historical scenes. I have a scene painted by him at home. Apparently, he is now in America, this painter is highly valued. And the mother of this half sister of my father died, Duiliu took her along back home. He laid out a painting studio for her at Faraoanele. She painted extraordinary things, depicting that entire atmosphere with the forests around Faraoanele...

Now I've taken over the house at Faraoanele. And I'm trying to see to it. I go there quite often, I go by car... Unfortunately, the house looks rather shabby and I can't find money to renovate it. I wish I had turned it into Duiliu Zamfirescu's memorial house...

The Bălcești Mansion

Henriquetta, my father's sister, had also

studied in Paris. Then she married Mandrea-Bălcescu and they had a mansion at Bălcești, in Argeș County. It is a fine, beautiful old house. It is a big mansion with a watch tower. It is furnished in Romanian style. Its picture is carried by many books and brochures. You can imagine, if it had belonged to Nicolae Bălcescu...

The Bălcescu family also has quite an important tree, even if it is not so extended like other family trees.

Mandrea-Bălcescu, the husband of my father's sister, was inspired and during the communist regime, donated the mansion to the Writers' Union⁴⁷, provided Henriquetta had a room there in her lifetime. The mansion was turned into a writers' rest home. And Henriquetta would go and spend her summers there. Sometimes, I joined her during my holidays.

The mansion at Pietroasa⁴⁸

The mansion at Pietroasa (County Vâlcea) is my grief! It stood close to Valea Mare, 4 km from the Oltenian Bălcești, where the Cerna River flows into the Olteț. There is a big hill there. The county highway runs at the foot of that hill and one hundred-two hundred metres away, the Cerna flows across the highway. You could see the river from high up, from the terrace. On top the hill there was this construction going back to around one thousand six hundred. In the Turks' time, it had been a kind of fortress and then, it was roofed to look like a house. It had 90 cm thick walls and when we were children, we would lie down in the window recesses.

It was two-storeyed. On the ground floor there were lots of rooms and a staircase in the middle of it. You went in through a verandah and upfront there was a staircase up to the second storey. It was like that (about 1.60 m long). It was said to have been made from two thick trees, reinforced below the steps, steps cut in that tree which was from the Turks' time.

Downstairs there was a large drawing room. Next to it, there was the study forming the side

of the house, because the drawing room was big, three times as much as this room (e.n. a 10-12 square m room). And then, on the other side of the staircase there were the dining room and the office and the kitchen. And on this side there were the study and another room, I can't remember which room and at the end of it, there was a room. Downstairs there was a guest room with a verandah overlooking a plum orchard. You could look down far away and if you looked on the right, you could see the Cerna and if you looked a bit farther, you could see the Olteț.

There were 19 constructions there. There were barns, hen coops, stables, distillers to make plum brandy. As the whole hill was planted with plum trees. And they made a plum brandy, wow...that plum brandy was super. Of course, they would bring it to Bucharest.

That mansion was pulled down, erased. They demolished it completely.

The estate stretched over 1800 hectares in the beginning, when my grandmother, Eliza got married to Costică Gărdescu...There was a forest and an orchard and farm land... Some of them were in the meadow. Now, we still have some pieces there, which I've kept like a fool. I'm linked to the estate sentimentally because I can't do practically anything with what I've got. I've got that entire hill which is bare now. They uprooted all those plum trees and took them away.

Visits between mansions

At the mansions where I spent my childhood and youth, we were visited mainly by relatives, family members. Duiliu's sisters would come by. Right and we would pay visits too. We would go by carriage. Visits were always paid especially there, in Oltenia. We would go to Maria Goleșcu's, who would make waffles for us, a sort of biscuits like two overlapping striated palms. She was very nice. She also had a daughter, Maria, who died, poor thing... We would also go to doctor Teodorini's, also by the bridge. His descendants still live and they got back part of the forest too.

The church at Pietroasa

And it was God's will that our church at Pietroasa should be preserved.. It is the church in front of the courtyard, whose founders were my grandfather and grandmother, who are painted there as such. The inscriptions say: Costică Gărdescu, Eliza Gărdescu... The other founders are also painted there: the Pârâianus, the Otetelișanus... The church goes back to 1780, it is a historical monument laid down in Lecca's Dictionary⁴⁹. The frescoes were beautiful...They featured all the founders with their family, with their wife, their uncle, their child, an older or a younger one, all brought together... You know how these church votive pictures are made. Now, they have a new painting in tempera on it, which is not in agreement with the monument, which is a valuable monument.

There is also a cemetery around the church. The cemetery with crosses lies half way down the hill and you can see it from afar. And this little church is splendid. I can show you its pictures, both the outside and the inside ones. They show how it looked like. If you go there now, you no longer recognize it. I hope this new and ugly church painting can be removed and the original painting will be restored.

A nobleman's condition: delicate and difficult

You ask me if I feel in a certain way, different, having a certain noble ancestry...I would lie, sir, if I said that I felt like a nobleman. But I can tell you that at certain moments I had a special admiration for certain things, which I don't think everybody has. Maybe it's my own impression, selfish as I am. It's an admiration for certain people, who as a rule, belonged to a higher class. Some of them had modesty which I've only found with people belonging to such a family. I think it's also a kind of atavism. Certain genes are handed down from generation to generation. Why can the police establish someone's ancestry according to his genes? It means there is some-

thing that is handed down. I for one can't feel I have these genes. It's not that I don't feel them, but I...am not actually a nobleman. I don't think I am! No, no, no...

Nobles had the chance to reach a certain refinement because they were educated. They learned, that is they had the possibility to learn. They were sent to learn. And that gave them the weapons. That was the secret of their superiority. And as in the past lower social strata were terribly illiterate... Some may say that it was not education that was decisive for a nobleman's character, but those genes inherited by a member of such a family...

As far as I'm concerned, relating to those in my ancestry makes me feel ashamed. I'm ashamed I couldn't be like them. But this is not the feeling that is currently called the feeling of being a nobleman or of being of a higher origin or of having two or three or four generations of educated people in your ancestry, so to say.

Not yourself, but someone else may say if there is something noble about you or not. It's difficult for you to say it yourself. I like music. I have a very good ear. And I love music...That may be related to my noble origin...But lots of people have such qualities, without being of

noble descent... Gipsies for instance, who play like masters...

That is something which differs from one man to another, irrespective of the social class he belongs to. Someone is prouder, more *hautain* as the French say and defends his origin... He looks down on the others and imagines he is somebody. I believe somebody notes that indeed his belonging to a higher class has helped him out in life and that consequently, he has proved to be a superior man. That may happen but not with anybody. Or somebody else may not realize that, the fact that he is a superior man just by belonging to a certain social class.

With me there is also the question of religion when sometimes I have doubts. I'm sorry to say it but I'm not a believer. But for me faith is doubt. I'm in doubt when I can't explain how so many natural phenomena could appear, exceeding human reason, how perfectly they work out...I mean, you're driven to despair because you can't explain, you can only explain through the existence of divinity...It cannot but exist...I think this explanation that has been given over centuries about the existence of God is the most sound one.

Notes

¹ **Lascăr Duiliu Zamfirescu** - born in Berlin on May 23rd 1922; electromechanical engineer. Recorded: Thursday, May 30th 2007 between 5 and 7 p.m. and Saturday July 21st 2007 between 6 and 8 p.m.

² **Ghica** - A princely family of old origin from Albania; in Wallachia in the 17th century (with branches in Moldavia too); they gave ten rulers and several other outstanding figures. (O.C. Lecca, *Dicționar istoric, arheologic și geografic al României*, Ed. Universul, București, 1937 - *Historical, Archaeological and Geographical Dictionary of Romania*, the Universul Publishing-House, Bucharest, 1937 -, pp. 231-232)

³ **Năsturel-Herescu** - A family of noblemen in Fierești or Herești (Ilfov), also nicknamed N. in the 16th century (*Ibidem*, p. 361)

⁴ **Mano (Manu)** - A noble family from Constantinople that came from Italy in the 16th century. They settled in Wallachia in the 18th century. (*Ibidem*, p. 314)

⁵ **Cornescu** - A noble family from Wallachia. Previously named Grecianu (owning the Greci village in Vlasca), they took the name of C. in the 18th century after Cornești (Dâmbovița). (*Ibidem*, p.156)

⁶ **Grecianu** - Noblemen from Greci in Wallachia (Ilfov) running that estate since the 15th century. (*Ibidem*, p. 243)

⁷ **Filipescu** - Noblemen from Filipești (Prahova), previously from Bucov, were known in Wallachia in the 15th century. (*Ibidem*, p. 218)

⁸ **Rosetti** - A family settled in Moldavia in the 17th century coming from Constantinople of old Italian origin. Several branches of the family in Moldavia (Bibica; Rosnoveanu, Solescu, **Bălănescu**, Răducanu, Ciortescu, Tetzcanu, named after their estates). The R. family in Wallachia are a branch of the R. family settled in Moldavia, which they broke away from in the 18th century. (*Ibidem*, pp. 450-451)

⁹ **Pârâianu** - Even if this family are not laid down in *Dictionary*, Danciu Pârâianu is documented as the one to have built the church of the Polovragi Monastery in its present form.

¹⁰ **Otetelișanu** - The noblemen from Oteteliș in Vâlcea owned this village and Beneștii in the early 15th century (1418) (*Ibidem*, p. 386)

¹¹ **Bălcescu** - A noble family from Bălcești, County Argeș (the 17th century). (*Ibidem*, p.45)

¹² **Mandrea** - Again a name which was not laid down in Lecca's *Dictionary*. The name of Nicolae Mandrea is well-known, a member of the Junimea literary debating society, who had a mansion at Câmpul Cerbului near Florești. His family accommodated Mihai Eminescu.

¹³ **Stolojan** - A family from Oltenia (Gorj). (*Ibidem*, p. 493)

¹⁴ **Zamfirescu** - A family from Focșani. (*Ibidem*, p. 586)

¹⁵ See *infra*, p.10

¹⁶ **Queen mother Elena** (born in Athens, on May 2nd 1896, died in Lausanne on November 28th 1982), princess of Greece and Denmark. Elena was the daughter of Constantine I, the king of Greece and of his wife, Sofia of Prussia. On March 10th 1921 she married King Carol II of Romania and Mihai of Romania was born on October 25th 1921.

¹⁷ **The Peleş Castle in Sinaia** - the summer residence of Romania's kings. The building works started in 1873. It was inaugurated in 1883, but works developing the project continued even after that date. Through its historical and artistic value, it is one of the most important monuments of this kind in Europe in the second half of the 19th century. **Sinaia** (population: about 15,000), about 120 km of Bucharest, on the Prahova River valley, just east of the Bucegi Mountains (the altitude varies between 767 m and 860 m). One of the most beautiful mountain resorts of Romania, combining natural beauty with picturesque architecture. The city is a popular destination for hiking and winter sports, especially downhill skiing.

¹⁸ **Snagov** - a lake, forest, recreation park, natural reserve, commune, monastery - a historical and architectural monument, 36 km North of Bucharest.

¹⁹ **Nicolae Malaxa** (born in Huși on December 10/25th 1884, died in New York in 1965), one of the leading Romanian engineers and entrepreneurs in inter-war Romania. He is considered one of the founders of the modern domestic industry. On August 3rd 1921, Nicolae Malaxa set up a rolling stock workshop. Then, in only 12 years (1928-1939), the Malaxa Plant developed from a rolling stock repair shop into a first class industrial corporation in Europe. Starting 1939, the big Romanian plant could build all types of locomotives. The ones in the 151,001 series of Romanian make were the most powerful in Europe and scored a great commercial success at the Milan International Fair in 1940. Following the nationalization carried out by the communist government on August 11th 1948, the Malaxa Plant was named by the communists the „August 23rd“ Plant, that became a state-owned economic unit.

²⁰ **August 23rd** - The National Day of Romania during the communist regime. On August 23rd 1944, in a proclamation to the country, King Mihai I announced Romania's getting out of the war against the United Nations. For over four decades, the communist regime assumed the paternity of that historical act.

²¹ **The Danubiana Plant** was set up in 1959, starting production in 1962. Over 1969-1981, a significant development of the production capacities was reported.

²² **Azuga** - a town situated in the Prahova Valley, at the foot of the Bucegi Mountains, at an altitude of 950 m. The locality was founded in 1830. Until 1881, it was called

Intreprahove. It was declared a town in 1948. It is a winter sports resort (boasting the only homologated ski slope).

²³ **Teodor I Laskaris** (1204-1222), founder of the Empire of Niceea (1204-1261)

²⁴ **Nicolae Bălcescu** (born in Bucharest on June 29th 1819, died in Palermo on November 29th 1852), a Romanian historian, writer and revolutionary, leader of the 1848 revolutionary movement in Wallachia

²⁵ **Ion Mincu** (born in Focșani in 1852, died in Bucharest on December 6th 1912), a Romanian architect, engineer, professor and deputy. A champion of the Romanian architectural style, Ion Mincu integrated the specific Romanian traditional architecture into his works.

²⁶ **Marin Simionescu-Râmniceanu** (born on November 9th 1883, died on March 25th 1964) was a Romanian academician, literary critic, historian, writer, corresponding member (1919) of the Romanian Academy.

²⁷ **Alexandr Suvorov** (born in Moscow in 1729, died in Lithuania in 1880). In 1786 he was appointed governor of Crimea. In the Russian-Austrian-Turkish war (1787-1792) the main victories were obtained by the Russians under Suvorov's command. He dispersed a Turkish army in Focșani, then destroyed the army of the great vizier at Vadul Râmnic, victory which brought him the rank of generalissimo and the title of „count of Râmnic“. In 1790, he won Ismailia, in 1794 he repressed the Poles' revolt, for which tsarina Catherine 2nd gave him the rank of field marshal and the title of prince. During the reign of Paul I, he fell in disgrace and was demoted.

²⁸ **Duiliu Zamfirescu** (born at Plăinești-Râmnicu Sărat on October 30th 1858, died in Agapia on February 25th 1922). He attended elementary and secondary school in Focșani and high school and the Law School in Bucharest (he took his degree in 1880). He was a judge in Hârșova and Târgoviște, then a lawyer and editor with *Romania liberă*. In 1885, he got a job by contest at the Foreign Ministry and three years later, going in for the diplomatic career, he was appointed secretary at the Legation in Rome until 1906, speaking Italian very well. In 1906, he came back home and was general secretary at the Foreign Ministry. He often withdrew to his villa in Odobești. After World War I, he was foreign minister in the Averescu government. He wrote poems, short prose, plays, but he made his most important contribution to Romanian literature with his novels in *Ciclul Comărăștenilor - The Comănești Cycle (Life in the Countryside, Tănase Scatiu, At War, Corrections, Anna, What It Cannot Be)* -. Adding up to all this is the first epistolary novel in our literature, *Lydda*.

²⁹ **Dimitrie Alexandru Sturdza** - actually his name was **Dimitrie Alexandru Sturdza-Miclăușanu** - (born at Miclăușeni, County Iași, on March 10th 1833, died in Bucharest on October 8th 1914), a Romanian academician, politician, repeatedly appointed prime minister or foreign minister of Romania during the 1895-1909 period. Between 1882 and 1884, he was the President of the Romanian Academy.

³⁰ **Luciano Manara** (born in Milan on March 23rd 1925, died on June 30th 1849) was a patriot who fought in the Italian *Risorgimento*. He became chief of staff of Garibaldi's army and died defeating the second Roman republic. His monument is in Milan.

³¹ **Henri Marie Coandă** (born in Bucharest on June 7th 1886, died in Bucharest on November 25th 1972) was a Romanian academician and engineer, a pioneer of aviation, a physicist and inventor of the jet engine.

³² Actually, when he was director of the Army Pyrotechnics, Colonel Alexandru Zamfirescu helped the young artillery junior lieutenant Henri Coandă build and test a number of pyrotechnical rockets (www.aspera.ro/dl/henri-coanda.pdf).

³³ **Alexandru Duiliu Zamfirescu** (born on March 18th 1892, died on February 26th 1968) was a diplomat prose writer and translator. He is the author of the cycle „Perfectii diplomați“ („Perfect Diplomats“).

³⁴ „*I belong to a miserable generation, an amphibian generation, the war generation, that took shape on the pre-war pattern and reaching maturity, it had to adapt itself to an environment for which it had not been prepared, in this struggle for a new life leaving aside a great deal of what enhances the grace of the spirit, that giovinezza e ardor del pensier gentile*“. (Al. Duiliu Zamfirescu, *Pe căi de miazăzi - On Southern Roads*, the Lutetia Publishing-House, Bucharest, no author, p. 10)

³⁵ „*The Focșani of my teens*“; „(...) *Focșani, the sentimental terminus of my existence, on the vineyard-crowned hills, in that lovely place in the Milcov area, where my dear ones rest (...)*“ (*Ibidem*, pp. 14-15)

³⁶ **Ion Antonescu** (born in Pitești on June 2nd, died in the Jilava prison on June 1st 1946) was a Romanian military and politician, head of the „Operations“ Department of the Army General Headquarters during the war for reunification, military attaché to London and Paris, commander of the Higher War School, chief of staff and minister of war. From September 4th 1940 to August 23rd 1944, he was prime minister of Romania and then head of state. Antonescu made the decision on Romania's entering World War II, described as „the holy war for territorial reunification“ on the side of Germany and of the Axis, the only ones to offer Romania guarantees about the return of the territories annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 under the Hitler-Stalin pact.

³⁷ **Nicolae Titulescu** (born in Craiova on March 4th 1882, died in Cannes on March 17th 1941), a well-known Romanian diplomat, minister several times, former President of the Nations' League.

³⁸ **Petru Groza** (born at Băcia on December 7th 1884, died in Bucharest on January 7th 1958) was a Romanian politician and prime minister in Romania's first communist government over June 2nd 1952-January 7th 1958.

³⁹ „*Patriotism being a profound feeling and not an extensive concept is expressed by each and everyone of us through the irresistible attraction to the place to which we*

are linked by our own past or by our parents' past. „ (Al. Duiliu Zamfirescu, *Pe căi de miazăzi - On Southern Roads*, the Luteția Publishing-House, no author, p. 14)

⁴⁰ **The Marmorosch Blank Bank** – emerged as a bank house in 1848 and it was turned into a joint stock company in 1905. One of the major banks in Romania, the Marmorosch Blank et comp. Bank run by Aristide Blank went bankrupt during the economic recession at the end of 1931. Saved through the intervention of the National Bank of Romania, it succeeded in surviving until 1948, when it was nationalized. The bank participated as an investor in numerous important projects of the time.

⁴¹ **Casa Capșa** – a hotel, restaurant and café set up by Grigore Capșa in 1852. Until World War II, it was a place visited mainly by the Romanian high society, as well as by numerous foremost intellectuals of the time.

⁴² **Athenée Palace** – a luxurious hotel and restaurant in Bucharest, built in 1914.

⁴³ „After World War I, another case stirred the interest of public opinion – the duel between Lascăr D. Zamfirescu (the son of writer and politician Duiliu Zamfirescu) and captain (r) D. D. Maican in the winter of 1921. Each of them fired their pistols three times for an insignificant offense. Lascăr Zamfirescu was seriously wounded in the head and despite medical attention, he died five days later. The Appeal Court in Bucharest sentenced D. D. Maican to two months' imprisonment, under art. 259 of the Criminal Code. Although Duiliu Zamfirescu had given up any claim and had even declared that he had made it up with his son's adversary, the sentence remained valid for Maican (his appeal to the Court of Appeal was rejected on January 31st 1922). Unfortunately, when he got out of prison, he killed himself.“ (Ovidiu Drîmba, *Istoria culturii și civilizației - The History of Culture and Civilization*, apud internet <http://radar.fcc.ro>)

⁴⁴ **The Băneasa forest**, situated 10 kilometres North of Bucharest, is one of the nicest recreation spots in the surroundings of Romania's capital city.

⁴⁵ **Sanda Stolojan** (born in Bucharest on March 4th 1919, died in Paris on August 2nd 2005) was arrested and

deported by the communist regime. She emigrated in 1961, settling in Paris. She was an official interpreter of Romanian for the presidents of France. She was co-founder of the prestigious review *Cahiers de l'Est*. She contributed to numerous periodicals in France. She published volumes of evocations and diary both in Paris and in Bucharest. She was active in the anti-communist exile and was the leader of the League for the Defense of Human Rights in Romania (1984-1990).

⁴⁶ **Alexandru Ghika „Red Beard** „ (born in 1785, died in 1868) was a collector of duties on spirits in 1813, Lord Steward in 1814, High Chancellor in 1819, High Treasurer in 1823, High Magistrate in 1825, Caimacan of Craiova over 1830-1831, President of the Court of Appeal, President of the Supreme Court in 1852.

⁴⁷ „*The undersigned Radu N. Mândrea, residing in nr. 3Exarcu Str. in Bucharest, owner of the Bălcescu family's original estate, donate the Bălcești Mansion with the park, forest, land under crop and vegetable garden, in the Topolog Valley, County Argeș, in memory of Nicolae Bălcescu, as his great grandson to the Romanian State, represented by the Ministry of Fine Arts, based in nr. 39 Știrbey Vodă Str. in Bucharest. The purpose of the donation is that the entire mansion with all its outhouses and the donated surrounding ground should serve as home, place of rest, study and recovery to scholars and artists of both sexes, who through their cultural and social activity contribute to the prosperity of our nation. This establishment will be called 'The Nicolae Bălcescu Home'... (March 31st 1948) „ (apud City, Râmnicu Vâlcea, nr. 87/ November 27th-December 3rd 2006)*

⁴⁸ **Pietroasa** – a village in Vâlcea County. A church built by the Otetelișanu family in 1839. (O.G. Lecca, *Dicționar istoric, arheologic și geografic al României - Historical, Archaeological and Geographical Dictionary of Romania*, the Universul Publishing-House, Bucharest, 1937, p. 404)

⁴⁹ See the previous note. The church is not on the present list of historical monuments in County Vâlcea