

The contribution of the Oradea consul general Mihai Marina, and his collaborators to saving some northern Transylvanian Jews from death (1944)

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THE VARIOUS kinds of actions conducted to save some Northern Transylvanian Jews (hiding them or taking them illegally across the border to Romania) during the time when the region was under the administration of the Hungarian state (September 1940 – October 1944) and especially during April-June 1944, when they were taken by force out of their homes by the police and gendarmerie and sent to the two Oradea ghettos have represented both a central theme in the memoirs of those who went through the tragic and traumatising experiences of the Holocaust and a study and research topic for historians and publicists who manifested their interest in such a historical issue regarding the victims of World War II.

A basic bibliography of this topic has been drawn up that should be examined rigorously and objectively. At the same time, one needs to expand the research in order to discover some other documents that could shed new light on the available information. We are not in the initial stages of remapping this historically valuable reality whose importance has been rightfully appreciated.

Among such contributions, one should mention the *Final Report* of the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, where we can find a few considerations that we subscribe to, as they reveal undeniable truths:

The forms of solidarity existing between the Romanians and the Jews have been insufficiently researched and highlighted. Undoubtedly, the actions carried out to save Jews during the Holocaust are more numerous than it is known at the moment.

This is a topic that should be researched further; in order to present a balanced image as faithful as possible to the realities of 1940-1944.¹

Indeed, the manifestations of this “solidarity” are only partially known four and half decades after the event because of the lack of constant interest in this dimension of human behaviour revealing the good in people that illustrates the “love thy neighbour” principle regarding of one’s neighbour’s social condition and nationality.

One should keep in mind the conclusion of the Commission’s president, the writer Elie Wiesel (Noble Peace Prize laureate and a Holocaust survivor), considering the need to carefully and thoroughly study all the actions of salvation:

There were good, courageous Romanians who risked their own lives and saved the honour of the nation by opposing oppression and the killing of their fellow citizens, and they deserved our deepest gratitude.²

Making reference to this “lesser known chapter” of the Holocaust, the American historian Randolph L. Braham declared in an interview for the *Magazin istoric* magazine:⁴

A special aspect of the Jewish problem in Romania was the salvation of Hungarian Jews. After March 1944, when the Nazi measures for the extermination of the Jews were introduced in Hungary, Romania became – as I showed in one of my books – a true oasis for thousands of haunted Jews driven to the gas chambers and crematoria in Auschwitz. The Hitlerist authorities pressured the Romanians to take steps to prevent such an exodus.⁵

After thousands of Jews “crossed the border illegally” to Romania, they did not have to face any “unreasonable constraint” and headed for Arad, Timișoara and Bucharest.⁶ A relevant example in this respect was provided by the Romanian Consulate General in Oradea, whose members were sensitive to “the suffering of the Jewish people” in Northern Transylvania and “followed closely” the activities of the Hungarian administration concerning the Jews’ “ghettoisation and deportation”.⁷

We believe that, at this point, we should examine the bibliographical and documentary evidence about the contribution of the diplomatic staff of the Oradea Consulate General, especially that of consul general dr. Mihai Marina, to saving Jews by taking them across the frontier through the so-called “cuckoo’s border”⁸, namely through places that he preferred to keep secret.

In 1944, dr. Mihai Marina was the *consul general* of Romania at the Consulate General in Oradea, being the most important Romanian diplomat who had worked in this Romanian state institution until 1944. He was born on October

5, 1907, in the village of Apșa de Jos (Maramureș County). He went to university and received a PhD in law from the Cluj University; afterwards, he worked for almost ten years in several Transylvanian offices of the Ministry of the Interior.⁹

Justly appreciated by his superiors due to the typically Transylvanian thoroughness with which he carried out his duties, dr. Mihai Marina was appointed consul general of Romania in Oradea on July 9, 1941; he began his assignment on July 10, 1941, after being granted the “agreement”¹⁰ from the Hungarian government, according to established diplomatic practices. In the appointment order, the state leader stipulated that the mission of the new consul in Oradea was to “protect and support” the interests of the Kingdom, especially as far as “trade and navigation” were concerned, and to “assist the Romanian nationals in their affairs”¹¹ (emphasis ours – A. F.).

After his arrival in Oradea in the summer of 1941, consul Mihai Marina carried out his duties in an exemplary fashion, succeeding in a short space of time in establishing dynamic relations with the Romanians and Jews living in Oradea and in other northern Transylvanian regions. His efforts were noted by Gheorghe Davidescu, the secretary general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who wrote in 1942 to the mayor general of Bucharest, Ion Rășcanu:

*Consul Marina, through his thorough knowledge of northern Transylvanian realities and the connections he has in the jurisdiction area of his consulate, became a true guide for the Romanian population, whose presence would be sorely missed. Given our interest in having proper representation in northern Transylvania, given the circumstances, General, I have the honour of asking you to re-examine the possibility of keeping those civil servants in the service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, given the considerations outlined above.*¹²

The Romanian minister in Budapest, Eugen Filotti, acknowledged Mihai Marina’s services in a letter sent to the Bucharest headquarters sent on January 20, 1943 and suggested to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that he should be promoted to the rank of consul general second class. At the same time, he praised Marina’s work that could be regarded as an incentive for other Romanian diplomats. He spent a lot of effort trying to gather the Romanians in Oradea and in his precinct around the Consulate. Moreover, his house was permanently open to “all Romanians”, so that intellectuals came to dinner on an almost daily basis. The consul paid particular attention to the way in which the Romanian peasants, who were received in special room, were treated when they came to “file complaints”. The minister Eugen Filotti considered that, by using such methods, consul Mihai Marina “succeeded in building strong ties with the Romanian population and contributed greatly to its good spirits.”¹³

On March 12, 1943, the Romanian Legation in Budapest was notified by the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs about its agreement to raise the

Romanian Consulate in Oradea to the rank of Consulate General. An immediate consequence of this decision was that dr. Mihai Marina became consul general second class.¹⁴ The same year, Mihai Marina was promoted by default to the rank of consul general first class.¹⁵ Consequently, in the summer of 1944, he held the important position of consul general first class,¹⁶ as token of appreciation for his efforts to maximise the efficiency of his institution.

On June 1, 1944, Minister Eugen Filotti signed a positive reference for the consul general. According to him, who knew his multi-faceted activity best, dr. Mihai Marina was “*a very capable officer, animated by the most genuine national feelings. He performed his duties in Oradea impeccably, a fact acknowledged by the Ministry himself.*”¹⁷ (emphasis ours – A. F.)

This was the man who became involved in saving the Jews in his consular precinct, also playing a decisive part in organising a “pathway” for crossing Jews across the border into Romania to save their lives. Through his activities, recounted in a valuable volume of memoirs,¹⁸ dr. Mihai Marina, together with his colleagues from the Oradea Consulate General (to whom we will refer further on), was the exponent of the Romanian diplomatic staff who also included some other intellectuals who manifested their undeniable support for the tragic fate of the Jews during the Holocaust.¹⁹

Some researches of this topic have manifested their discontent with the general nature of such arguments (that became banal by repetition), asking for persuasive factual arguments. The concrete details (regarding the various stages of the rescue operations, the names of the refugees, the illegal border crossing points, the names of their guides, etc.) should be sought and discovered, in order to bestow additional credibility to the historical reconsideration of this opportune issue.

In this respect, we consider it suitable to mention here the names of all those who worked in the Romanian Consulate General in Oradea in 1944 and were involved to various degrees in the rescue operations organised by consul general dr. Mihai Marina. Each of them had their specific contribution, according to the jobs they performed within the institution. As such, the members of the Consulate were: Anghel Lupescu (vice-consul, transferred from the Romanian Legation in Budapest), Ion Isaiu (jurist and vice-consul from Bihor), Ion Romaşcanu (vice-consul and SSPI officer with diplomatic rank), Mihai Bologa (vice-consul), Alexandru Olteanu (vice-consul), Vasile Hossu (vice-consul), Rupert Gamber (secretary), Geta Cănculescu (secretary), Tinuca Sabău (secretary), Steinkolar (secretary), Mihai Hotea (administrator) and Mihai Mihai (administrator).²⁰

The involvement of so many people in informing about the tragic fate of the Jews in northern Transylvania and in organising a rescue “pathway”²¹ to save some of them and take them illegally across the border into Romania points to a state of facts that should be researched further, namely that such activities were included in the “job description” of the Consulate members, being sanctioned

by the Bucharest headquarters; otherwise, the participation of nearly all the consulate staff in illegal activities could not have been possible. Therefore, Mihai Marina's coordinating activities were done with complete awareness about his responsibilities; that is why he was supported by his collaborators who were extremely discreet about such activities. However, one should not ignore the fact that all the Consulate members were permanently followed both by the Hungarian counter-espionage and by German professionals in this field.

The recounting of the events and rescue operations of the Jews starts with an explanation of consul general Mihai Marina, worthy of our attention for its undeniable moral value:

No matter how many restrictions we had to face as employees of the Antonescu regime in a fascist state, as humans, we could not remain insensitive to the suffering caused by actions that mocked the very notion of human dignity. This made us take action to support the Jews as much as we could and with all the necessary caution. The main incentive and support in such matters came from the entire Romanian population of northern Transylvania.²²

After mentioning the fact that the relations between the members of the Consulate with the Oradea and northern Transylvania Jews date back to before 1944, more precisely to the moment when the institution started its activity, the consul notes that some of the Consulate staff became the tenants of Jewish families living in the city on the Crișul Repede river. During the visits that they made to Romanian families in Oradea, they met some Jews with whom they had friendly relations.²³ These were all premises for adopting a favourable attitude to the Jews during the dramatic events of 1944.

In order to be more convincing, consul general Mihai Marina recounts instances of direct and unselfish support given to some Jews. First, he speaks about the case of tailor Ludovic Schwarta, one of "the leaders of the Oradea communist movement."²⁴ The consul "enjoyed talking "to him and "listen to how persuasively he expressed his faith in a better future."²⁵ When the Gestapo appeared in Oradea, Mihai Maria suggested to Ludovic Schwartz to cross into Romania, but the latter politely declined, saying that he had received "orders" (as a communist militant) to "stay in Oradea", telling him where his hiding place was, so that the consul could help him whenever possible²⁶ with basic supplies. The Romanian general consul also helped a professor from Iași (who had remained in Oradea after the Vienna Dictate) to "cross the border illegally" into Romania through the above mentioned "cuckoo's border".²⁷

So, how was this illegal border crossing organised by consul Mihai Marina and some of the Consulate staff during May and June 1944, when the border was much more closely guarded? In his memoirs,²⁸ the consul general tells us about the fact that the three cars belonging to his and to the vice-consuls

Anghel Lupescu and Ion Romaşcanu (who, being an intelligence officer, acted in a professional manner) were used to transport Jewish refugees. Thus, the Jews who were helped to cross over into Romania with the help of Marina and his collaborators were transported with the Consulate cars (that had diplomatic license plates and were not searched at the border) to “certain points” where they were greeted by “*trustworthy people who took the across the border via secure crossing points*”. (emphasis ours – A. E.)

Consul general Mihai Marina insists upon the fact that there were “many Jews” who arrived in Romania through “this pathway” and that none of them “fell in the hands of the Hungarian gendarmes and border officials”. This was due to the very well-organised border crossing operation “through various points” (set up primarily by the two Consulate administrators, Mihai Hotea and Mihai Maxim, aided by two Romanian peasants who knew well the regions on either side of the border.²⁹

The Cluj publicist Zoltán Tibori Szabó, in his book published in Hungarian in Cluj in 2001 and translated into Romanian four years later, proves to be reserved, almost critical when speaking about the contribution of some Romanian intellectuals and peasants to the “humanitarian work” of saving northern Transylvanian and, in a more general sense, Hungarian Jews from certain death, stating, with surprising nonchalance, that “the information of the former consul (general – our note) *have not been confirmed by other sources so far*.” (emphasis ours – A. E.) In other words, the information provided by the man who organised a network for rescuing Jews, consul general Mihai Marina, are questionable, because they are not supported by other memorialistic and documentary evidence, being a product of his own subjectivity.

Such a point of view evidently expressed the tendency to dismiss one of the most noble actions of supporting people who were threatened by the prospect of imminent death. Instead of praising such efforts (as he did in his book in the case of Hungarian people who were involved in such activities), the Cluj publicist displays his negativity³¹ disproven by the historiographic documents of the time (1944-1946). We will make reference to *at least three of them* that represent valid “confirmations” of the consul general Mihai Marina’s accounts.

In one of the first memoirs about 1944 Oradea, Katona Béla (who lived through those tense days and was familiar with some of the activities of the Romanian Consulate General in Oradea), pays rightful homage to the members of this institution: “*The Romanian consul in Oradea and almost every member of the consulate tried to facilitate the escape of Jews from the city. More than once, the consul’s car, bearing diplomatic license plates, sped across the border in the middle of the night, loaded with Jews who had escaped from the Oradea ghetto.*” It is evident that information about the role played by the members of the Romanian Consulate General in Oradea began circulating as early as 1946 thanks to an Oradea Hungarian publicist who made it available to the cultural and historical interest.

His statements could not have been influenced by external factors. They precede Mihai Marina's book by almost three decades. One should also note the fact that these fragments had been reproduced in two other books published before 1989.³² A thorough researcher of the bibliography in the field could not simply ignore them, because he should have quoted them in the name of professional deontology and as arguments supporting Marina's story, if such a support was indeed necessary.

The strongest and most irrefutable "confirmation" of Marina's account is brought by a Jewish doctor from Oradea, Miksa Kupfer, who – after being saved by consul general Mihai Marina in circumstances presented below – left a *Declaration* for posterity (dated September 2, 1946); we would like to quote a few fragments from it:

Mr. Marina, whom I met in 1942, declared his anti-fascist orientation repeatedly, condemning all its manifestations. During the fascist terror, he actually proved that he was indeed a democrat and an antifascist, in addition to making ideological declarations.

Facts:

1. During the construction of the Oradea ghetto, myself and my family were helped by Mr. Marina and we saved ourselves by taking refuge in Romania. I would like to emphasise that this help was provided completely unselfishly by Mr. Marina.

I know for a fact that he provided help to other families in a similar manner, such as the families of dr. Nagypál, Osvát, dr. Winkler and others. Besides such help, I also know that consul Marina also assisted mr. Ludovic Schwartz with money and food for a few months; he was one of the oldest leaders of Oradea's workers, who had taken refuge in Oradea's vineyards.³³

It should be evident for any objective researcher that this declaration is a document proving beyond the shadow of a doubt the fact that dr. Mihai Marina was involved in the rescuing of Jews and that he did that without asking for any money or valuables in return from the refugees he helped transport illegally across the border from Hungary to Romania with the aid of his collaborators. During some investigations carried out, we discovered some new documentary evidence about the members of the Kupfer family regarding when and how they were helped to arrive in Romania and what happened to them afterwards. These also represent irrefutable evidence supporting the veracity of Mihai Marina's accounts.

On June 25, 1944, the Tinca Investigation Office sent a group of Jews who had crossed the border illegally from Hungary to the Timișoara Martial Court on the basis of a document containing some information about them, signed by captain I. Hera. We thus find out that, on June 24, 1944, a few people

crossed the border illegally from Hungary into Romania through the Șauaieiu *border point* and headed for the Tinca station from where they bought a train ticket to Arad. They were caught in the Ciumeghiu station by the local border police.³⁴ These were the families of two Oradea doctors (who had managed to escape from being transported by train to Auschwitz-Birkenau): Miksa *Kupfer*³⁵ (his wife *Elisabeta*, nee Czeizler, son *Rafael*, aged 14 and *Rozalia*, his mother, aged) and Alexandru *Balint*³⁶ (with his wife *Iuliana*, nee Fogel, aged 39). They all “took refuge in Romania because of the measures taken by the Hungarian authorities against the Jews.”³⁷

After consul general Mihai Marina arranged to have the five of them (family members of important Jewish doctors) transported across the border to Romania³⁸ though the Șauaieiu *border point*, they were found on the train going to Arad and investigated by the Investigation Office of the Joint Staff in Tinca, commanded by captain I. Hera. He was the only one who was entitled to conduct such investigations. He established the circumstances in which the two families crossed the border “illegally” and sent them, in keeping with legal regulations, to the Timișoara Martial court (belonging to the 7th territorial region). This institution sentenced them to internment in the Târgu Jiu Camp for Political Prisoners, from where they were released after August 23, 1944.³⁹

The documents we found reveal another very interesting aspect. Two members of the Kupfer family were not sent to the Timișoara Military Tribunal because of the attitude of the local gendarmes in Beiuș, who claimed that they were gravely ill and could not be transported. This was undoubtedly an arrangement accepted by the Beiuș doctor, Liviu Gavril Cosma, who signed the two medical certificates. He mentioned in the first certificate (dated June 7, 1944) that *Rozalia Kupfer* had suffered a brain haemorrhage and suffered from high blood pressure (260) and was put on bed rest in order to prevent a new bleedings.⁴⁰ The second certificate dated July 8, 1944, stated that *Rafael Kupfer*⁴¹ had his right leg completely atrophied following a case of “childhood paralysis” and he was forced to constantly wear a special prosthesis. This had been damaged and had to be repaired only by a “logopedic specialist” in Arad.⁴² Therefore, the boy could not be “moved temporarily” and stayed in Beiuș.

On July 18, 1944, colonel S. Leoveanu, the commander of the Camp for Political Prisoners in Târgu Jiu, confirmed through memo no. 5193 – “the reception” of 16 Jewish refugees who were to be interned in the camp, following their sentencing by the Timișoara Military Tribunal. The members of the two families were among them⁴³ (Miksa Kupfer, his wife Czeizler Elisabeta, his son Rafael Kupfer, Alexandru Balint and his wife). Rozalia Kupfer was not among them, because she could not be transported for genuine medical reasons. The 1st Battalion of Border Guards (part of the 4th Regiment of Border Guards) headquartered in Beiuș asked, on August 7, 1944, that doctors Kupfer and Balint be sent “to be investigated further about their border crossing from Hungary

into Romania”.⁴⁴ The reply was that the Bihor Gendarme Legion was no longer able to intervene in this respect, the matter being under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs,⁴⁵ which controlled the Târgu Jiu Camp for Political Prisoners.

We have provided all this certain and easily verifiable documentary evidence in order to emphasise that Zoltán Tibori Szábo’s statements concerning the fact that the information in Mihai Marina’s memoirs, published in 1976 (three decades after the events) was not “confirmed” by “other sources”⁴⁶ needed to be amended, as they were not true, as we have shown. The same author, not paying enough attention to bibliographic sources, claims that consul general Mihai Marina made statements that he never did, as such statements belong to Katona Béla,⁴⁷ who was among the first to evoke the events taking place in Oradea at the time.

We would also like to add that more recent memoirs have been published, among them those of Lizica Lupescu, vice-consul Anghel Lupescu’s wife. She remembers that “almost all the members of the Consulate also rendered other services to the Jews,⁴⁸ in addition to helping them across the border illegally from Hungary to Romania. They informed about the “arrest and isolation” of Bihor Jews in the “Oradea ghettos” by the Hungarian gendarmes, provided food to some Jewish families and safe kept some of “their valuables, especially gold jewellery that they would return after the war”,⁴⁹ which they did.

Even the Romanian “notabilities” of interwar Oradea – who manifested “tolerance towards minorities, including Jews, were deeply moved upon finding out about the events taking place in Oradea (between May and June 1944 – our note). *Many of them deplored the tragedy of close friends.*”⁵⁰ (emphasis ours – A. F.)

In a report dated May 1944, entitled *Overview of the Situation of Hungarian Jews*, an important part was dedicated to the *relations between Romanians and Jews in northern Transylvania*; we would like to quote a few fragments from it:

*The Romanian population of northern Transylvania manifested sympathy towards Jewish demands from the moment when the region was given over to Hungary... This sympathy was evident especially during the sad events of the past few weeks and it consisted not only in a state of passive compassion, but in an effective and real aid. The few Jews who crossed the border to save their lives escaped from the concentration camps (actually, from the ghettos – our note) only due to the support and commitment of Transylvanians, especially the Romanian peasants in northern Transylvania who helped them spontaneously by providing shelter to the fugitive Jews and facilitating their border crossing despite great personal danger and risks.*⁵¹

We have revisited the circumstances in which the members of the Romanian Consulate General in Oradea organised one of the most efficient crossing routes from Hungary and Northern Transylvania to Romania (between April and

August 1944), thus saving some Jews from certain death. It is evident that the endeavours of the Romanian diplomats are worth knowing and investigating through new documentary research.

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Notes

1. *Raport final*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2005, pp. 294-295.
2. *Ibidem*, p. 15: *Mesajul președintelui Comisiei Internaționale pentru Studierea Holocaustului în România, Elie Wiesel*, 11 November 2004.
4. Florentina Dolghin, interview with prof. Randolph Braham, (USA) about *România – o adevărată oază pentru evrei în cel de-al doilea război mondial (Romania – a True Oasis for the Jews during World War II)*, published in *Magazin Istoric*, 1989, no. 3, pp. 36-37.
5. *Ibidem*. Randolph Braham, undoubtedly the most thorough and informed researcher of the Hungarian Holocaust, held a conference in Bucharest at the beginning of 1989 about “its peculiarities”, with a special focus on the organised terror in Northern Transylvania and the horrible conditions in which the Jews were transported to the death camps in Poland.
6. *Ibidem*, p. 37.
7. *Ibidem*.
8. „The cuckoo’s border” is a popular expression designating an unknown place that is at the same time hard to find. Certainly, in the present case we are referring to several border crossing points that remained unknown for evident reasons. One of them was mentioned in the documents we have published: the town of Șauaieu, next to which there was a “pathway” for saving Jews, used by the diplomats of the Romanian Consulate in Oradea.
9. We would like to mention a few data about this period in his life, when he worked as a probationer operator at the Cluj County Prefecture (5 May 1930 – 12 January 1931), head of office at the Maramureș County Prefecture (12 January 1931-1 April 1934); head of office first class in the same institution (21 April 1934 – 1 April 1936), head of office second class in the same institution (1 April 1937 – 1 April 1939) and vice-director second class in the Someș – Cluj County (The Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, henceforth: A.M.A.E.), *fond Problema 77/dosare personale*, M. 157, vol. I, pp. 1-13).
10. A.M.A.E., *fond Problema 77/dosare personale*, M. 157, f. 10,14.
11. *Ibidem*, f. 29.
12. *Ibidem*, f. 35.
13. *Ibidem*.
14. *Ibidem*, f 116.
15. We should also mention the fact that marshal Antonescu included him – in a collective decree of June 20, 1944 – in the country’s consular body as *consul general*

- first class* (beginning with June 1, 1944) (*Ibidem*, f. 111-112).
16. We made this observation in order to correct the statement that dr. Mihai Marina would have been only a consul in 1944. (See Z.T. Szabó, *op. cit.*, p. 111-118). There is an important difference between the rank of consul and that of consul general first class, which was awarded to consular diplomats for exceptional merits.
 17. A.M.A.E., *fond Problema 77/dosare personale*, M. 157, f. 116.
 18. Dr. Mihai Marina, *Nu puteam nimăne impasibili !*, in *Magazin istoric*, 1976, no. 6, p. 38.
 19. See, for example, Ottmar Trașcă, Stelian Obiziu, *Un diplomate roumain à la défense des Juifs: Constantin Karadja*, in *Transylvanian Review*, 2010, no. 3, pp. 131-145.
 20. Mihai Marina, *op. cit.*, p. 39; Mihai Drecin, *Informații de „istorie orală” privind activitatea Consulatului român din Oradea (septembrie 1940 – august 1940)*, in *1940. Drama românilor bihoreni sub administrație horthyistă*, Editura Tipo MC, Oradea, 2010, p. 63.
 21. Another important “pathway” for saving the Jews of Northern Transylvania was the one organised by the mayor of Vărciorog village, Teodor Popoviciu. (See Antonio Faur, *România-„poartă deschisă” pentru salvarea evreilor (aprilie-august 1944) din Ungaria și Transilvania de Nord. Contribuții documentare*, Editura Universității din Oradea, 2010, pp. 33-37; Idem, *Teodor Popoviciu – salvatorul de la moarte sigură a sute de evrei (1944)*, Editura Universității din Oradea, 2010, 175 p.; Idem, *The contribution of Mayor Teodor Popoviciu (from Vărciorog, Bihor County) to the Salvation of Hundreds of Jews from „Certain Death” (1944)*, in *Studia Europaea*, 2008, no. 3, pp. 101-108.
 22. Mihai Marina, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
 23. *Ibidem*.
 24. This statement is confirmed by two other documents. In a *note* of the General Police Office of April 27, 1944, it was mentioned that Mihai Marina was also known for his “communist activities” or, in other words, he would have contacts “with communist elements in Hungary” (A.M.A.E., *fond Problema 77/Dosare personale*, M 157, vol. I, f. 117). Later, in a letter addressed by diplomat Mihai Marina to the minister Ana Pauker on November 29, 1948, he confessed: “The fact that notorious members of the communist movement who were hiding and fearing for their lives put their trust in me and kept in contact with me from their hiding places is, I believe, telling enough.” (*Ibidem*, vol. II, f.8).
 25. Mihai Marina, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
 26. *Ibidem*
 27. *Ibidem*
 28. See *Magazin istoric*, 1976, no. 6, p. 9.
 29. *Ibidem*; *Teroarea horthyisto-fascistă în nord-vestul României (septembrie 1940-octombrie 1944)*, coordinated by Mihai Fătu and Mircea Mușat, Bucharest, 1985, p. 274; Oliver Lustig, *Jurnal însângerat*, Editura Militară, Bucharest, 1987, pp. 264-265; Zoltán Tibori Szabó, *op. cit.*, p. 165
 31. Katona Béla, *Vărad a viharban (Oradea în furtună)*, TEALKA Kórháztámogató

- Egyesület, Nagyvárad (Oradea), 1946; Idem, *Dramaticul parcurs al unui memoriu*, in *Magazin istoric*, 1976, no. 6, p. 38.
32. *Teroarea horthysto-fascistă în nord-vestul României...*, p. 272-275; Oliver Lustig, *op. cit.*, pp. 263-265.
 33. *Ibidem*, p. 273.
 34. National Archives – Bihor County Office (henceforth: A.N.-S.Jd.Bh), *Bihor Gendarme Legion fund* (henceforth: Lg. Jd. Bh) dos. 12/1944, f. 133-134; Antonio Faur, *România – poartă deschisă pentru salvarea evreilor...*, pp. 46-48, 53-54; 120-121.
 35. *Ibidem*, f. 134.
 36. *Ibidem*.
 37. *Ibidem*, f. 133.
 38. The publicist Z.T. Szabó, lacking any other information except that included in the memoirs published by dr. Mihai Marina in the magazine *Magazin istoric*, puts forward some arguments disproven by documents in the Romanian archives: “Unfortunately, [consul general] Marina *did not publish any other details* – we do not know who escaped with his help from Oradea to Beiuș or Arad. (Z.T. Szabó, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166). Now he can find out the names of at least five people who were helped by consul general Mihai Marina; the future thorough research will probably reveal more such names.
 39. Zoltan Tibori Szabó, *op. cit.*, p. 165. See also the declaration given by the literary historian Pál Réz, the son of dr. Kupfer, to Daniel Löwy, on 21 November 2004 (*Ibidem*). We would like to mention that they were sent to the Târgu Jiu Camp on July 14, 1944, by the commander of the Bihor Gendarme Legion, lt.-col. Ștefan Rusu. (A.N.-S.Jd.Bh, *fond Leg. Jd. Bh*, dos. 12/1944, f. 129-132).
 40. A.N.-S.Jd.Bh, *fond Leg. Jd. Bh*, dos. 12/1944, f. 131; Antonio Faur, *România – „poartă deschisă” pentru salvarea...*, pp. 126-127.
 41. He later settled in Budapest and became known as a literary critic under the pen name of Pál Réz, following the example of his father Miksa Kupfer, who was a “well-known novelist and translator” under the literary pen name Adàm Raffy (Zoltan Tibori Szabó, *op. cit.*, p. 165).
 42. Arad was the most important city where the Jewish refugees went so that it was not by accident that a specialist could only be found there.
 43. *Ibidem*, f 141; Antonio Faur, *România – „poartă deschisă” pentru salvarea evreilor...*, pp. 160-161
 44. *Ibidem*, p. 205.
 45. *Ibidem*, p. 206.
 46. Zoltán Tibori Szabó, *op. cit.*, p, 166.
 47. We would like to quote Zoltán Tibori Szabó’s comment: “Based on the data published by the then consul general in Oradea, Mihai Marina, one can deduce that the car of the [Oradea General] Consulate, with diplomatic license plates, raced under cover of night to Romania several times, loaded with Jews who had escaped from the Oradea ghetto (emphasis ours – A. F.) (*Ibidem*, p. 165). In reality, this statement

is made by Katona Béla; we would like to quote a relevant fragment from his book: “the Romanian Consulate in Oradea and nearly every member of the Consulate strove to facilitate the escape of the fugitive Jews from the city. More than once, the car with diplomatic license plates crossed the border loaded with Jews who had escaped from the Oradea ghetto.” (Katona Béla, *Dramaticul parcurs al unui memoriu*, in *Magazin istoric*, 1976, no. 6, p.38). In a different section of his book (p. 111), Zoltán Tibori Szabó makes a similar error: “In 1976, Marina communicated that these refugees were met in Arad by Justin Filep (the correct name was Filip), who took care of them from that point onwards.” Again, this information had been presented by Katona Béla (*op. cit.*, p. 38). It is rather surprising that the Cluj publicist, otherwise very thorough (when he analyses the testimonies of others, especially those of rabbi Carmilly-Weinberger and professor Raoul Șorban) should treat so superficially the quotes from the memoirs of the two personalities (dr. Mihai Marina and Katona Béla), who made each other’s acquaintance in Oradea.

48. Mihai Drecin, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

49. *Ibidem*.

50. Katona Béla, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

51. *Martiriul evreilor din România (1940-1944). Documente și mărturii*, Foreword by dr. Moses Rosen, Editura Hasefer, Bucharest, 1991, p. 260. In a footnote added when the document was published it is mentioned that the “synthesis” was drafted by specialists from the Ministry of Foreign affairs based on “information” received from the Romanian general Consulate in Oradea.

Abstract

The present study presents details about the actions of rescuing some Hungarian and Northern Transylvanian Jews in 1944 by taking them illegally across the border from Hungary to Romania. The article focuses on the contributions of consul general Mihai Marina (from the Romanian Consulate General in Oradea) and his collaborators in saving these people, by means of providing concrete examples. Based on the available documentary information, one can note the organisation of a “pathway” for crossing the border by those mentioned, which also involved Romanian peasants living close to the border. Special attention is given to the saving of the gynaecologist Miksa Kupfer’s family; at the same time, the present study corrects some errors from the previous works dealing with this topic. By putting together a series of documentary sources (from memoirs and archives), one can construct a persuasive factual argumentation proving the fact that the Romanian diplomat from the Oradea Consulate made evident efforts to save a number of Jews from certain death; their names are mentioned in the present historical account.

Keywords

Hungary, Transylvania, medieval ethnic and confessional structure, majority and minority, acceptance and exclusion

