

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Romanian Culture Project

Romanian Culture in Mahoning County

O. H. 452

ALEX SACUI

Interviewed

by

John Muntean

on

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YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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INTERVIEWEE: ALEX SACUI

INTERVIEWER: John Muntean

SUBJECT: Heritage, Comparison of schooling and culture  
with the United States

DATE: May 9, 1975

M: This is an interview with Alex Sacui for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on Romanian Culture in Mahoning County, by John Muntean, at 579 West Indianola Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio, on May 9, 1975, at 4:00 p.m.

Alex, what part of Romania did you come from?

S: I came from the northern part of Romania, named Transylvania, close to the city of Cluj.

M: Is that a large city?

S: The second largest city in Romania in population.

M: Would the buildings in the city resemble the structures in Russia, or would they more resemble the ones in Europe?

S: The old city is built in the fourteenth or fifteenth century style. They are beautiful old buildings, not taller than about three or four stories. But lately they have built tall buildings about ten or fifteen stories high around the perimeter of the city. The city in general is considered a cultural city because there is the university there, one of the few ones in Romania. I don't think there are but five or six universities in the whole country of Romania. This university is very vast with all kinds of studies there like doctors and so forth.

M: Are there any industries nearby that are major ones?

S: No, not quite. It's considered more of a cultural city. There are a few small factories, but not any big ones.

- M: So the people are more or less farmers then.
- S: No, they're not farmers in the city at all. They don't even own farms. They just live in that city and in the city there are villages where farmers come to the people and sell their goods in the city and that's all.
- M: They work in a lot of small industries?
- S: Right, small industries and businesses, but not now. Before they used to, but now there is no business for anybody at all. Everything is under the communists.
- M: When you were a child in Romania, can you describe what a typical day was like for you?
- S: We had to go to school. It was the rule to start school at the age of seven, in the elementary school. You had to go through eight grades of elementary school.
- M: In other words, you would be about fifteen years old when you would be done with elementary school.
- S: Yes. Eventually, if you wanted to go to high school, if that was the case, then you went only four years to elementary school and then went to a city where there was a high school. If you didn't go to the junior high school, then you had to go through eight grades of elementary school.
- M: Were there any tests that you had to pass in order to go to high school?
- S: Yes, only the best children were accepted into the high school.
- M: What happened to those children who do not get accepted to the high school?
- S: They go to trade schools or they go through eight grades and that's all.
- M: Was it easy for them to find jobs later?
- S: Yes, there are plenty of jobs, especially if they have the schooling. They used to have their farms, but now they go to work in the commune. All the properties are one and each person had to work so many hours every day in order to get his portion of cereal of that product from that factory.
- M: That was back in that time too?
- S: No, it wasn't. After the communism came this is how it was. Before this each one had his own farm to cultivate his own products.

- M: Then after the communists came over that's when they started the commune type?
- S: Each person had to go and work in the community; if he didn't work he didn't get anything. He had to die.
- M: There was a depression in the United States at that time in the 1920's and the start of the 1930's. Were jobs scarce in Romania too, during the Depression?
- S: It didn't affect Romania much, because most of Romania was agricultural instead of mills and factories. You felt the Depression there also, but not in such a measure as in the United States.
- M: There weren't that many layoffs?
- S: No, there weren't. The system in Romania was that nobody could have more than one job.
- M: Was that even before the communists took over?
- S: Even before the communists. You had only one job and at a certain age you had to give the job over to a younger person, even though you were still capable of doing it. Nobody could work over seventy years of age. There was forced retirement. He had to retire. He got his pension, and then another place opened for another child who was capable of taking over. Everything was organized even before the communists came. Now even more so.
- They knew how many persons they needed. For example, the teachers knew how many teachers were to be released for their pension, so they didn't take more pupils to be teachers than the amount that they knew would fill up those places. So that there would be nobody without jobs and the same thing with other occupations. You have a worker surplus. Now especially, it's calculated absolutely that we have so many engineers so they don't accept any more than the amount necessary. A number X will go on pension and they put only that many in training for that occupation.
- M: Going back again to your childhood, can you tell us about a typical day at school?
- S: In the elementary grades and high school, before the communism, generally the first thing in the morning the teacher came into class and all the children stood up and made a salute. This salute varied, depending on where you lived. The salute generally was "Praise the Lord." The students would say, "Praise the Lord," and the teacher would answer, "Forever, Amen." That was general everywhere. After the communists came that was done away with, but the

salute then was "Good Day" or "Good Morning" and the teacher answered. They stood in their position until the teacher said to sit down. Generally the children are more obedient, more disciplined than here. I had some opportunities to go here to some of the junior high school and I was amazed at how the children here behave, compared with the way they are there.

No parent tries to protect his child if he's punished somehow or if he has to overstay in the school because he didn't do his lessons.

M: Did they ever paddle the students in Romania as they do here. That's called corporal punishment.

S: Yes then, but not now. Now it's absolutely forbidden.

M: What do they do to punish a child now if he's really disobedient?

S: Now under communism they take different measures. If the child is in such a state then the parents are responsible for anything the child does. There are no cases of a child trying to destroy anything intentionally. If the child does destroy something, not only in school, but in other institutions, they put the parents responsible for that and they get punished very severely for that.

M: What kinds of subjects did you study when you were a child in Romania?

S: Generally, in the elementary school we studied about the same as they do here. They study arithmetic, geography, history, reading, writing, and spelling. They don't put as much emphasis on spelling there as they do here, because the language is simpler; you don't need to spell.

M: Did the teacher work with the children or did the children do, as they do in some colleges, work by themselves?

S: You always gave the child some homework to do either in elementary school or high school. There was never any work given to any student before it was presented by the teacher. For example, if you took arithmetic you showed him a certain operation to do and then you gave him the problem to do.

M: Did the teachers work on a one-to-one basis with their students, in other words, take a student aside who needs help?

S: When it was necessary, yes. The teacher normally tried to learn each child's temperament and feelings and to try to

understand him, be closer to him. There were kids who probably needed to be spanked but for another one it was enough if he was scolded or another might just have to be talked to. You had to know the personality of the child and treat him according to it. If you had no results with him that way, you called the parents to school and took measures to correct him.

- M: Were there an equal amount of boys and girls going to school at that time, or did some of the boys stay home to help with chores around the house?
- S: Many times that happened in the villages where I was a teacher. I was a teacher for twenty-three years, so I know the life of the parents and students. There were seasons when the parents had to keep the child home. Many times you had to intervene so that they would send them to school because some of them were kept home too much. Many times the parents would say that he doesn't need school because he was going to be a farmer anyway. Then you had to take measures against the parents and you made a list of how many days he was absent, and he would get a punishment in money for all the days that the child was kept from school. Then the parents would become scared and send their child to school the next time so he won't have to pay the bill.
- M: As a student before the communist regime took over, what were you taught in regards to the United States of America? What were you taught in geography and history regarding that?
- S: Before the communists came, the United States was regarded as a very rich country and a good friend. They had the best remarks about it. After communists came, they were absolutely opposite. They were considered the enemy of the workers.
- M: Did the people believe what was being told to them: First, we were their friend and then in a couple of years--after the communists took over--they were told that we were an enemy. Did they actually believe that the United States was their enemy?
- S: After the communists came, you didn't dare not say what they believed. What you believed was your trouble. You didn't dare say a thing. You had to accept what they said. You were afraid to even think different than they did. But what you had in your soul or in your mind you had to keep there. You were afraid to express yourself in front of your children again.
- M: Did the communist change the Romanian schools when they took over?

- S: There was a very drastic change. All of the books were destroyed, not only the school books, but everyone else's books too. Books out of the library had to be destroyed. Any of them that had anything nice to say about the United States or anything that was written against Russia or communism were destroyed.
- M: What about the government before the communist government took over in Romania? Did they have anything to say about the government they took over? In other words, did they in the schools, try to bring out Romanian history or seem to all at once say that Romanian history started with the communists?
- S: They falsified everything. They tried to just reject everything that was in the history of the country and in geography also. For example, we had territories taken over by the Russians that for hundreds of years were ours, and they took them away and said that they belonged to them. They started to say that our descendents were not descended from Latin-Roman Empire. Anything that was said was made through the workers and nothing was anything else. Everything was the working class . . .
- It wasn't won through the generals or the leaders. It was done by the workers. All of the emphasis was put on the working class.
- M: What language was used in school before the Russians came?
- S: The Romanian language.
- M: What about after the Russians came?
- S: Still the Romanian language, but everybody had to also learn the Russian language. It was like that for several years and after that the Romanians got into some kind of trouble with the Russians. They didn't like them, because when the Russians came, they overtook everything. All they left in the factories were the walls. All the machinery was taken away, even though we were allies with Russia. We were still considered as an occupied country. You had nothing to say or nothing to do or you got the bullet.
- M: As a child, in regards to school again, what were the buildings like inside? You said you were in the junior high school here. Would you compare the high schools there to the ones in Youngstown?
- S: The elementary schools were generally in the cities. One class to each teacher. The classes were composed of about thirty to forty children. In the villages they used long benches to sit on and they had a little desk in front of

them. In the cities they were more modern. Each had his own desk, but they didn't have this modern equipment like they have here. They had a blackboard and that's it.

M: Did the children have to use ink?

S: They wrote with ink and with pencil.

M: Did they have to buy their own or was it supplied for them?

S: They weren't supplied. Each one had to buy their own. This was before and after the communists.

M: Going back before the communists took over, can you tell me something about your parents in Romania?

S: They were working on the farm. They had a few acres of land or as we call it a hectare, which is the metric system. A hectare is one hundred by one hundred meters, so it's much larger than an acre.

M: What did they grow over there?

S: Generally, they grew wheat and corn, barley and oats for the animals. But for their food they grew wheat and pork. The people who lived in the villages ate kind of a mush made out of cornmeal. This was called mamiliga. They eat it with milk or cheese, which is much richer than the cheese here. It is made with sheep's milk.

M: Was that more or less the cultural tradition of the Romanians?

S: Yes. You could eat it with stew, chicken or lamb stew especially. I tried to make some mamiliga here, but it didn't come out the right way. I think the cornmeal wasn't ground from whole corn.

M: What kind of animals did you have on the farm?

S: Generally everybody used to have a lot of sheep and cows. You could sell them or exchange them. It depended on the amount of animals you had and the amount of territory you owned. If you owned only a few hectares then you couldn't keep so many. Usually even the poorest person had at least one cow and about five or six sheep.

M: During that time also did the people in the villages or the cities have special celebrations, in which you preserved some of the Romanian heritage? Did you have any special way of celebrating special events?

S: The Romanians in general are very religious and they celebrate with much respect and tradition, especially the feasts of Christmas, Easter, and Pentacost. They used to celebrate



each one three days. Nobody worked. Everybody went to church. Another national holiday was on May 10th, the Independence of Romania--before the communists came. The people were very respectful to the national holidays; they were good patrons. They loved their country.

M: A lot of it was tied in with the church?

S: Yes, that's right.

M: When they would have some of these celebrations, did they dress in a certain way?

S: Yes, they sure did and they made their own clothes. Nowadays, they don't. They used to weave their own material, and make their own blouses and skirts with beautiful designs and flowers. It depended on the region you lived in the country. Each region had it's own specific way of sewing their clothes. It was really beautiful.

M: You mentioned that you were a schoolteacher in Romania. Was that before the communists or after?

S: Before and after.

M: Could you tell us some of the changes that you saw other than political changes that we know about and don't want to get into. Did you see any changes in the culture of the Romanian people?

S: The people had to accept what the communists taught. There was no religion, no God, no nature, nothing.

M: So in other words, the communists were in power. A lot of the culture of Romania was tied with the church, but after the communists came in, the church was abandoned and a lot of the culture from there now gone. What was it tied to then?

S: The communist party set up the new culture in the schools, in the church, and in the people's lives. They allowed the churches to go on but the preacher had to say and teach what the party said.

M: As a schoolteacher you mentioned some of the ideas you saw regarding the children's behavior in school over in Romania and over here. When the communists came in, were there restrictions placed upon you in teaching other than teaching in the subjects? Were there restrictions on teaching the children?

S: The first thing they did was to take out religion in the schools. No prayers. You were supervised by the super-

intendent of schools. He could be the dumbest man-- they didn't care. As long as he was communist, it was all right. He came in the school and dictated to you how to teach and what to teach the children. The supervisors were simple people, who barely knew how to sign their names. They were telling the teachers what to do, but this didn't last long, only a few years. But it was enough.

M: Did the children improve in behavior under the communists because they were afraid?

S: In the beginning they weren't afraid. They started to be disobedient and even started to smoke in class. In the junior high school I visited one time--I also had my own children there in 1946 and 1947--there were kids that were smoking in the class, sitting on top of the desk. The teacher was yelling at them to sit down, but they didn't even care. The teacher couldn't do anything and after that the higher people from the government saw that things were not going well and getting out of hand, so they applied a strict regime against the children and they again started to be obedient.

M: Did they punish the parents?

S: No. They didn't punish the parents, but they punished the children.

M: Did they paddle them?

S: I don't know what measure they took. They must have put them out of school.

M: You mean the party came and punished the children?

S: Yes, the party intervened and they came to the school. They told the children that if they didn't behave they would be put out of school, and wouldn't have any rights to do this or that and no job. They also called the parents.

M: In other words, the teachers did not do the punishing?

S: No, the teacher couldn't do it. It's the same as it is here: If the teacher starts to punish the children or paddle them or something, you'll get in trouble. That lasted two or three years and after that everything got in order.

The thing that is very interesting now in our country is that a child cannot go from one grade to another. For example, even in the university, if the student doesn't come with a certificate that shows that he worked and did

voluntary work for the neighborhood or in a factory or on a farm, no matter what he is studying in the university, he won't be admitted to the university. Even if he has all A's he will not be admitted if he does not have a certificate showing that he worked so many days during his vacation, doing voluntary work for the people.

M: Were the children failed if they didn't do well in their work, before the communists came?

S: Yes, there were cases. If the children didn't know their work they had to repeat that class.

M: When the communists came into power, did that change or was it continued the same way?

S: It was continued the same way. The child has to have good grades or else he will not be accepted in the next grade.

M: Now here, parents can make a request that their child fail a grade. Can that be done in Romania?

S: There is no case of that; the parent has nothing to say about it. The teacher knows if the child is to be failed or not. I don't know why the parents interfere, the teacher knows more about the child's ability.

M: Sometimes they fail them in the United States not only on an academic basis, but because they're not mature enough for the classroom, in age and behavior.

S: In Romania they do not do it this way. No parent ever came to me and told me whether or not I should pass the child or to make him repeat the class.

M: This is what is done in the U.S. sometimes.

S: They do not accept children for the first grade unless he is seven years old as of September. If he is six years and eleven months old, he still is not accepted.

M: Did most of the members of your family, including your father and mother attend school in Romania?

S: My father attended the elementary grades and then he had his farm.

M: In other words, schooling was compulsory at that time and required only grades one through eight.

S: No, no. It was a must that children had to go to school for eight grades; they had to.

- M: In Ohio when a child is sixteen years old, he may quit school with the parent's permission, of course. Do they have anything like that in Romania?
- S: The child at sixteen years old had to finish the eight grades. If he repeated the grades many times and still couldn't finish the eight grades, because of mentality or something, then he could get out.
- M: In high school in Romania, do the children go from classroom to classroom as they do here?
- S: No, I haven't seen such a school in Romania. The teacher had his own subject that he taught, for example math; then he went from one class to another and the students stayed in the same classroom.
- M: That's in the high school?
- S: Yes, that is in the high schools.
- M: In elementary school, did he have the same students all of the time?
- S: He had the same students all of the time and generally the teacher had to teach his class all the subjects. There wasn't a certain teacher for math and so forth. In the small villages, the teacher had to teach all eight grades. He had four classes in the morning and four classes in the afternoon. It was very hard to do. They also taught music and such too.
- M: When did you come to the United States?
- S: I came to the United States in 1965.
- M: When you came to the U.S., did you come straight to Youngstown?
- S: Yes, I did.
- M: When you came to Youngstown, here you were in a new country that was different in culture from your own country. In regards to the people in Romania and the Romanian people in Youngstown that you have seen, what were some things that surprised you; for instance, the neighborhoods in both Romania and Youngstown, the difference between them.
- S: Well, it's natural in a country where people of that country speak mostly the same language that these people are closer to one another. You know their name; you're more friendly, more hospitable.
- M: In other words, the Romanian people in America are more

close to one another?

- S: They're not that close. For example, in the villages I remember they didn't even have locks on their doors. If they went to work in the morning they closed the door and they put a broom on the outside of the door against the door and whoever went by saw the broom and knew that nobody was home. Everybody was at work and the kids were probably at school. That is why the broom was there. They didn't go in and bother anything. But here you don't dare leave your door open to go even to the store. You can stay here for years and you won't know the name of your neighbor next door.
- M: When you were in Romania before the communists, most of the people you said owned their own house and farms. When the communists came, I understand they took it over.
- S: They took over the big buildings, but the poor people were still permitted to have their own homes and they could sell them.
- M: Were they still allowed to build their own homes?
- S: They were allowed to build. Now even my son wrote to me and told me that he wants to build a house and the government said that he couldn't build a one story house. It had to be a two story house. Before the communists, you could build a one story house or make it out of whatever material you wanted to.
- M: Were those people who had their houses taken over the rich people? Were they told where they had to live?
- S: Well, they were taken away and put in concentration camps and they had to work there for several years and after that they were brought back to wherever they wanted to go or taken to a new place. They were given a small house.
- M: Did you have to pay taxes under the Russians?
- S: Yes, we had to pay taxes and after the Russians also.
- M: Did these taxes support the schools as they do here?
- S: Well, the schools were supported by the taxes of the people, sure.
- M: Were the schools in session nine months or the whole year?
- S: They had a vacation in the summer.
- M: Were the teachers paid high in Romania in regards to other

paid people?

- S: No. Generally they were paid enough for them to live on. If you were a university professor you were paid higher and a high school teacher was paid high than an elementary teacher because he had more schooling, more obligation.
- M: Coming back to when you came to the U.S., when you came to Youngstown, you mentioned already the manners of the children in schoolrooms. Compare youngsters in America to youngsters in Romania as to their manners, not only in school, but with their parents and in public.
- S: As I said before, the children have more respect for their parents and older people in Romania. They have more respect for the good other people do. They wouldn't go and burn your house down or break your windows.
- M: Getting back to the question about the Romanian heritage in Mahoning County compared to that in Romania, you had mentioned about the closeness and friendliness in the Mahoning County community. I would like to ask you in regards to this neighbor friendliness and so forth and the behavior of the youngsters, what would you say would be the communist idea of pranksters, like people who go out at Halloween time and throw eggs and damage cars? Would they tolerate something like that in Romania?
- S: No. There is no Halloween in the first place, but on no occasion would they do that. There is no forest without some dry pieces in it and some rotten ones--in any country you can find some bad kids and some good kids. You can't generalize. Most of the kids are decent, but in proportion with the children there, there is more disobedience with the teachers and parents here than in Romania. I was surprised at how disobedient they are here. When they receive a bad grade or get punished, they might beat up the teacher and destroy the whole school and this never happens in Romania. If there are children that are in such a state that they cannot be supervised by their parents or teachers, then they would be put in a detention home. Very seldom is this the case.

Getting back to the neighbors. I was not referring to the Romanians in America. The Romanians I know are friendly. In general, it's very dangerous here in the United States even to walk on the sidewalks after it gets dark. In Romania you can walk all night long and no one will ever touch you, not in the city or in the village.

- M: Why do you think this is so in Romania? Is it because they are fearful of the government?
- S: No. It wasn't any different before the communists came. You could go out all night, and nobody ever attacked you

for anything. I don't know why it is like this. Maybe it is because of the mixture of all kinds of nationalities here and there and probably adventurers who think that it's much easier to hit you in the head and take your purse even if you have only a buck in it. They don't know what you have.

M: Could this have something to do with the bringing up of the children?

S: It might be that. It might be the lack of discipline and the lack of supervision of the parents in the first years of the child's life. If the child doesn't have good discipline in his first seven years that will show all his life. The teacher is incapable of doing and teaching him what he didn't get in the first seven years from his parents. This is the whole trouble here. The parent is too lazy or too occupied or he doesn't care to supervise his child and teach him and give him an education. This is where the education starts when the child gives his first smile to his parents.

M: In other words, some of the people here, instead of teaching their children respect for themselves, parents, and others, are lacking in that, compared to Romania.

S: Right.

M: When you came here and met some of the American people and spoke to them, what were some of the things you noticed in regards to the use of the Romanian language in the United States?

S: At first it surprised me they were interlacing the language with one or two Romanian words, then one or two English words; it felt strange. Even now it seems ridiculous, but you can't help it. Most of them for years haven't spoken the language.

M: Alex, in comparing the Romanian language spoken by people who were born in the United States to the way it is spoken by people who were born in Romania, is there any difference in annunciation or pronunciation of words, or is it basically the same?

S: I never really noticed. You were born here; you are Romanian, but I never heard you talk Romanian, so I can't make the comparison. If a person born here spoke the Romanian language correctly, I'm certain that he would talk better than someone who has spoken English and then learned Romanian. For example, I heard a person say, 'I called John but he didn't answer.' That person will say both words that don't belong together and makes it his own way. It's kind of ridiculous.

M: Do the people in America speak the Romanian language that were born in America? Is it like a textbook language, like Spanish, where you go into the class and learn it out of a book?

S: That's it. But very seldom do you get a person born in the United States who is able to speak the Romanian language correctly or fluently. Probably he knows a few sentences or something like that. There are very few that I met here that speak the language good.

M: In other words, if a person in the United States was born a Romanian and learned the language and would go to Romania and try to talk Romanian to the Romanian people, would they at once know that he was a foreigner?

S: Yes, absolutely. I have a cousin who went to Romania last year. He knew only a few words and he couldn't understand anything that the people there were talking about, because he doesn't know the language. He couldn't express himself either; he had to have an interpreter.

M: Is the Romanian language comparable to the United States in that the United States, in the northern part of the country, we speak with the northern accent and in the south with the southern accent. Is there that type of accent in Romania too?

S: Right. It depends on the region where you are living. There are different accents and many times you can hardly understand the other person. It's exactly like here. The ones from Montana speak the purest Romanian. That's where your name comes from, Muntania. Munta, that's mountain, mountain people. If you were to translate your name to English that would be mountaineer.

M: How would you translate your last name in Romanian?

S: My name is Sacui. That's the name of a group of people who were put there in about the fifteenth century by one of the kings of Austria to protect the border from the invaders.

Generally, the people are named from their occupations or from the place where they live. In a part of Romania that is called Moldova, they call him Moldovan. If he lives in the mountains, they call him Muntian. If his complexion is dark, they call him Negru or Nergrean, or something like that.

M: In regards to some of the differences in Mahoning County in the Romanian culture, you mentioned the food mamiliga being a traditional dinner in Romania. Ha e



you noticed that some of the people in the United States from Romania still have their food of the traditional Romanian variety?

S: They've Americanized the food. The mamiliga you can eat anytime, not only at dinner.

M: Were you surprised then when you came here and saw this?

S: No, no. The mamiliga is more often found in the villages and in the towns. They generally eat less meat. Usually they eat meat in the villages in the spring when they have chickens or lamb and in late autumn they may cut a pork and smoke it and eat that all winter long.

M: In other words, the people still cling to their traditions whereas you noticed that the Romanians in the U.S. haven't kept some of them.

S: They keep them, but not much. I saw when they had the fair they had the Romanian sandwich and clothes.

M: In regards to the dances in Romanian, do they teach the old Romanian folk dances?

S: Yes, they still teach them now even though the communists came with their strict Stalinist habits. Now the people are allowed to have back their old tradition with the dances and so forth. Before when they came you weren't even allowed to go like the children did, from house to house and Christmas carol at Christmas time. Now they are allowed.

M: What was your reaction to some of the differences in culture other than what we already talked about like food and the neighborhoods and the treating of one another and togetherness, say, for instance, in music or sports or art?

S: Well, I don't know about the culture of the Americans that much, but the Romanians that I met were friendly and they asked me about the life of the people in Romania. They had some parties and sang Romanian songs. They still have a nostalgic feeling for their country and the ones who live there.

M: Would you say that the Romanian people in America are proud of their heritage?

S: Some of them are and some of them are not. Some don't even want to mention that they are Romanian, the ones who were born here; I don't know why. I don't know why, because there's nothing to be ashamed about by being a Romanian.

Even though it's a small country still it's a proud country and it didn't do anything wrong.

M: Have you seen anything in the United States in the culture of the Romanian people that would be almost similar to that of Romania? We spoke about some of their differences, did you see anything that would be similar to Romania?

S: I don't know anything about it.

M: In regards to the Romanian sense, in Romania do you think that some of them are trying to Americanize themselves and become similar to the Americans?

S: They are in a sense, because now we are in a closer relationship with the United States. Even the president has visited Romania. The letters that I receive from my grandson in Romania are always asking me for different clothes that are made here, not only because of the better quality, but because of the newest style. Romania, in general, is trying to get industrialized and become more civilized. There were a lot of wars there and oppressors.

M: As I get from your conversation, the American-Romanians are becoming more and more Americanized and the Romanian people right now are trying to become Americans themselves, in a sense both of them are becoming Americanized. How do you feel about your Romanian heritage? Are you proud to be Romanian?

S: Well, I don't see why I shouldn't be proud. I love this country and there are certain things that even though I long to go back to see my family and the country, keep me here. So this is my country here. I believe in what I have lost my citizenship for and I consider this my country.

M: You mentioned that you were a schoolteacher in Romania. What is your occupation in this country?

S: I'm in the maintenance department at the public library.

M: Could you tell us what you do basically in a typical day?

S: Whatever is necessary, whatever my boss tells me to do. It depends on what he asks me to do. I try to do my best.

M: Does that mean in maintenance you work with electrical work and such?

S: Whatever is necessary to do, starting from the easiest to the most difficult.

- M: In other words, you have a general knowledge of a lot of things which pertain to the functions of the library in a mechanical way.
- S: Yes, electrical, plumbing, or whatever. You should be able to do these things. Most of them I learned from being here. At first I didn't even know the names of the tools and how to handle them, but after a while I learned.
- M: How did you go about learning the English language, because you do have, and I must say this sincerely, a wonderful annunciation of the words.
- S: I think that most of the words, after I started looking through the American dictionary, a great percentage of the words are similar to those in the Romanian language, either being derived from them or having the same roots. This is like the Latin language through the occupation of the Roman Empire. With the higher culture, they impose their language on the countries which they occupy.
- M: In other words, many of the words you tried to learn and pronounce yourself?
- S: Yes. It was easy for me and being at the library, the only language I heard was English. If I came to a word I didn't understand, I looked it up in the dictionary or I asked one of the librarians. They were very kind to me to explain.
- M: Have you found any books in the public library that deal with the Romanian culture?
- S: Oh, yes. They had books of Romanian writings and books of many foreign languages. In history books you can read about the Romanian culture.
- M: So you used to like some of these books about the Romanian culture?
- S: I didn't have to read about the Romanian culture because I knew it. I was more interested in American history and geography and so forth.
- M: Is there anything else that you would like to add in regards to the Romanian culture in either Romania or the United States that we haven't touched upon?
- S: No, but I think that the parents in the United States should give more attention to their children and give them the right education. The government's laws must be respected; then you are against not only the state's laws but also against God's laws. The government's laws are according to God's laws. God punishes you if

you steal and the government does also.

Get closer to the children. The parents should show more love and concern for the children and to take time to educate them of all the nationalities. We would have a more beautiful country through the love that would exist here. I was amazed that when we were driving with my brother and sister there was a man on the side of the street pointing his finger and I told my brother to pick him up and he said that he couldn't because he could kill me. That doesn't happen in Romania. Nobody was ever in such a situation.

M: In other words, the Romanian heritage is such that there is more respect and in many of the nationalities respect is forgotten.

S: I could end with this: The most beautiful thing here is the freedom which I lacked there in Romania. But the freedom has to be up to only a certain point and then stopped, with a little bit of discipline and respect for the law then everything would be good. If you exceed the liberty that is given to you by the constitution, the freedom that you have and abuse, you get into trouble and could cause the decline of the United States.

M: Thank you, Alex Sacui.

END OF INTERVIEW