

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY	Rumania	REPORT	
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SOURCE EVALUATIONS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

1. Among 14 Zionist leaders brought to trial in Rumania in March 1954 the principals were Mme. Mela Iancu; lawyer Michel (Misu) Benvenisti, also a member of the World Zionist Council; Dr. Hirsch; lawyer Cohen of Bucharest; Dr. Haas of Oradea; and a certain Grunberg. They were arrested in 1950 and until 1952 were kept at the Ministry of the Interior (MAI) prison, then transferred to the Malmaison prison. The trial took place in a former private mansion on Strada Nicolae Iorga, which today houses a section of the Territorial Tribunal of Bucharest. 25X1
2. The 14 accused were taken to the Malmaison prison in a prison van, were provided with black goggles and separated from each other by Security agents. Throughout the trial, as during the four preceding years, they were forbidden to speak a single word to each other. The president of the Tribunal, "the last word in judgment", was General Major Petrescu, who also presided at the trial of Iuliu Maniu and at the Iron Guard trial during Antonescu's regime. He was assisted by two assessors, "understudies", who did not say a word during the entire trial. From the beginning, the trial was declared secret and the courtroom public consisted of Security officers and agents, all in uniform.
3. The prisoners had not seen their lawyers before entering the courtroom, and then were permitted only five minutes' conversation and never knew the names of the lawyers. The lawyers based their pleas on the confessions which had been signed by the prisoners in their cells. Several days before the trial began, each prisoner had been summoned before the prosecutor, Perlea, Security commandant. Perlea drafted two-page proces-verbaux summarizing each of the prisoners' earlier confessions, which were originally 100-200 pages long.
4. The prisoners were brought before the judges one by one and after them, witnesses were called. The witnesses had already been arrested long

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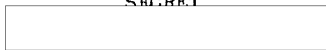
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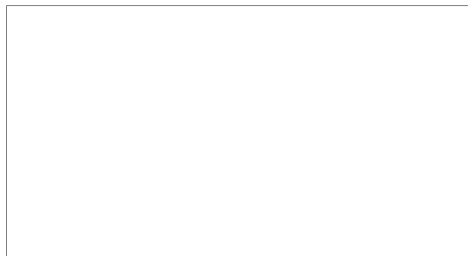
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before the trial, with the exception of a peasant who testified on the character of one of the prisoners, a country doctor. Despite their testimonies, which were unfavorable to the prisoners, these witnesses were allegedly implicated later in a new trial and condemned to various punishments. The prosecutor, a captain, was a former laborer. The last word was left to the accused who at that time were all in the courtroom. The lawyer Benvenisti spoke first, for a half-hour, acknowledging his crimes, stating that he deserved his fate and promising that while in prison he would work hard for the good of the socialist fatherland. The others declared themselves in agreement with Benvenisti. Mme. Mela Iancu showed the most praiseworthy attitude.

5. The evening of 30 March 1954, the prisoners were transported to the prison of Jilava where they were separated in an annex to rooms 9, 10, 11 and 12. A week later a court clerk came to read the sentences: some (Mela Iancu, Benvenisti) were condemned to life, others to 25, 12, 10 and 8 years. None of them had dared defend himself against the accusations. Before the trial they had each passed before an ad hoc committee which brought to their attention the fact that should they confess something different from their original declaration, they would be obliged to return to the Security for a "complement of information." In addition, they had been tortured during the inquest. Some of the tortures were:

- a. The accused was tied in a sitting position, wrists fastened to ankles, and hung from a horizontal bar which passed under the knees. He was then beaten with rubber bludgeons.
- b. Hair and eyebrows were pulled out.
- c. Several hours of walking around in a room until the accused were dizzy and completely exhausted; or leap-frogging around a table while a militiaman, perched on the table, whipped them.

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