

〈記録〉

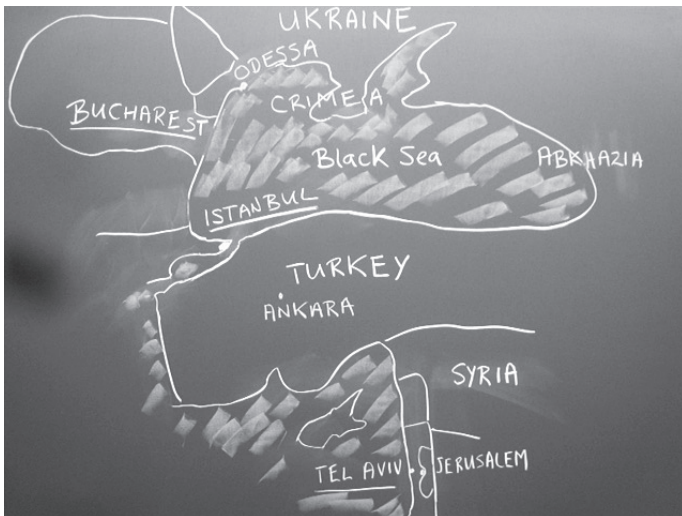
BUCHAREST and TEL AVIV (March 2016):

Another Adventure which Started in Sasashima.....

John Hamilton

I booked a Turkish Airlines flight at Chichester Market Cross, from Gatwick to Istanbul, connecting on to Bucharest, arriving in the evening, hoping to be met by Horia Vacarescu (I was!).....then 3 days later, on again, back to Istanbul and down to Tel Aviv, arriving at 3.05 am where Mark Hamilton had gallantly said he would pick me up (and he did!). And the return flight at the end of the week was again via Istanbul, back to Gatwick.

This is an account of that journey.



This map is all interconnected. It is like a top, spinning around Istanbul. A good friend of mine is from Sukhumi in Abkhazia originally...He lives here in Aichi, but

this February I was with him and his family in Toronto And not so long ago my son Oliver was working in Kiev as an intern in the law firm Cameron McKenna. When I visited him there we went out to Kharkiv in East Ukraine, also to Poltava over there.

That was before the troubles started in East Ukraine..... I have never been to the Crimea but my grandfather went there in 1911 (an extraordinary story)And when my sister went to visit Oliver in Kiev, they went down to Odessa. Some of Mark Hamilton's new relations in Israel had grandparents from Odessa.....

During my journey this time, bombs seemed to be going off everywhere. A big one went off on March 13th in Ankara killing 27 people, wounding many others.....There had been a stabbing incident in Jaffa close to where Mark Hamilton and family live and an American had been killed. That was just before I arrived.....Israeli tourists in Istanbul were killed in another attack and the bodies were being flown home to Israel. On March 22nd, the day of my return, there were bombs going off in Brussels..... 3 million refugees from Syria were living in various parts of Turkey, most of them wishing to enter the European Union.....The U.K. was going to have a referendum in June to decide whether it should stay in the European Union or not.

The PURPOSE of this journey was to visit Romania for the first time, and meet Carol and Elena Vacarescu on their home ground, and to visit Israel and see my son Mark and his family.

Bogdan Vacarescu gave me the CD he had made at Christmas and I threw it into my Japan suitcase having no idea what a treasure it was. Only a month later did I listen to it for the first time in the car driving to Toyohashi.

It starts with GEORGE ENESCU's Sonata for piano and violin Op. 6 No. 2 in F minor. For me this was an introduction to Enescu. I had never heard of Enescu before..... There were other very fine pieces of music on the CD, but it was the Enescu that thrilled me, and it thrilled my neighbour in Okazaki, Sugita sensei, as

well. I quote: “Bogdan Vacarescu and Julian Jacobson play music with beautiful combination. I guess you are proud to have Vacarescu as a husband for your daughter. When I listen to music from Eastern Europe, I don’t know why, I always feel my blood tingle. My favourite works of GEORGE ENESCU are two sonatas, first, Sonata for piano No. 3 D-major op. 24–3, and second, Sonata for violin and piano No 3 A minor op. 25.....I have got CD’s of both of these.....”

BUCHAREST

So I had to go to Bucharest, bombs notwithstanding!..... Horia WAS at the airport. It was rather a relief because I had no idea where they lived and didn’t speak a word of Romanian and would not have known what to do. The number of the car was B42 HBC (Horia Bogdan Carol)....it was an Opal with a vintage feel.....we drove into night time Bucharest, with the buildings all lit up. It was indeed like Paris with everybody parking on the pavements, girls attractive.....but smaller and more intimate than Paris with streets which are quite like London. Around the Vacarescu house is a bit like Fulham. Then I was shown into Bogdan’s bedroom where I was to stay, and I became aware of the powerful influence of MICHAEL JACKSON.....I fell asleep immediately, waking up the next morning...and looking out of the windows saw the church Sfintul Elefterie and in the distance Ceaucescu’s palace.....it reminded me a little bit of the view of Notre Dame from the Quai d’Orleans flat on Isle St Louis.



Well done Meg finding such a family. I must learn Romanian I decided. The house was really nice, a lovely orchid maintained by Elena on the window sill of the big room and a print showing the curtain, former curtain they said, of the Prague Opera House.....Elena a genius in the kitchen.... the Ghebe (mushrooms) were delicious....and Fasole Battuta (beans) also, and there were even some Hitech features (!) ...a working computer with Skype calls using video coming in from South Africa, also from Holloway, and in the bathroom a Laser operated tapahead of us in England.....the problem was how to keep the water going at the same time as washing your hands. I was beginning to look back at England through Romanian eyes.



On that first day in Bucharest I ventured forth with Horia to have a first glimpse of Bucharest. We went to the Cantacuzino palace housing various Enescu treasures, but the little house at the back where he and his Countess (Maruca) had lived in 1937 before moving to Paris, was closed. That had to wait for a couple days. We also went into the Peter and Paul church opposite which was very nice. From there we went to the Athenaeum Opera House and thanks to Horia were able to get in through a back door to a rehearsal of Tchaikovsky's Manfred Symphony (inspired by Lord Byron's poem)we looked up at the ceiling and could see the name of the poet Vacarescu.....And after the rehearsal we ran into friends of Horia and Bogdan....one of them had been the first violin....actually together, Horia and Bogdan must have know everybody there one way or another. After that we went to Caru' Cu Bere which is one of the great coffee shops of the world...no less...very hard to get into in summer...but in March there were empty tables. Certainly it was a nice experience just to be there under the arched ceilings, with stained glass in the windows and waiters wearing green braces and green bow ties and there was very good coffee.....what a treat!

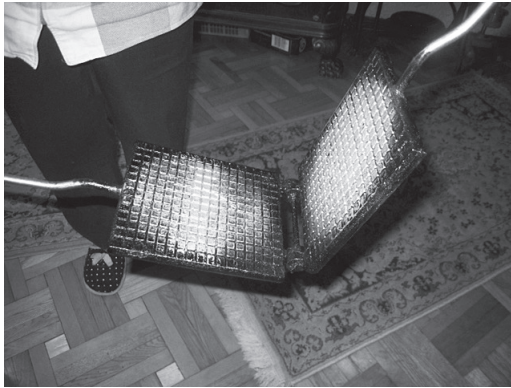


The next day Carol looked after me. Actually we managed to communicate without language quite well. There were some doubts about the car, the battery was not absolutely reliable, but it had been re-charged. And the oil level was a little bit low, and it needed a certain kind of oil which was not available everywhere. We set off north out of Bucharest with Maria Tanase on the CD player, and picked up some magic water along the way. Then we passed the French Lycee.Anna de Noailles, Liberté, Egalité Fraternité.....was written on the wall. We bypassed Ploiesti and then Breaza where the Vacarescus have a casa de vacanza and a vegetable plot....but we didn't go there. There was a bit of snow on the ground as we entered the Carpathians, just the foothills. And then we reached Peles Castle. Here is a picture of Carol in fur hat taking orders from Elena.



The Castle was built in about 1890. It is rather like West Dean in Sussex...same date, though there were no stuffed animals and no surrealist artworks. Carol had been there but not up to the second floor, but he was somehow able to get us in.....us by then included a Japanese girl Tomomi Hikosaka from Tamagawa University.....With the red carpets and gilded frames it was actually very royal. You could imagine royal children on tricycles. Quite grand people had stayed there. The list of visitors included Edward VII, Emperor Franz Joseph, President Nixon and Gaddafi.....The guide could speak English so was able to interpret between me and Carol, and I could speak to the girl in broken Japanese....there were just the four of us. The big stoves heating the place were a marvel, but from a Japanese point of view, the baths were rather small.

On the way back we passed the Vacarescu family church. The car was OK. We had Danube carp for dinner with Marmaliga, Galushka, Sarmale, and Creme de Zahar Ars (creme caramel). Elena made very good wafers (called Faguri maybe). Here is a photograph of the wafer machine.



On the last day with Horia I visited the little Enescu house again, which was open this time. Enescu was Maruca Cantacuzino's second husband, and they lived there in 1937 before moving to Paris. At the back of the house in a dark corner there was a portrait of Constantin Cantacuzino Movila Basarab 1564, an ancestor of Maruca's first husband. He looked like Bogdan wearing a turban. In all Romanian museums there are people in every room whose job is to stop people from taking photographs.

It is not quite clear why they have this rule! Anyway I couldn't take a photograph.

I also liked the little tete-a-tete chair there.....again no photograph.

With Horia I visited the Parcul Cismigui with its lovely spring flowers and fine trees. Among the busts of poets there was Il Caragiale, also Mihail Eminescu (1849–1889) Romania's Romantic poet. I was told I must read 'The Third Letter to the Turkish Pasha'. The park was near to the Collegia National Gheorghe Lazar where Elena teaches music.....

And we went to some lovely little churches, very small and intimate at ground level, but going high high up, and beautifully decorated inside the spires. One such was the Sfintul Nicholae, actually a Russian church with onions on the top, within the Manasteria Stavropolos, beautifully painted inside. There was a place outside to pray for the living (vii) and the dead (dormiti). The Sfintul Elefteria opposite the Vacarescu house was very fine too. I was reminded of the damage

done to English churches during the Reformation (the smashing of lovely stained glass, the over painting of frescoes etc). In the evening Horia took a break from practicing Paganini and we went out to a tea house called 'Infinita' which was really nice, and we only had to drink tea. Thank you very much to Horia for introducing me to Bucharest and for getting me onto a plane at 9.30 that evening.

I have a post script to this. Just recently I have been looking at my mother's scrap book and I found this photograph. During the last two years of the Second World War my mother, aged 24 then, was working in the British Embassy in Moscow. I don't think she took this photograph but it is her writing around it.



I had a feeling that this conference had something to do with Romania, so I looked it up. Indeed it had. This is the note about 'spheres of influence' that Churchill passed across the table to Stalin.....with Stalin's tick on it. I think that nobody else at the meeting saw the note. It is called the Percentages agreement.

Romania
Russia 90%
The others 10%

Greece G. P. & L. 90%
The others 10%

Yugo Slavia 50/50%

Hungary 50/50%

Belgium Russia 75%
The others 25%

Churchill's copy of secret agreement with Stalin
made in Moscow, October, 1944.

TEL AVIV

I was in Istanbul at midnight and arrived in Tel Aviv Ben Gurion at 3.05 am. Mark Hamilton was there to meet me, all bright and bushy tailed. On the plane I had been reading a book about how to train a dog, more specifically how to persuade our dog in England, Leo, a Rhodesian Ridgeback, to come back when he

is called. It was very good to be back in Neve Tsedek and see the grandchildren all one year older, and to meet little Mikhail for the first time, with Tamara, nearly 5, trying to communicate in English, and Raphael, nearly four, who had his first haircut ever while I was there...which looked good, and was perhaps more comfortable. Daphne, who is 3, is teamed up with big brother Raphael at their Montessori kindergarten and looked very nice in the Laura Ashley dress I had brought. I didn't know I had brought it ("Did you pack this bag yourself?" I had been asked.). And little Mikhail looked like his Uncle Oliver when he was small. And all of them spoke beautiful Hebrew. It was nice to hear them talking to each other. This is indeed a new thing for the Hamilton family. I was there for PURIM and there was a party up at Tamara's kindergarten.

PURIM is a Jewish holiday to commemorate the saving of the Jewish people from Haman, the first minister of the Persian king.....The story is in the Book of Esther in the Old Testament.

I went for a walk with Shimrit and we spotted these two dogs. The first is a British Bulldog. It seemed to be a resident of Neve Tsedek.



And the other was a three legged dog which had been fitted up with wheels and straps so that it could go for a walk. Apparently there was somebody locally who had a business fixing up three legged dogs. I looked up three legged dogs on the Internet and fixing them up is indeed a field of endeavour.....



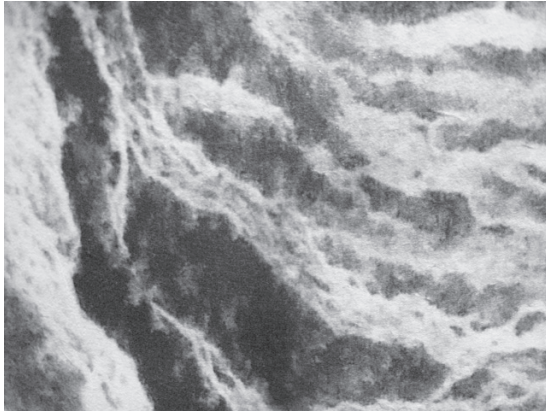
The relationship between Israelis and Palestinianians was going through a difficult patch. Shimrit thought it was too dangerous to go anywhere.....Jaffa or Jerusalem....but I just thought that I was like the bulldog. I would hope for the best and do what I had intended to do. Actually there wasn't time to stay in the Turkish hostel in Jaffa which is a place I like. But I had to go to Jerusalem to see Ruth Cohn.

JERUSALEM

So the next day Mark left me at the bus stop near to Ramat Gan. At the bus stop there were black hatted Orthodox Jews, and attractive girls in uniform with guns (according to Shimrit, not loaded. They keep the bullets in a case on their belts.). And in the queue ahead of me there was a Chinese couple who had come off a boat from Italy and were heading via Jerusalem for the Dead Sea. The bus conductor was saying “SHEKELS, SHEKELS.....” And they were replying “VISA, VISA.” So I said to them: “我买两张票给你们” (I will pay for your

tickets.). It takes about an hour from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and in my pocket I had some Israeli money from the previous trip. I didn't know what it was worth, but I knew I had enough. So I paid for them as well as for myself. On the bus we talked about their journey and they gave me some American dollars which I put in my pocket.....The countryside along the way was surprisingly green and beautiful. I guess everything depends on water management. I thought of Shuki Pollack, Shimrit's uncle who, she told me, is something like the mayor of one of the little towns here.(I would really like to meet him again and his son-in-law Eren.) At the Central Bus Terminal I was able with some difficulty to get a tram ticket because the machines are terribly slow. I just made it on to the tram in time. But then it didn't move off. There was a suspicious object on the lineso we had to wait a bit.....but then we did move off. Later I found US\$ 40 in my pocket. I think the tickets to Jerusalem were about \$6 so the Chinese had been very generous..... Actually it paid for the trip!

I was quite pleased when I did arrive at Ruth's place in Yoel Salamon to see her up on her balcony tending the geraniums, so I was able to call up and was let in quite easily. It was nice to be back. I wish I could have stayed longer. I think in the limited time I was able to sort out her geraniums. It is a lovely bohemian flat, full of plants and artworks, not to forget the dog Nakita and a Siamese cat. I wanted to see what she had done with the washi, sent from Tokyo with the help of Takami Ishizaka, formerly Aichi University. I wasn't disappointed. We went up to the attic in a very makeshift lift and she opened up her 'Water Icon' series which is an amazing collection of black ink on washi, astonishing actually. I just show a close up snap because they have not yet been exhibited. Water is a very important thing.....everywhere, but especially in Israel.



After that, in a daze, I got back outside and onto a tram. And there in Jerusalem I found myself surrounded by a lovely Japanese family! The grandparents were from Gifu. And the son was the NHK correspondent in Jerusalem and there were three children. I couldn't but tell them about Ruth Cohn, how she had lived in Nishi Mukou near to Kyoto, and had been writing big black calligraphies on Japanese paper....and now here in Jerusalem she was still working with washi.....later when I was back in Nagoya he wrote to me and I gave him Ruth's contact details.

Neve Tsedek is very nice in March with the scent of orange blossom everywhere and all the bougainvillea in flower (like Okinawa) and good smells coming from the bakeries, and the delicious ice creams from the shop on Shalom Shabazi. Also I enjoyed walking around the Tel Aviv White City at night, King George V Street, Allenby, Rothschild, Balfour, Warburg, Montefiore.....Foolishly maybe, I was not afraid.....

It is very exciting to have 4 grandchildren who speak Hebrew rather than English....



Before I left England our neighbour in Sussex, Daphne Birch, gave us an account of her visit to the West Bank, also this bottle of Olive oil. I have read her account of what is happening in the West Bank through three times, and I am not going to write about it here, but I might have a go at it in the future. There are a lot of excellent people on the Palestinian side, and there are also a lot of fine people on the Israeli side.

