

# Samuel Eiferman

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Braila

Romania

Interviewer: Roxana Onica

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*Samuel Eiferman is a modest man whose face bears the traces of the hardships inflicted on him by life. He is grey-haired and of average height. He lives with his wife in a three-room house on a peaceful city street. Having lost their only son a few years ago and lacking closer heirs, they support a niece (from Mrs. Eiferman's side of the family) through college. It seems misfortunes made their relationship stronger; perfect understanding reigns between the two spouses, even when they prepare the meal in the kitchen side by side.*



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### **My family background**

My paternal grandfather was born in Galicia [1](#), Poland, in 1876. His name was **Haim Eiferman**. I don't know when he and his wife settled in Sipot [*Ed. note: Nowadays Sipot is called Dolishniy Shepot and is part of the Chernivtsi Region, Ukraine.*], Storojinet County, Bukovina [2](#), which belonged to Austria-Hungary back then. I don't know my paternal grandmother's maiden name or her birth date. All I know is that she came from Galicia too. I never met her, as she died in 1925, shortly after I was born.

My grandparents spoke Yiddish and were religious. I don't know about my grandfather's education, but I know he worked at the forest rangers' office in Sipot – the area was all woodland. The village of Sipot is where the River Siret [*Siretul Mare*] has its source; back then it was near the frontier with Russia. The village was crossed by a narrow-gauge railroad and a highway that led to Storojinet and to Chernivtsi. The houses bordered the road, but there were also houses uphill. Most of the Jews resided on the same street, but didn't live next to one another; their houses were 100 meters

to 1 kilometer apart. For instance, our house was some 100 meters apart from the closest Jewish house. I don't know how many Jews had lived in the village when my grandparents were young, but there were only 12 families left by the time I was born.

My father was my grandparents' only child. He bore the same name as my grandfather, **Haim Eiferman**, and was born in 1902 in Sipot. I don't know how many grades he had completed in school. Just like his father, he worked at the forest rangers' office, where he was a clerk. The office was under the jurisdiction of Count Vasilko, a "grof" [*Ed. note: "Grof" is Hungarian for count.*] who owned all the mountains in Northern Bukovina. His administration was based in Berhomet [*Ed. note: today called Beregomet, in Chernivtsi Region, Ukraine*], a larger commune located on the Siret Valley, some 20 kilometers away from Sipot. When I was a kid a narrow-gauge train would run through our village. It lasted until after World War II, when the Russians brought in tractors and cars. We would take it to get to Berhomet, from where we could travel further to Storojinet and Chernivtsi.

My maternal grandfather's surname was **Weiner** and he came from Galicia as far as I know. I don't know his first name or his birth date. I don't recall much about Grandmother **Weiner** either; I have no idea when the two of them settled in Sipot. They had three children: **Etty Weiner**, born in 1900, my mother, **Gisela Weiner**, born in 1904, and **Adolf Weiner** - but I don't know when he was born.

My mother's sister, **Etty**, married David Dauber. They had three daughters; my cousins' names were **Roza**, born in 1924, **Suzana**, nicknamed Coca, born in 1926, and **Sarah**, nicknamed Sally, born in 1932. Aunt Etty died in May 1940, before the deportation. Uncle David Dauber and his three girls were deported at the same time with us. My mother ended up in the same camp with Roza, while Coca and Sally were taken to an orphanage, as they were younger. We found out from Sally's letters how she and Coca witnessed the end of their father. The girls were boarding a ferry when David Dauber rushed to take Sally in his arms, to help her get through the mud; the gendarmes hit him in the back with rifle butts so hard, that his lungs broke. He died the following day. Roza became ill and my mother watched over her in the camp's infirmary. She died in 1944. Coca and Sally survived the Holocaust and left the country - but I couldn't tell you when or how they left. Coca is now living in Spain; I never met her again. She has a son who was born in 1950. Sally is living in the US, close to New York City. The last time I saw her was in 1968, when she came to Romania and we went to the seaside [*the Black Sea*]. She's the one who contacted the mayor in Sipot in order to start the formalities to get the family house back. But neither of us received any answer so far. They won't give us anything back. But it's not like I need anything anymore... I'm happy with what I have now.

Uncle **Adolf Weiner** was drafted to the Red Army and died during the bombing of Bryansk in June 1944. [*Ed. note: Bryansk is a city in Russia located 379 kilometers southwest from Moscow. It is more likely that the bombing Mr. Eiferman refers to took place in 1943.*]

My mother, **Gisela Eiferman** nee Weiner, was born in 1904 in the village of Sipot, just like my father. I don't know how they met. They got married in the early 1920's and I was born in 1925. I was an only child. I don't know how many grades my mother had completed in school, but she also knew the Gothic alphabet. My grandparents and my parents used Yiddish at home. I can still speak Yiddish. I can also speak German - we lived amidst Poles, Germans and Ukrainians.

My mother was a housewife and my father worked in the timber business. They didn't have machines back then - they used horses, so the work was harder. The village had timber tradesmen, house builders, carpenters and even a timber yard - plenty of jobs were available. My parents' economic situation was average.

### **Growing up**

We lived in a large house made of wood beams, like is the custom in the mountains. It had 7-8 rooms. We had a kitchen, a pantry, a large cellar, a henhouse and a stable for the cattle. We grew two cows, a pair of horses and many chickens. Nowadays the village has new houses covered in tin plates. Back in our days, we used shingle. Our furniture consisted of the regular pieces of our time: wardrobe, bed, small couch. Pictures hung on the walls, because Jews don't have icons and cult artifacts to display. The timber yard had a power generator, but few houses were connected to it. Our family used gas lamps. We didn't have plumbing - our water supply was a spring nearby. There were many small tributaries of the River Siret in the area and one of them passed by our house.

Our neighbors were Ukrainians; they were nice people. We spoke in their native language with them. Sipot and Banila [*today Banilov*] were villages of Ukrainians. There were also villages of Romanians in the vicinity - like Krasnailski [*today Krasnoilsk*]. The region had been under the Austrian administration until 1918. It was only in 1920 that they started to use Romanian as the official language. In our village, the gendarme, the priest and the teachers were Romanian. The mayor's office had Romanian and Ukrainian employees - but the latter could speak Romanian too.

The traces of the Austrian administration were clearly visible in the education that people had received. They were simply more cultivated and more polished than the inhabitants in Walachia and Moldavia [3](#). Sometimes I would hear the Ukrainians telling my grandmother: "We were better off under the Austrians". Life wasn't bad under the Romanian administration either, but they didn't like the fact that the gendarmes would prevent them from keeping their old holidays. They celebrated Christmas 13 days later than the Romanians and the gendarmes would beat them if they caught them caroling. This tradition wasn't Austrian, but Slavic. I remember this quite well - I was old enough to remember these things.

The village had a Christian-Orthodox church. Ukrainians had basically the same holidays as the Romanians, only they celebrated them 2 weeks later. There were also Adventists, but they were very few. They held a service every Saturday in a private house.

Jews didn't have a synagogue, but they congregated in a prayer house. My parents would go there too. Men would go every Saturday. Women and children would only attend the place on large holidays. Religious marriages were officiated in the nearest town, because the village only had 12 Jewish families; there were many elderly people and very few children, since many families didn't have offspring.

My parents dressed in the Jewish fashion of the time. My father wore a hat called "hut" - it's called the same in German - or "kopheletz", but didn't wear whiskers; he had already become more modern. Women were quite modern too; in summer they didn't cover their head anymore. My parents were religious. They had prayer books at home and they read them.

We kept all the major holidays: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Chanukkah, Pesach, meaning the Passover. We celebrated them down in the village, although there were so few of us. But we weren't the only Jews in the area: other villages down the Siret Valley, all the way to Berhomet, as well as Berhomet itself had their own Jews.

My mother would cook chicken on holidays. For instance, on Rosh Hashanah, we would have chicken stake, soup and many sweets. We didn't eat bread on Passover, only matzah. We also had chicken stew, "meatballs" made of potatoes and a particular type of cake that I can't remember anymore. We were supplied by people from Berhomet with beef that had been ritually slaughtered and was sure to be kosher. My mother kept a chest as large as a bed in the pantry; it contained special dishes that we only used once a year. Wine consumption was scarce in my parents' house. We usually had a small glass on Passover. It went the same for 'tuica' [*plum brandy*].

The village was too small to have a kindergarten, so all the children were brought up at home until they were old enough to go to school. The school was located up on a hill and consisted of seven grades. When I entered the 1st grade I could speak German, Ukrainian and Polish, but I couldn't speak Romanian, so I had to learn it in school. We were taught by two Jews – a schoolmaster and a schoolmistress. I forgot their names. I later met them in the camp. I started going to school at the age of 7 and I attended 7 primary grades. Classes were taught in Romanian. The teachers were Romanians who had been brought from the Kingdom [*Ed note: People living in the territories that were the last to become part of Romania, in 1918 (as is the case of Mr. Eiferman's native Bukovina), used to refer to Walachia and Moldavia, the two provinces that united to form Romania in 1859, as "the Kingdom"*], since our village only had Ukrainians. There were one female teacher and two male teachers. The men's names were Cozma and Lefter. I can't remember the lady's name though. Both men were reservists, wore "pre-military" uniforms and service caps and conducted drills with the boys aged 18-19 in order to prepare them for the military service. Teachers weren't the only professionals who had to be "imported" from elsewhere; it was the same for priests. The pupils wore whatever their parents could afford. Some were dressed in traditional outfits; others had watchmen's uniforms [4](#). After the Russians invaded Bukovina, classes were taught in Russian. In 1940-1941, we completed 7 grades in one year. I actually enjoyed the stories and the poems of the Russian authors.

I didn't want to learn Hebrew. We were two Jewish boys in school and were supposed to study Hebrew, but, being a couple of spoiled brats, we said no. Our parents didn't force us. And this is why I never got to learn Hebrew.

I really can't remember whether I had my bar mitzvah or not. We were already living in Braila when two Jews who had come from America put those sacred scrolls called tefillin on my forehead and on my left arm and read to me in Hebrew, while I repeated after them. I suppose that was it.

As a kid, my favorite pass time was playing with the ball and hiking in the mountains in summer, and sleighing and skiing in winter. The skis were made of beech by our village carpenters. The sleigh was essential, due to our long winters that lasted from September to May. We would go hiking in summer, during our training as watchmen. In 1938 we even received the visit of Minister Sidorovici, accompanied by some 8 cars. [*Ed. note: While the King [5](#) was the watchmen's supreme commander, Maj. Teofil Sidorovici was his lieutenant, as executive commander of the Watchmen's Guard. On 28 June 1941 he was appointed minister of national propaganda, a short-lived office*

*which he held until 3 July of the same year.*] Back in those days, Romanians paid special attention to the territories that used to belong to Austria-Hungary. We, the watchmen, would often serve as guides for the groups of tourists that came from the Kingdom. We took them hiking in the mountains for as much as 7-10 kilometers.

Anti-Semitism wasn't an issue in our area. Even though the Cuzists [6](#) came to power in 1937, the Ukrainians weren't aggressive to us. This went for the Romanian gendarme and the Romanian priest too. When it was time for the religion class, the priest would ask the two Jewish boys, one of whom was me: "Would you like to leave?" – "No, Father, we'll stay." So we stayed with the others and watched the Christian Orthodox class being taught. I made friends with everyone, regardless of their faith. We didn't know what racial hatred was. Even when Cuzist supporters spent one month in our village, with clubs, swastikas and everything, they didn't harm anyone, despite the fact that they were already in touch with the Gestapo.

### **During the war**

In 1939, when Hitler invaded Poland [7](#), the Romanian Army held parades. An infantry regiment was particularly noteworthy – they were wearing new uniforms and were equipped with the latest weapons. It was the way in which Carol II [5](#) showed that he wasn't going to yield to the Russians. But Hitler ordered the surrender of Bukovina and Bessarabia [8](#) and the king had no choice but to comply. The Army held its last parade in the fall of 1939. A major addressed the troops and the audience, which included children that had been summoned for the occasion. He said: "All around our borders, the gunpowder is drawing near. It will soon light up and we have to be prepared for that." Then, after the surrender of Bessarabia, the Romanian Army slowly withdrew. There were plenty of troops stationed in the area, for the Polish border was only 25 kilometers away.

When war broke out, in 1941, we felt it directly, because we were so close to the border. On a Sunday morning, German planes bombed the headquarters of the Russian border patrol. The noise woke us up. 10 days later, Hitler [*that is, the German Army*] marched into Kiev [*19 September 1941*].

On 2 June 1941 all the Jews in our village were assembled and sent to Transnistria; we weren't allowed to take any belongings with us. There were 12 Jewish families in our village. We were assembled by a forest ranger who kept in touch with the Romanian troops and already knew what would happen to the Jews when the Romanians would get there. As soon as the Russians withdrew and the border patrol left, that forest ranger took us out of our homes. His son, who was 18-19 years old at the time, later apologized to us for what his father had done. In 1944 he fled to Germany, fearing the Jewish revenge.

I got separated from my father and my grandfather, who were put with a third Jew in another cart. That was the last time I ever saw either of them. They probably caught up with the Russians, who were withdrawing, and made it to Chernivtsi. But there was no one to save them there. Elderly people were usually shot because they couldn't keep up with the rest. My grandfather didn't make it to the camp, so I assume he died along the way, in 1941. He was about 65 years old. I later found out about my father's end from some Jews who had been in the same camp as him; they told me he had fallen ill and was unable to work, so he was shot in 1942. This happened in some stone quarry in Transnistria. Only those who were able to work till the end made it out of there alive. This



was my case too.

The rest of my family and I were taken to the next village. I was with my mother, with Uncle David Dauber and with my cousins. Sally was in 2nd grade, Coca was in 4th grade and Roza was in 7th grade.

In the next village the gendarmes took over us. We walked for 20 kilometers, on Siret Valley, to Berhomet. The Russians were still there, so our escort had to wait for the Romanian Army to arrive. Before they left, the Russians gave all their food supplies to the peasants: sugar, flour, chocolate. Then they burnt down the barracks and they pulled back.

They marched us via Storojinet, Chernivtsi, Novoselita, Lipcani, Ocnita, Iedinit [*today Yedintsy*] and Moghilev. On our way to Moghilev, we spent the nights sleeping on the ground. The journey lasted from 2 July to 1 September 1941; so it took us two months to walk some 300 kilometers. Like I said, some elderly people were shot because they couldn't keep up. Others died of heart attack. They didn't give us any food. In order not to starve, we had to sell the few belongings we had managed to take with us. Jewelry, shirts, linen and the likes were actual lifesavers. Also, we worked for food when we could find someone who needed us.

All the Jews who had been gathered from Bukovina ended up in the Moghilev [9](#) camp, divided in several ghettos. We were 13,000 Jews in Moghilev alone. When the Romanian Army arrived, they shot many Jews. Then they occupied Transnistria and they relocated the Jews to Odessa, Rabnita [*Rybnitsa*] and Doaga. Moghilev had Jews coming from various areas: the town of Dorohoi, Northern Bukovina, Bessarabia; in the end, they even began to deport Jews from the Kingdom. The bridge over the Dniester was right there, in the town of Moghilev, in Atachi.

When we got to Moghilev, they just left us there. We took over the empty houses which they had freed for us. The houses had been flooded all the way to the ceiling, but the water had withdrawn. My mother, my cousin Roza and I lived in an empty house that had no windows and no furniture, except for a bed made of planks. My other two cousins, Coca and Sally, were taken to an orphanage, because of their young age.

In Moghilev we were sorted out by the gendarmes, who assigned us to work either for the German or for the Romanian regiments. Representatives from both armies came to the gendarmes' station, were handed the lists of inmates that had been assigned to them and signed us out. The gendarme colonel set up a Jewish community led by a Jewish man named **Jagendorf** who was later replaced by **Danilof**. He had them fix the water station, the power station and the steel foundry, which began using Jewish workforce. Thus, many Jews stayed in Moghilev instead of being reassigned to other camps.

[*Ed. note: "...another native from Bukovina was **Siegfried Jagendorf**, an engineer from Radauti who was deported to Moghilev and served as the leader of the local Jewish committee for a while. Jagendorf got the prefect's approval to rebuild the town's foundry using the Jews who came from Bukovina and to sell the finished products - mainly spare parts for farming equipment. This way, he secured a relatively decent living for more than 1,000 who resided in town. He and the Jewish skilled workers were allowed to live outside of the town. (...) he used his position in order to obtain favors from the authorities, not just for himself, but also for the skilled workers whom he led. However, these favors caused resentment among the less privileged members of the Jewish*

committee in Moghilev, namely the unskilled workers and the destitute families that formed the majority of the ghetto. (...) The egalitarian rules that had been established to govern the participation to and the exemption from forced labor were sometimes overlooked. Article 6 of Resolution no.23 required the ghetto leader to draw up a list of all the Jews that could be used for forced labor. He had to take into account the survival instinct too. Many Jews sought to avoid this kind of work, for it often had to be performed away from the ghetto, in inhuman conditions. Some of the Jews were in a position to bribe their way out of performing forced labor by paying the ghetto leader. Those who had strong ties with the head of the Jewish committee or with other members of the committee often took advantage of their connections in order to be assigned to a clerk's position instead of being sent to physical labor. This was the case in Moghilev and Sargorod, where the members of the committee and its leader all came from the same town and, in some cases, were either relatives or close friends." Deletant, Dennis, "Transnistria: Cateva consideratii despre semnificatia acesteia pentru Holocaustul din Romania" ("Transnistria: A few observations on its significance in the Romanian Holocaust") in "Romania si Transnistria: Problema Holocaustului. Perspective istorice si comparative" ("Romania and Transnistria: The Holocaust issue. Historical and comparative perspectives"), coordinated by Viorel Achim and Constantin Iordachi, Bucharest, Curtea Veche, 2004, pp.183-184.]

[Ed. note: "On 25 November 1941, 3 weeks after Jagendorf had started the foundry, **Mihail Danilof** and Janco Marcu, the leaders of the Jews deported from Dorohoi County, made a 'donation' of 500,000 lei (\$2,500) to deputy prefect Moisev to persuade him to authorize 649 persons to remain in town as workers. After receiving the money, the deputy prefect handed Danilof and Marcu blank permits which he signed as soon as the leaders from Dorohoi had filled them in. On the one hand, Danilof, a former attorney from the Kingdom, thought corruption was an unavoidable reality. On the other hand, Siegfried Jagendorf, who thought more like an Austrian than like a Romanian, felt corruption was degrading and irrational from a political point of view. The engineer chose to act on a larger scale, enticing the authorities with the profit that could be drawn from using disciplined workers in factories and workshops. (...) The organization chart of the Jewish Committee in Moghilev would change six times over the 30 months of deportation. Jagendorf presided over the first 3 committees, from November 1941 until June 1942, when he resigned." Hirt-Manheimer, Aron, "Introduction and comments" in Jagendorf, Siegfried, "Minunea de la Moghilev. Memorii 1941-1944" ("The Miracle in Moghilev. Memoirs 1941-1944"), Bucharest, Hasefer, 1997, pp.48-50.]

Anyone who was fit was sent to work in those places. The colonel supported the Jewish initiative and he provided the spare parts that were necessary to get things moving - he brought them from Romania and from Ukraine. The three plants worked until the Russians came. Employees were even paid. But I didn't work in any of them. I was assigned to various other sites, like fixing bridges and roads, demolitions, clearing snow, collecting phone wires or building roads for the German regiments.

In the camp we would eat boiled potato peels. We would steal wood and sell it in winter to make small money. Uncle David had some gold he helped us from time to time. My mother sold her gold teeth. We also came across some gold in an abandoned house in Bessarabia, where we stopped along the way. By the looks of things, the looters had left in a hurry, before finding the jewels. Our buyers were Romanian invalids who came there to purchase everything the Jews were forced to

sell in order to survive. The invalids had the right to travel free of charge anywhere, so they came from Romania and bought clothes, jewels and everything else the Jews would sell. I remember this mixed family – the husband was Jewish and the wife, who was not, chose to accompany him to Transnistria instead of staying home. They survived thanks to the parcels they received from their relatives.

The camps were all about weeping and graves. Many people died before we were liberated and many others died after the liberation, as a result of the horrific conditions in which we had lived. Of the Jews who had been brought from Bessarabia and Bukovina, some 180,000 perished; they were murdered or they died of typhus and other diseases, starved to death or froze to death. Uncle David was hit by the gendarmes and he died the following day; they had broken his lungs.

In 1942 the Jewish community in the camp began to receive aids from the Joint [10](#). The Queen Mother had pleaded for us in front of Antonescu, begging him to allow the sending of clothes and medicine.

*[Ed. note: On 10 December 1942 the Queen-Mother of Romania, Elena, informed Marshal Antonescu that she did not want the name of her son, King Michael I, to be in any way associated with the anti-Jewish persecutions in Romania. Two days later, the German Ambassador to Romania, Manfred von Killinger, notified the German Foreign Affairs Ministry that Marshal Ion Antonescu was considering a plan to send 75,000-80,000 Jews to Palestine for a ransom of \$107 million. (...) On 15 December 1942, while de deportees were facing their second winter spent in Transnistria, Jagendorf began his last term as chairman of the community (...) and decided his two main priorities were: to prevent the outbreak of a new epidemic and to keep the orphans alive. Neither the Romanian authorities, nor the Jewish Central in Bucharest offered any support." Hirt-Manheimer, Aron, "Introduction and comments" in Jagendorf, Siegfried, "Minunea de la Moghilev. Memorii 1941-1944" ("The Miracle in Moghilev. Memoirs 1941-1944"), Bucharest, Hasefer, 1997, p.133.]*

In 1942 Antonescu began to cut the Jews some slack, realizing the war would be lost. In February 1944 a Jewish delegation sent by the Romanian government was allowed to gather 5,000 orphans from all Transnistria. They were taken by train to Constanta, then by sea to Turkey, then again by train to Palestine.

*[Ed. note: The orphans of Transnistria were a special case. Their repatriation was intended to be an image boost for the Antonescu regime at a time when the outcome of the war was clearly favorable to the Allies (after the Battle of Stalingrad). Of the 10,744 Jews that were repatriated, 1,960 were orphans, a fifth of the ones who had survived by the fall of 1943. Their food was provided by the Jewish Central; initially placed in Jewish families in 9 towns of Moldavia, most of them emigrated to Palestine (later Israel). The orphans came from 5 areas of Transnistria: Moghilev (1,349), Balta (435), Tulcin (100), Iampol (65), and Golta (11). Some of the children were repatriated to the Soviet Union, which viewed the Jews in Bessarabia and Bukovina as its own citizens; 100 children were sent to orphanages in Odessa only to be rescued once again, in 1946, by Rabbi Zissu Portugal, who managed to send them to Bucharest. On 20 January 1944 the Ministry of Internal Affairs, through the Department of Public Order, gave the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmes the order to repatriate 3,965 orphans from the following counties: Moghilev (2,690), Balta (793), Jugustru (276), Golta (95), Tulcin (111). ACSIER, Fond III, Ds.931, p.32.]*



The locals were anti-Semitic. I remember this young Ukrainian who was about my age and lived on a street near the camp; he kept making fun of me for a while. But, when the Russians began to close in on us, he tried to make up with me. I told him: "So now that 'Ivan' is near [*that is, the Russkis are near*], you're getting all nice on me? Why couldn't you behave like that before?". However, other Ukrainians were good to us and gave us food. One of them even kept me hidden for more than a month.

My mother was sent to labor once, but she broke her arm. In fact, very few women actually worked. Two or three young women were working alongside their men at the bridge, by the concrete mixer, when the engine caught fire. They got away with a few minor burns, but, after that incident, women were exempt from work. We spent one year and a half in Moghilev. In 1943 we were taken to another camp in the town of Scazinet.

[Ed. note: "On 29 and 30 May 1943, 3,000 Jews in Moghilev (...) were lined up in 4 rows and sent to Scazinet. They walked all the way. When they arrived they were put in two decrepit buildings that had belonged to a military school. (...) One year before that, tens of thousands of Jews had passed through the same barracks in Scazinet, being pushed back and forth across the Dniester, first by the Romanians and then by the Germans." Ioanid, Radu, "Holocaustul in Romania. Distrugerea evreilor si romilor sub regimul Antonescu, 1940-1944" ("The Holocaust in Romania. The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944"), 2nd edition, Bucharest, Hasefer, 2006, pp. 312-313. [http://www.romanianjewish.org/en/In\\_Romania.html](http://www.romanianjewish.org/en/In_Romania.html) ]

In the summer of 1943 they had us level some trenches near an airfield. The Germans were in the process of withdrawing, with the Red Army approaching from the direction of Kiev. They were only a few hundred kilometers away. At noon they gave us food and let us rest. While others were smoking, I fell asleep. I only woke up in the evening. I found myself alone. They had assembled the workers, but hadn't counted them, so they had no idea I was missing. I hid in a nearby forest and spent the night there. In the morning I noticed I was close to a cemetery; it wasn't older than 2 years. Romanians, Germans, Hungarians, Italians and Russians were buried there. I couldn't make it back to the camp, for I wasn't familiar with the surroundings. I went up to a Ukrainian local who was harvesting in the field. I was certain he wouldn't turn me in, since the Russians were close. He took me to his place, fed me and, in the evening, he returned me to the camp in Moghilev. I stayed there until March. My work consisted of cleaning snow and collecting German telephone wires.

The Jews in Moghilev would pray on occasion, but they couldn't observe their holidays properly, because they were never given a break. We weren't given any day off. The Romanians kept saying: "Our troops are dying on the front, so the least you can do is help the war effort here". What could you say to that?!

Those who could speak German were better off than the rest. I, for instance, was on good terms with the Germans and I had even made a friend among them. He shared his food with me. They would have goulash, pea soup with vermicelli and all sorts of canned foods from Holland and Denmark. He belonged to the Todt Organization [11](#), which was part of the Wermacht. They wore the same uniforms as the regular soldiers, only their insignia displayed a pickax. They were combat engineers and their job was to build bridges, roads and railroads. The Romanians had pontoniers.

In a way, we were lucky we had to deal with the Wermacht, the German regular army, not with the SS or the Gestapo. I can only remember one instance when the Nazis shot a Jew: a nasty warrant

officer dressed in the SS uniform shot an inmate because he wore red pants, which made him, in the German's opinion, a Bolshevik and a Communist. The leaders of our community reported the incident to the gendarme colonel, who was Romanian. The commander of the German battalion was summoned and he promised that the warrant officer would be sent to the front. I think he really kept his promise, because that warrant officer soon disappeared and was never seen again in the area. Anyway, that was the only case of a Jew being murdered while working for the Germans. However, the cases of Germans mocking the inmates were quite common. For instance, they would have an inmate sit on a moving conveyor belt; or load some logs in a small carriage, have some inmates climb on top of them and launch them into the River Dniester - which, fortunately, was quite shallow; or boarding 10 inmates in a boat instead of the maximum required number of 4. Things like that.

In the beginning, there were two companies of Romanian enlisted men. But the Germans said: "Pull them out and send us Jews instead." So the gendarmes' commander started to gather as many Jews as were needed. Anyone who was below 50 years old was considered fit for work. The work included digging out the German phone wires from the fields, since the Russians were approaching, or leveling the roads using charcoal, to secure the German retreat. There was plenty of work to do. We dug out the phone wires because the communications unit was among the first to retreat. The armored units were the last to retreat.

One day I reported to the station agent who was also the customs clerk, since the Romanian border passed through Moghilev. 4-5 German officers ranging from second lieutenant to captain had gathered there. None of them looked older than 45. They could only speak German and needed me as an interpreter. They wanted me to tell the customs clerk that they had things to sell. "Well, get them o'er here to show me what they've got!" the clerk ordered me. I didn't feel too comfortable, but I thought that, given the fact that they were communications officers, not SS, I shouldn't be afraid of them. They had leather coats, winter jackets and many other things to sell. I asked them what kind of money they wanted. "Lai, lai" they replied, as they couldn't pronounce "lei". [Ed. note: "Leu", plural "lei", was the Romanian currency of the time. It still is nowadays.] The customs clerk was loaded with money, so he bought everything. Then I asked the Germans where they were heading. "We're communications officers and our unit is the first to withdraw. We're going to Bacau." The customs clerk withdrew that same night too.

That night I was in the railroad station, watching the trains filled with retreating German troops. It was 15 March 1944. I was approached by a German captain. He was dragging two large suitcases, was full of sweat and was carrying his service cap in his hand, despite the cold. He hadn't managed to get on the train - the enlisted men held hand grenades and prevented him from boarding, saying "You're the one who brought us here, you stick around and wait for 'Ivan' [*the Russkis*]!" The captain had me negotiate with the Romanian engine drivers. They agreed to take him in the engine.

Two days later, the Germans lost an important battle on the River Bug and were pushed back. They blew up the bridge on 17 March 1944. That is the day when I finally considered myself liberated. The Russians were here. I took off with the first Red Army unit that crossed the Dniester. The others weren't as lucky as I was, because the Russians decreed a general mobilization and drafted all the men below 55 years of age to the Red Army. Most of them died on the front. The women stayed behind and gradually went back to Bukovina and Bessarabia, which had returned under the

Soviet administration. The Romanian army only repatriated the Jews from Walachia and Moldavia; those who had come from Bukovina and Bessarabia were left to the Russians. It was a political move.

[Ed. note: *“Transnistria finally ceased to exist on March 20, 1944, when the Red Army reached the Dniester. The last weeks saw less of the suffering to which the surviving deportees had grown accustomed. A witness recalled about that time, ‘No one was abusive, not the officers, not the soldiers, not the military prosecutors, not the pharmacists, not the agricultural engineers. The «Jidani» had now become the «Jewish gentlemen»’. But liberation by the Red Army brought new tribulations for the Jews, who were forced into work battalions and who now would experience enormous difficulties trying to return to Romania.” Ioanid, Radu, “Holocaustul in Romania. Distrugerea evreilor si romilor sub regimul Antonescu, 1940-1944” (“The Holocaust in Romania. The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944”), 2nd edition, Bucharest, Hasefer, 2006, pp. 326., [http://www.romanianjewish.org/en/In\\_Romania.html](http://www.romanianjewish.org/en/In_Romania.html) ]*

I wasn't able to return to my native village, Sipot, because the front line was right there. Passage was forbidden beyond Berhomet. The Germans had relocated in the mountains. My mother stayed in the camp with Roza, who was ill and was confined to the infirmary, where she soon died. I only saw my mother in Storojinet, in the summer of 1945.

I served on the front lines and I was discharged in July or August 1945. I worked for a spirits factory in Krasnoilsk until 1946. In April I returned home.

### **After the war**

I hadn't seen my village since 1941, when we had been deported. I found my home empty – it had been looted back then, in 1941. That forest ranger I told you about must have had a whole gang of henchmen who helped him seize everything the Jews left behind: cattle, horses, carts and sleighs, chicken, furniture, clothes and anything else that bore any value whatsoever. I stayed for a day in the village and the sight was discouraging. There were no Jews left and other people had moved into their houses. The village had a new mayor whom I didn't know. I went to him and filed a statement that expressed my consent about assigning my house to another family. The mayor then issued a certificate stating that I made no material claims. I rushed with that paper to Storojinet and I crossed the border with Romania through the town of Siret. I had to give up all my possessions in order to be allowed to cross the border, you see.

After the Revolution [12](#), my cousin Coca wrote to me that our old house had been demolished and that a Gypsy family had built a new one in its place. It hurts me to remember all these things I have been through from 1940 up to this day. My mind shudders. That camp and everything that followed left deep marks.

On 6 April 1946 my mother and I returned to Romania. The Russians had allowed us to cross the border on condition that we would go to Israel. Many Jews took that opportunity. Although we were only supposed to transit Romania, my mother wouldn't go any further, so stayed here.

The first time we came to Braila, my mother and I were lodged by the Herscovici family who lived at the last number on Republicii St. We stayed one year with them. Then we moved at the corner of Unirii St. and Republicii St., where Mrs. Gross lived. She had a dye store downstairs. She didn't

charge us anything. Back then, it was still easy for Jews to find a place to stay. The old Jewish houses were usually occupied by one elderly woman who lived alone in as much as 10 rooms. Our landlady, Mrs. Gross, owned a store, but she didn't have any children.

We later received aids from the Joint [10](#). They gave us money because we had been to Transnistria. And they gave us a house in Braila. If you were able to prove you had been deported, they would give you clothes, money and food. They also ran a canteen. I found a job. I provided for my mother for as long as she lived. I arranged for her to receive a surviving spouse's pension, as my father had been shot to death. She spent 20 years in the retirement home in Braila, for she was ill. The town didn't have an exclusive home for the Jewish elderly, like some other cities in Romania. She died in Braila on 17 June 1981. She was buried in the Jewish cemetery, but I can't remember whether a rabbi attended the ceremony or not. The town still had a rabbi while my mother was alive. Today there isn't any rabbi in Braila.

In 1946, when I returned to Romania, I was assigned to the town of Caracal; I went there a couple of times, but didn't like it, so I came to Braila. I still didn't hold the papers that allowed me to settle in the country. In 1951, when I wanted to get married, I had to apply for Romanian citizenship. I was received by Commissioner Ieseanu; I explained what my situation was and he issued an identity card for me.

My wife's name is **Eugenia Eiferman** nee Paraschiv. She's Romanian. She was born on 17 December 1931. I met her at a friend's place in 1951, right after she had graduated from high school. She had attended the economics high school in Braila, which was then called the Middle School for Finance. Both her parents had been married once before. My wife has a sister whose name I don't know. Her father had two boys: Vasile Paraschiv, born in 1926, and George Paraschiv, who died in December 1989.

We got married on 1 April 1952. It is true that, before the war, the custom for Jews was to marry within their faith; but I married a Romanian. My mother didn't oppose my decision. Things ceased to be that strict after the war, so no one was surprised. My mother always addressed her daughter-in-law as "Mrs. Eiferman". She was an educated woman who worked as an accountant.

We had a son whose name was **Jorj Eiferman**. He was born in 1954. He worked in the same factory where my wife worked, the Textile Factory. The management there was very friendly. He died in 2001, at the age of 47. He wasn't buried in the Jewish cemetery, but in the Christian Orthodox one, as he had been baptized in that faith. They're about to create a plot in the Jewish cemetery for the couples who have a mixed marriage. There are many of us here in Braila who have non-Jewish spouses - about 35.

In 1964 we filed a request to leave for Israel for good. But they wouldn't let us go. I remember there was a Securitate [13](#) colonel named Rizea who rejected our application. I wanted to take my wife and son with me.

The house we're living in used to belong to my parents-in-law. It is the house where my wife was born. We moved in after we got married. We have three rooms here, plus an extra two rooms on the other side [*of the house*]. When our son died, we moved his furniture over here; we also sold some of it.

In 1946 I started working for the Russians near Lacu Sarat, in an ammunition warehouse located in a forest, between Radu Negru and Satu Nou. I rode my bike to work. In 1948 I got another job at the Comlemn warehouse. I worked there for 10 years, and then I moved to the Wood Processing Plant, where I worked for 25 years, until my retirement. The plant made matches, particle boards and furniture.

I haven't used German for a long time. Some 20 years ago a German engineer came to our factory to install some equipment. Back then, it was dangerous to have contacts with Western foreigners. The Securitate officer who was in charge of our factory warned me not to invite that engineer to my place. Every factory had its own Securitate operative in those days. The German engineer was paid 300 lei per day, which was a lot of money 23 years ago. The chief engineer summoned me and told me: "I'm assigning you the German fellow; you are to show him around for three days." You see, the engineer had installed the new equipment faster than expected, because he was very well trained and I did a good job translating everything there was to know for him. Not wanting to leave for Germany 3 days in advance, he decided to stick around. In 3 days I took him to the most expensive restaurants I could think of. 3 bottles of wine cost 41 lei. We went downtown, to where the Communist Party's headquarters used to be; that was the fanciest place in town. Then we went to the Traian Hotel and to Lacul Sarat. I felt like taking him to my place too, because I had a very good 'visinata' [*cherry brandy*], but I needed to avoid being followed. So I thought of a trick - you see, I was young and quite sharp at the time. I took him to Lacul Sarat, where we had a beer and a snack, and then I told him: "And now we're going home." Back then there wasn't a streetcar on Dorobanti St., but only on Carol Ave. So we came down Carol Ave., and then we took Republicii St. It was about noon and everyone was at work or in school. We then entered a back alley and I looked behind us to make sure we weren't being followed - I knew their tactics pretty well by then. We reached my place, where we partied, we drank and we ate properly. In the fourth day, I went to the railroad station and bought him a ticket, and then I saw him to the train. The factory was also visited by a Swedish engineer who spoke German and dated a German student who had been born in Sibiu. This engineer was afraid of the Securitate. He wouldn't even have a beer in the company of a foreman. Actually, all foreigners were afraid of the Securitate. We also had Poles, who had come to build a melamine factory. They brought lots of Polish vodka - the one made from rye.

I never hid my Jewish origin. There were Jews who did. I registered with the Jewish Community in 1946, as soon as I arrived. They issued a paper certifying I had been in the camp and they gave me aids. In 1947 I joined a Jewish party [14](#), but I didn't activate because my job didn't leave me time to. Many Jews didn't sign up for any party back then. They only did it after the Revolution. Not me. I was never a member of the Communist Party and I was never forced to become one either.

There were coworkers who picked on my Jewish origin, but I would punch them on the spot - I was a bit of a bully and I didn't think twice. I felt little anti-Semitism under the communist regime - and, in the few instances when it came out, it was motivated by stupidity, not by politics. However, after the Revolution, the Legionaries [15](#) resurrected. They wrote nasty words against the Jews right in front of our house, on the pavement. They obviously knew a Jew lived here.

All my life I had both Jewish friends and non-Jewish friends. The factory had a staff of about 1,500 people and only one or two of them were Jewish. So it was only natural for me to have Romanian friends too. I didn't have any problems with them because of my Jewish origin. In fact, I didn't have any problems with the Securitate either - I had friends among them too. I worked as a clerk for



about 5 years, and then I was assigned to man a mechanical hacksaw. I did that for about 16 years, until I retired. While I was a clerk, someone kept nagging me: “So, you’re sitting around in an office instead of doing real work in production?!” As soon as there was an opening at the mechanical hacksaw, I seized the opportunity. I showed them!

I always attended the farming labors [16](#). I never lacked food or drinks, but I also worked as hard as I could.

After I got married I didn’t go to the movies or to the theater as often as before. But my wife and I ate out quite frequently and we attended the New Year’s Eve parties. She worked at the Textile Factory and her sister worked at the bank; we alternately went to the parties held by the factory or by the bank. We were quite happy with our life; we didn’t have too hard of a time. We would stroll in the Public Garden, go to Lacul Sarat or go fishing. For 20 years we went fishing very often. But we stopped doing it 3 years ago; we just don’t have the energy anymore. We didn’t go on vacation too often. Sure, I remember going to Slanic Moldova, to Baile Herculane or to Constanta; and we once went touring the whole country. But, on the whole, we didn’t travel much.

I go to the Jewish Community on every holiday; on certain occasions I even go there twice a day. Men sit in the right half and women sit in the left half. There are very few of us left – only 14 of us still attend the services. The youngest Jew is 60 years old. There are only three men in Braila who are older than I am: Bernstein, 81, [Max] Wolf, 84, and [Silo] Oberman, 86. [*Ed. note: Centropa also made interviews with Mr. Max Wolf and Mr. Silo Oberman.*] When none of them shows up, I’m the oldest man in the synagogue.

My wife goes to the synagogue too, but only on major holidays, 3-4 times a year. Women don’t attend the regular service. Prayers are read in Romanian because most of us can’t speak Hebrew. In fact, Bernstein and Mr. Luthmar are the only ones who can. I can speak Yiddish though. Bernstein and I are the only ones in Braila who can speak Yiddish well. The rest can barely understand it because they grew up in the Kingdom, where Yiddish wasn’t that widespread. Their fathers may have spoken it, but the Jews of my generation didn’t learn it.

The current chairman of our Community is the former manager of the Wood Processing Plant, where I used to work. His name is Esric and he’s 69. He ran the plant from 1969 until 2000. There’s another Jew named Lutmar, who’s 75.

For a long time I didn’t care too much about keeping the Jewish traditions. It was only after the Revolution that I began to pay attention to them. Holidays are a nice thing, after all. We have the Passover, then Rosh Hashanah in October, then Chanukkah. I wasn’t familiar with the customs; all I could do was remember my days as a child and have my wife cook the same things as my mother used to: meatballs with noodles, beans with noodles, dumplings, meatballs with mashed potatoes...

On Pesach we buy matzah from the Jewish Community and we cook traditional dishes. They’re not too particular – you need to have chicken or beef, soup, stake, “meatballs” made of potatoes with eggs and matzah flour. There are fasting periods when you’re not allowed to eat certain foods. But I can’t observe the fast because I’m on medication. We still get aids from the Community: 8 parcels per year.

Ever since we returned to Romania I have listened to foreign radio stations broadcasting in Romanian, German or Russian. I still do that today, even with Communism gone.

Communism didn't stop Jewish newspapers and books to be printed. Today I only skim through the Jewish press – my wife is a more ardent reader than I am. I have frequent headaches and I stay indoors most of the time. I also have problems with my prostate, but I didn't resort to surgery. I undergo a yearly treatment.

The Revolution didn't cause our lives to change dramatically. I can't say we had a hard time before; we had everything we needed – not more, not less. 5-6 years ago, in July 1998, I started to receive a pension from Germany and things got better for us from that day forward. I was 16 when I was sent to the camp and I did forced labor at the railroad bridge over the Dniester that connected Moghilev and Atachi. I worked there for a year and a half, from April 1942 until July 1943. It later turned out I was registered on the lists of the Wermacht's combat engineer corps. They didn't pay us back then, but they're paying us now. I first got Deutschemarks, and now I'm getting euros. They also paid me war compensations in Deutschemarks. But money can't reverse the hardships I endured.

I've never been to Israel. I had friends who went there, but I didn't keep in touch with any of them. I exchange letters with my cousins Coca and Sally. They send me medicines whenever I need. I also get help from an organization in Switzerland that supports German-speaking Jews. In the 1960s I wanted to leave for Germany, but they wouldn't receive me – they didn't say why. I never tried to leave again.

I often go to the Jewish Community in Braila. We have a local club where we gather with our spouses, many of whom aren't Jewish. There's also a women's club where members reminisce about the old days. Unfortunately, there are so few of us left.

## **Glossary**

### **1 Galicia**

Informal name for the lands of the former Polish Republic under Habsburg rule (1772–1918), derived from the official name bestowed on these lands by Austria: the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria. From 1815 the lands west of the river San (including Krakow) began by common consent to be called Western Galicia, and the remaining part (including Lemberg), with its dominant Ukrainian population Eastern Galicia. Galicia was agricultural territory, an economically backward region. Its villages were poor and overcrowded (hence the term 'Galician misery'), which, given the low level of industrial development (on the whole processing of agricultural and crude-oil based products) prompted mass economic emigration from the 1890s; mainly to the Americas. After 1918 the name Eastern Malopolska for Eastern Galicia was popularized in Poland, but Ukrainians called it Western Ukraine.

### **2 Bukovina**

Historical region, located East of the Carpathian Mountain range, bordering with Transylvania, Galicia and Moldavia. In 1775 it became a Habsburg territory as a consequence of the Kuchuk-Kainarji Treaty (1774) between the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empire. After the fall of Austria-

Hungary Bukovina was annexed to Romania (1920). In 1939 a non-aggression pact was signed between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), which also meant dividing Eastern Europe into German and Soviet spheres of interest. Taking advantage of the pact, the Soviet Union claimed in an ultimatum from 1940 some of the Romanian territories. Romania was forced to renounce Bessarabia and Northern-Bukovina, including Czernowitz (Cernauti, Chernovtsy). Bukovina was characterized by ethnic and religious pluralism; the ethnic communities included Germans, Poles, Jews, Hungarians, Ukrainians and Romanians, the most dominant religious persuasions were Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. In 1930 some 93,000 Jews lived in Bukovina, which was 10,9% of the entire population.

### **3 Moldavia**

Historic region between the Eastern Carpathians, the Dniester River and the Black Sea, also a contemporary state, bordering with Romania and Ukraine. Moldavia was first mentioned after the end of the Mongol invasion in 14th century scripts as Eastern marquisate of the Hungarian Kingdom. For a long time, the Principality of Moldavia was tributary of either Poland or Hungary until the Ottoman Empire took possession of it in 1512. The Sultans ruled Moldavia indirectly by appointing the Prince of Moldavia to govern the vassal principality. These were Moldavian boyars until the early 18th century and Greek (Phanariot) ones after. In 1812 Tsar Alexander I occupied the eastern part of Moldavia (between the Prut and the Dniester rivers and the Black Sea) and attached it to its Empire under the name of Bessarabia. In 1859 the remaining part of Moldavia merged with Walachia. In 1862 the new country was called Romania, which was finally internationally recognized at the Treaty of Berlin in 1886. Bessarabia united with Romania after World War I, and was recaptured by the Soviet Union in 1940. The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic gained independence after the break up of the Soviet Union in 1991 and is now called Moldovan Republic (Republica Moldova).

### **4 Strajer (Watchmen), Strajeria (Watchmen Guard)**

Proto-fascist mass-organization founded by King Carol II with the aim of bringing up the youth in the spirit of serving and obedience, and of nationalist ideas of grandeur.

### **5 King Carol II (1893-1953)**

King of Romania from 1930 to 1940. During his reign he tried to influence the course of Romanian political life, first through the manipulation of the rival Peasants' Party, the National Liberal Party and anti-Semitic factions. In 1938 King Carol established a royal dictatorship. He suspended the Constitution of 1923 and introduced a new constitution that concentrated all legislative and executive powers in his hands, gave him total control over the judicial system and the press, and introduced a one-party system. A contest between the king and the fascist Iron Guard ensued, with assassinations and massacres on both sides. Under Soviet and Hungarian pressure, Carol had to surrender parts of Romania to foreign rule in 1940 (Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR, the Cadrilater to Bulgaria and Northern Transylvania to Hungary). He was abdicated in favor of his son, Michael, and he fled abroad. He died in Portugal.

### **6 Cuzist**

Member of the Romanian fascist organization named after Alexandru C. Cuza, one of the most fervent fascist leaders in Romania, who was known for his ruthless chauvinism and anti-Semitism. Cuza founded the National Christian Defense League, the LANC (Liga Apararii National Crestine), in 1923. The paramilitary troops of the league, called lancierii, wore blue uniforms. The organization published a newspaper entitled Apararea Nationala. In 1935 the LANC merged with the National Agrarian Party, and turned into the National Christian Party, which had a pronounced anti-Semitic program.

## **7 German occupation of Poland (1939-45)**

World War II began with the German attack on Poland on 1st September 1939. On 17th September 1939 Russia occupied the eastern part of Poland (on the basis of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact). The east of Poland up to the Bug river was incorporated into the USSR, while the north and west were annexed to the Third Reich. The remaining lands comprised what was called the General Governorship – a separate state administered by the German authorities. After the outbreak of war with the USSR in June 1941 Germany occupied the whole of Poland's pre-war territory. The German occupation was a system of administration by the police and military of the Third Reich on Polish soil. Poland's own administration was dismantled, along with its political parties and the majority of its social organizations and cultural and educational institutions. In the lands incorporated into the Third Reich the authorities pursued a policy of total Germanization. As regards the General Governorship the intention of the Germans was to transform it into a colony supplying Polish unskilled slave labor. The occupying powers implemented a policy of terror on the basis of collective liability. The Germans assumed ownership of Polish state property and public institutions, confiscated or brought in administrators for large private estates, and looted the economy in industry and agriculture. The inhabitants of the Polish territories were forced into slave labor for the German war economy. Altogether, over the period 1939-45 almost three million people were taken to the Third Reich from the whole of Poland.

## **8 Bessarabia**

Historical area between the Prut and Dneestr rivers, in the southern part of Odessa region. Bessarabia was part of Russia until the Revolution of 1917. In 1918 it declared itself an independent republic, and later it united with Romania. The Treaty of Paris (1920) recognized the union but the Soviet Union never accepted this. In 1940 Romania was forced to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR. The two provinces had almost 4 million inhabitants, mostly Romanians. Although Romania reoccupied part of the territory during World War II the Romanian peace treaty of 1947 confirmed their belonging to the Soviet Union. Today it is part of Moldavia.

## **9 Moghilev-Podolsk**

A town in Ukraine (Mohyliv-Podilsky), located on the Dniester River. It is one of the major crossing points from Bessarabia (today the Moldovan Republic) to the Ukraine. After Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, the allied German and Romanian armies occupied Bessarabia and Bukovina, previously Soviet territories. In August 1941 the Romanians began to send Jewish deportees over the Dniester River to Transnistria, which was then under German occupation. More than 50,000 Jews marched through the town; approximately 15,000 were able to stay there. The others were deported to camps established in many towns of Transnistria.

## **10 Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)**

The Joint was formed in 1914 with the fusion of three American Jewish committees of assistance, which were alarmed by the suffering of Jews during WWI. In late 1944, the Joint entered Europe's liberated areas and organized a massive relief operation. It provided food for Jewish survivors all over Europe, it supplied clothing, books and school supplies for children. It supported cultural amenities and brought religious supplies for the Jewish communities. The Joint also operated DP camps, in which it organized retraining programs to help people learn trades that would enable them to earn a living, while its cultural and religious activities helped re-establish Jewish life. The Joint was also closely involved in helping Jews to emigrate from Europe and from Muslim countries. The Joint was expelled from East Central Europe for decades during the Cold War and it has only come back to many of these countries after the fall of communism. Today the Joint provides social welfare programs for elderly Holocaust survivors and encourages Jewish renewal and communal development.

## **11 Todt Organization**

Named after its founder, Nazi minister for road construction Dr. Fritz Todt, this was an organization in Nazi Germany for large-scale construction work, especially the construction of strategic roads and defenses for the military. By 1944, it employed almost 1.4 million workers including thousands of concentration camp inmates and criminals.

## **12 Romanian Revolution of 1989**

In December 1989, a revolt in Romania deposed the communist dictator Ceausescu. Anti-government violence started in Timisoara and spread to other cities. When army units joined the uprising, Ceausescu fled, but he was captured and executed on 25th December along with his wife. A provisional government was established, with Ion Iliescu, a former Communist Party official, as president. In the elections of May 1990 Iliescu won the presidency and his party, the Democratic National Salvation Front, obtained an overwhelming majority in the legislature.

## **13 Securitate (in Romanian**

DGSP - Directia generala a Securitatii Poporului): General Board of the People's Security. Its structure was established in 1948 with direct participation of Soviet advisors named by the NKVD. The primary purpose was to 'defend all democratic accomplishments and to ensure the security of the Romanian Popular Republic against plots of both domestic and foreign enemies'. Its leader was Pantelimon Bondarenko, later known as Gheorghe Pintilie, a former NKVD agent. It carried out the arrests, physical torture and brutal imprisonment of people who became undesirable for the leaders of the Romanian Communist Party, and also kept the life of ordinary civilians under strict observation.

## **14 Jewish representative organizations after WWII in Romania**

Due to Romania's resigning the war (23rd August 1944), the anti-Jewish provisions introduced by the former German-friendly regime were abrogated. The new political configuration made possible



the re-organization of the country's historical parties (National Peasants' Party, National Liberal Party etc.); simultaneously the Jewry endeavored to ensure an institutional framework for its political representation of interests. However the chaotic postwar situation reflected well the lack of transparency, which was characteristic at that time of Jewish public life. In North-Transylvania, which had a continuously unstable status, Jewish organizations were established and wound up irrespective of Romania's other Jewish organizations. The representative organization called The Jewish Democratic Community of People was established in October 1944 aiming to unify the Jewish democratic forces and to support people returning from deportation. The organization was strongly affected by the Communist Party. In their view there was no need for separate institutions and national separation, but Jews should integrate into the unified communist society. The youth branch of the organization was called the Jewish Democratic Youth People's Association, which represented the same trend as the JDCP, and assigned as the task of the Jewish youth the participation in the political life "on the side of democratic forces." Simultaneously the North-Transylvanian Democratic Jewish Communities of People and Communities Federation, including the former as well, were established. The later joined the Jewish Democratic Committee in 1946, with its headquarters in Bucharest. In 1945 the Democratic Jewish Association was established in Transylvania, with similar objectives as the others. The Jewish Democratic Committee established in 1945 and supported by the Romanian Communist Party took over completely by 1948 the representation of the country's Jewry, and either incorporated the other organizations, or made impossible their functioning. The Romanian power induced in 1953 the Jewish Democratic Committee to self-dissolution together with the Hungarian and German representative organizations.

## **15 Legionary**

Member of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known as the Legionary Movement, founded in 1927 by C. Z. Codreanu. This extremist, nationalist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic movement aimed at excluding those whose views on political and racial matters were different from theirs. The Legion was organized in so-called nests, and it practiced mystical rituals, which were regarded as the way to a national spiritual regeneration by the members of the movement. These rituals were based on Romanian folklore and historical traditions. The Legionaries founded the Iron Guard as a terror organization, which carried out terrorist activities and political murders. The political twin of the Legionary Movement was the Totul pentru Tara (Everything for the Fatherland) that represented the movement in parliamentary elections. The followers of the Legionary Movement were recruited from young intellectuals, students, Orthodox clericals, peasants. The movement was banned by King Carol II in 1938.

## **16 Farming labor (new)**

During the communist regime, the urban population was regularly summoned to forced labor disguised as voluntary work in the service of community - and dubbed "patriotic labor". The preferred moments for this kind of activity were right before the major State holidays or during the spring fieldworks and the autumn harvest. Getting large masses of people (from industrial workers and enlisted men to students and white-collars) to clean the city streets or help picking potatoes in the fields was intended to give the impression that the population enthusiastically supported the government. This kind of labor was also a means to compensate for the workforce shortage in the rural areas - hence the name "farming labor".