

Samuel Eiferman



This is an ID photo taken in 1978, in winter, when I had to renew my identity card.

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 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.