

# Eveline Ciocoiu

Ciocoiu Eveline

City: Braila

Country: Romania

Interviewer: Roxana Onica

Date of interview: February - July, 2004

*Ciocoiu Eveline is an elegant woman whose former dark hair is now starting to grow a little white, while the features of her face bespeak determination, resolve, a fact that doesn't give away her real age, as she looks much younger than she is, despite her being a grandmother.*

*She responded immediately, enthusiastically when requested to give this interview. She is living with her husband in a neatly decorated apartment located one bus station away from the train station in Braila.*

*She inherited from her parents a chest where she keeps her photographs. She is always eager to travel to Israel where her sister lives and where she has a very good time.*

*From her daughter she has a small grandchild whom she is very thrilled with. In a sense, judging by the way she talks, she is an artist by nature, it being no coincidence that she is married to an actor.*



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- **My family background**

The grandparents from my mother's side were from [the region of] Dobrogea [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dobruja>], from Braila. Their name was Braunstein. My grandfather's name was Leon, and my grandmother's name was Sofia. I knew them, but I couldn't tell for sure when they were born as they had no official papers.

My grandmother was born around 1890. She was born in Tulcea and they fled when the Bulgarians occupied their territory. [Ed. note: On 22nd October 1916, German and Bulgarian troops were entering Constanta, which was deserted and devastated by bombardments, the authorities and the population having been previously evacuated. (...) The Bulgarian soldiers (...) committed acts of unprecedented cruelty, a behavior that was entirely different from that of the German allies (...). In September 1918 Bulgaria was dealt a decisive defeat by the Entente, and Dobrogea returned

within the borders of the Romanian nation.

[http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istoria\\_Dobrogei#Sub\\_occupa.C5.A3ia\\_Bulgariei](http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istoria_Dobrogei#Sub_occupa.C5.A3ia_Bulgariei) ] [1](#)

My grandmother used to say that 'she didn't attend her baptism ceremony,' but she thought, nevertheless, that she was born in 1890. I don't know about my grandfather. He was a tinker, while my grandmother was a housewife. These grandfathers had a regular household. They had both electricity and running water.

They even had a bathroom. My grandparents didn't raise livestock. I couldn't say that the grandparents from my mother's side were religious people. My grandfather didn't return home one day and we don't even know where he is buried. He didn't return home which is to say he eloped with a woman.

My grandmother lived until 1956, when I was in my 2nd or 3rd year at the university. I remember that my grandmother was very cheerful [by nature]. She lived right here in the courtyard [of the Jewish Community in Braila], with the Obermans. Only the grandparents from my mother's side spoke Yiddish.

The grandparents from my father's side were from Sapanta, [near] Sighetu-Marmatiei [Ed. note: 18 km north-west of Sighetu-Marmatiei]. My grandmother's name was Blima Wegh, married Basch, and my grandfather's name was Coppel Basch. I knew them, but I was little then and they were caught by the Hungarian occupation

[Ed. note: Mrs. Ciocoiu is referring to the 1940-1944 period when the North of Transylvania was under Hungarian rule.] [2](#) and they died at Auschwitz. I know that my paternal grandparents were very well-off, that they had forests and a mineral water well. That's what my parents told me. I was never there because the war had broken out. Nor did I go there to reclaim anything. It seems to be fated that whenever I intended to go to Sapanta I never made it there.

My paternal grandparents begot my father, Moses, born in 1898; his sister, who was married to a rabbi, lived in the neighborhood of Beclean [in the Bistrita Nasaud county, 150 km south of Sapanta] during the war [World War II]. This sister had several children whom I myself met, but I no longer remember their names. I've met one of them ten years ago in Israel. I no longer remember the name of my father's sister.

My father had left Sapanta and went to the Regat [Kingdom] when he was in his 20s, around 1923. [Ed. note: 'Kingdom' was used by Transylvanians in everyday speech when referring to the Romanian Kingdom, before the unification of 1918.

It remained in use after the unification, designating the regions of Moldavia and Wallachia that had formerly composed the Romanian Kingdom]. I don't know, however, why he left in the first place. My parents' marriage wasn't arranged since they met here for the first time, in Braila.

My maternal grandparents had been living here since the occupation of Dobrogea, when the Bulgarians came. However, my paternal grandparents remained in Sapanta.

My mother's name was Ety Braunstein. She was born in 1908. My mother was very young when she married, she was 20-21 in 1929, and they only married religiously. Back then, the engagement was held at the synagogue, too. They also gave out invitations for the marriage ceremony and

party.

They married on the day of the Epiphany, on 6th January 1927. My parents had a wedding celebration when they married. My mother was a beautiful bride, you could swear she was right out of Hollywood, she had a very nice wedding attire. She wore a short dress and she was a splendor to look at.

Wedding dresses were custom-made to suit the taste of each bride. They were sewn by dressmakers. A Jewish ritual was performed at weddings. I didn't marry religiously and I have no idea in which way it is different from other rituals. In any case, in our tradition, it is the parents who are usually the godfathers, the parents of the groom and of the bride.

My mother was a sworn atheist. My father was a very religious Orthodox Jew. When his parents came to meet my mother and found out she wasn't a zealot, they didn't really want my father to marry her, but then they thought that she was young and that any offshoot can be converted.

But the exact opposite happened, for it was my father who swayed. When he came to Braila, my father was a religious person, and my mother changed him completely. My father attended religious schools in Austria-Hungary, for Jews had such schools back then, just as they do nowadays in Israel.

Here, in Braila, the custom was to attend the synagogue on holidays; the men remained on the ground floor and the women went upstairs, and my father would accompany my grandmother to the synagogue because I believe my mother never set foot inside the synagogue after the wedding.

Concerning the languages my parents spoke, my father used to say that he doesn't speak Romanian and that he forgot Hungarian. He spoke Romanian very poorly, but he could speak and write Hebrew. My parents didn't speak Yiddish at home.

I can safely say that my parents were well-to-do. My mother certainly had hired helpers around the house. There were times when she even had two women who helped her with household chores. As a rule, there were many women in our house: there was my mother, the grandmother from my mother's side, and one of my mother's sisters, Tilly, who lived with us until the end of the war when she got married.

She died last year, in 2003, in Israel. This aunt was younger than my mother and I believe she was born in 1914.

We didn't really have relatives so I couldn't say whether my parents kept in touch with them or not. My mother's sister lived with us, and my father's sister lived in Ardeal [Transylvania]. They had news of one another, but there were times when they didn't keep in touch. I remember that his sister used to write him.

We lived on Sfantu Petru St., or Petru Maior as it is called nowadays. Formerly, its name was 'The Jewish Street,' because many Jews lived on that street back then. This is where Mr. Silo Oberman lives [Ed. note: Centropa made interview with Mr. Oberman too.], and next to his house there is the Jewish Community in Braila and the Choral Temple.

We lived opposite Mr. Silo Oberman's on this street, where there is a passageway. There was a large courtyard at the end of the passageway and we were the sole occupants. Nowadays it is riddled with gypsies, but that's how it is. Be that as it may, my grandmother shared the courtyard with Silo Oberman.

My parents' house was nicer than the house of my maternal grandparents. The house where we lived didn't belong to my parents. I remember that there was Studio type furniture there, which was fairly rare in those days, and hand-made rugs on the floor.

People had sofas in those days, but we had a Studio bed with a chest. We had a nice bedroom. There were six rooms all in all. It was customary in my parents' family to adorn the walls with various paintings. My parents also had books, mainly literature. And they always kept pets: birds and a dog.

My parents had a butcher's shop where they sold meat products and their pastrami was famous, so that when the renowned actor Radu Beligan [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radu\\_Beligan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radu_Beligan)] visited Braila a few years ago he inquired about my father. It was my father who founded the business, he wasn't born into it. As a rule, Jews were craftsmen and salesmen. They were watchmakers, doctors, and some were administration clerks. Their professions were more independent, let us say.

### • **Growing up**

My maiden name is Eveline Basch, I was born in December 1932, and my married name is Ciocoiu. I had a brother, Silviu, who was older than me, he being the firstborn, in 1929. I also have a sister, Grete, who was born in December 1936 and has been living in Israel since 1970.

My brother had a bar mitzvah. The ceremony was performed at the synagogue. There was the rabbi Thenen, but there was another rabbi as well, who lived opposite the Community, but I forget his name. [Ed. note: Rabbi dr. Mayer Thenem is one of the most important Jewish personalities in Braila.

He served until 1940. He authored the first Romanian translation of the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur prayers. One should also mention Rabbi Ihil Michel Dobruschin, who served at the Bet'h Iacob Synagogue from the age of 20 (1932) until 1956, when he left for Israel.

He was the town's last rabbi.

[http://www.romanianjewish.org/en/mosteniri\\_ale\\_culturii\\_iudaice\\_03\\_11\\_12.html](http://www.romanianjewish.org/en/mosteniri_ale_culturii_iudaice_03_11_12.html)] He had two sons with whom we used to stroll and make conversation. I remember the bar mitzvah ritual very well. There was a large feast which was held at our house. My brother had a navy blue suit tailored for him, with a lounge coat, and he sat at the head of the table. I remember everything very well.

My mother didn't have separate dishes for preparing the food. She didn't cook kosher food. We usually observed traditions and holidays in the family, such as Purim, Passover, the autumn holidays, but as my mother wasn't a religious person, she didn't even urge us to fast [on Yom Kippur]. Nevertheless, our grandmother and our father did urge us to fast. We were more influenced by our mother, for you are always influenced by what suits you best.

Not all my parents' neighbors were Jews. But there were many Jews in Braila. I was rather little back then, I couldn't tell how many Jews there were, but downtown, in the area where we lived, there were many Jews and Greeks. The Jewish community in Braila was very large in those days. The society my parents frequented wasn't Jewish, however. They had many friends. My mother used to play cards with other ladies.

When I was little, it wasn't customary to go on vacations or holidays. I do know, however, that my parents used to go to restaurants. I remember even to this day that they used to go to an evening restaurant located somewhere on the shore of the Danube and afterwards they would go sledging. They used to party in nightclubs. My parents had a group of friends and they all used to go to parties. We, the children, stayed home.

We did our market shopping at the Main Marketplace and I went along, for there was a tramline along the Regala St. We used to return from the market by tram and get off at the Sfantu Petru tram station. There were carriages and trams.

My father had no political views and wasn't a member of any organization, cultural or otherwise. I know about my father that he did his military service and I even found his military papers. He was a cavalry volunteer in the Austria-Hungary war [3](#) [in World War I] and he was wounded in one arm there.

This happened when he was in Ardeal. He told us afterwards where he was during the war, but children aren't generally interested in that. Also, I left home early in life, after graduating high school, but whenever I visit my sister in Israel, she tells me more details, for she left our parental home later in life.

To be sure, there were military parades in the town of Braila. I recall that on May 10 [4](#) we were hanging from the windows in order to see the military parade on Republicii St. We enjoyed seeing mounted officers riding their horses. Even today I still take great pleasure in seeing a military parade.

#### • During the war

I was little during the war but I lived with the fear that they were going to take us to Bug. We waited with our luggage packed because we knew that Jews and Gypsies were taken to Bug. [Ed. note: Mrs. Ciocoiu is referring to the deportations to Transnistria.] [5](#) Whenever we saw someone carrying a briefcase we thought they were coming to take us there. I was exposed to anti-Semitism even as a small child.

I was tormented by the complex of not being able to attend the same school as my friends living on our street. We, the children on our street, would organize these school parties to support the soldiers. We collected money and took cigarettes and food to the wounded. One of my girl friends, who lived in our neighborhood, said that she no longer wanted to be the 'Jews' buffoon.' No matter what people say, one could feel the anti-Semitism.

I remember my father being drafted for labor during the days of the Legionary Movement [6](#); they called him 'the Jew.' One could feel the anti-Semitism. My father was drafted to perform forced labor. He was very ill, he was suffering from a vertebral affliction he contracted during the war

when – he used to tell us – he lay in water and his vertebral column became stiff as a result.

He kept going in front of all sorts of commissions so that he would be exempted from doing forced labor. All these can be found in his military papers. He didn't serve the entire period of forced labor. He would go there for two days and then he would again be taken in front of a commission.

During the war [World War II], my father transferred the business on my mother's name. It was then called Ety Basch, for I found some work permits stating that my father was her employee. My mother was registered as the owner because Jewish men were not allowed to own businesses back then. And my father worked there, as an employee.

This is how my father was allowed to work. My mother would help him with the store. [Ed. note: In general, Jewish people had a 'double' (strohmann) [7](#), a Romanian in their business, some were even in the official papers, hence some abuses. This was possible only if the mother was a second-degree Jew which meant she had additional rights as heir of a war veteran. But Mrs. Ciocoiu makes no reference to this aspect, so the situation is ambiguous.]

#### • After the war

In fact, the first time I ever traveled by train was just after the armistice was signed [Ed. note: Mrs. Ciocoiu is probably referring to 23rd August 1944, it was the term they used at that time] [8](#), when I accompanied my parents to Bucharest. Jews weren't allowed to travel by train.

I had been bitten by a rabid dog and there was no vaccine against rabies in Braila; I had to go to Galati, but my parents weren't allowed to travel by train [9](#) and so they left me there with some acquaintances. This was during the Legionary movement, in the 1940s.

I attended the Catholic kindergarten when I was little. After kindergarten, I attended primary school, which is to say 4 primary grades, at a Jewish school called 'Baroneasa de Hirsch,' because in those days during the war we couldn't attend other schools [Ed. note: In October 1940, Jewish pupils and students were denied access to public education of all degrees. The Jewish people were free to organize private primary and secondary schools. The Jewish schools were allowed to function but they weren't allowed to be advertised.

The graduation diplomas were not recognized by the state and had no practical validity regarding the graduate's admission into a profession.] Braila was one of the towns that had a Jewish school. There were very many cities in Moldavia, in Iasi, for instance, where Jews received no education during the four years of war, because they couldn't attend anywhere.

[Ed. note: Mrs. Ciocoiu is probably referring to the fact that they weren't admitted in state schools, yet there were Jewish schools in Iasi during the war, and in other regions as well, wherever there were enough Jewish pupils to form at least one class.] During my first year of high school I attended the Schäffer High School, this corresponds to the fifth grade in secondary school nowadays. I attended there for one year.

Afterwards, I studied with the nuns, at Sancta Maria [Saint Mary], until 1948 when the educational reform took place [10](#). That was a school that was allowed to be advertised and the high school was very good. Classes were taught in Romanian, but I was learning German as well. I studied the

history of the arts, painting, musical instruments, foreign languages and much knowledge.

I learned Hebrew in school, but I was a catastrophe and it was very difficult for me. However, I can speak German and French. I managed to get by fairly well when I traveled to Germany and in the course of a week I was speaking fluent German. But if you don't speak a language on a regular basis, you are bound to forget it.

I received private lessons at home: piano lessons and French lessons. Mademoiselle Lambert, who was French, used to teach me French. On the whole, I believe that my parents tried to give us the education they didn't receive. My private lessons ended when the communists came to power.

In 1948 the school for nuns was closed and then, when the educational reform was introduced, I was transferred to the Theoretical High School, where the Murgoci High School can be found nowadays. After the reform, it was the only theoretical high school. Come to think of it, chemistry was my favorite subject at school.

I had a very stern chemistry teacher, Mrs. Rascanu, who would kick you out of the classroom if you so much as sneezed. I believe 32 of the 40 graduates of the class of 1951 continued their studies in fields related to chemistry and medicine. This Mrs. Rascanu was an exceptionally good teacher, but she was also exceedingly demanding.

I still keep in touch with the friends I made in my school years. My girl friends live in Bucharest and they are all chemists, by mere coincidence. They studied food chemistry, it was fashionable in those days, and they received jobs in Bucharest.

I only had one Jewish friend, Marta Berenstein, who also happens to have studied chemistry. We see each other when I travel to Israel. I remained friends with classmates from the period when I attended the Jewish school; all of them emigrated. I kept in touch with them and I still receive phone calls from them.

I remember that when I was in school, but also as a young woman, we used to stroll during our spare time along the Corso or go to the Main Public Garden. When we graduated we wanted to have a banquet [throw a party], but banquets weren't customary in those days.

My good friend, Gutu Gardis, lived on Fortificatiei St. and a policeman also lived in that courtyard. And since we didn't return home until 9 o'clock in the evening, they sent the policeman to get us, to gather us, the pupils who had graduated high school.

As a rule, I didn't travel anywhere during the holidays, because neither did my parents. I once went to Cernatu, in the Brasov county, I was invited by some friends who lived on our street, the Popescu girls; they had a house there and I accompanied them.

I traveled by train when I went to Cernatu, to Brasov, in 1947, I was in the 5th grade in high school. I once went with my mother to Vatra Dornei, it was surely in 1948. Usually, we crossed the Danube and sunbathed. We also went to Lacu Sarat. I didn't go on summer camps, as there weren't any in that period, nor was I a member of any club.

There were very few automobiles in Braila in my childhood. There were mainly carriages in those days. There were carriages even when I was a student in Cluj. My student years were beautiful in

the sense that I was young, but I was in dire straits in those days because I didn't receive accommodation in the students' hostel.

I lived in a very wretched room. Around 12 girls lived in a students' hostel room. I used to go to the hostel every now and then to study with my classmates, for there were no written lectures. The room that I lived in was rented.

There were 2 persons in my year who weren't members of the U.C.Y. [members of the Union of Communist Youth], me and Silvia Barbu, the daughter of a priest from Campia Turzii. And we were very tense because they held meetings where they said that those who weren't members of the U.C.Y. should leave, and we were embarrassed.

There were many young people in our class who graduated from high schools for the working class, those who graduated from high schools by 'taking the shortcut' [under the optional attendance system] and who were given a degree after only two years of studies. Nevertheless, they did very well in school and they were very committed.

Until 1948-1950 my parents' financial situation was very good, meaning that one person was working, namely my father, and he was able to support seven others. Afterwards, my father had to give up the store, but I forgot the actual year when that happened. I was still a student then. My father started working in a state-run butcher's shop.

That is why I say that the financial situation worsened afterwards, because my sister started working after she graduated from high school. She even received a qualification afterwards, for she attended a technical high school and supported me during my university studies. She didn't attend the university.

I was given a position in Cluj after graduating from the university, but I had married during the 5th year of my studies and my husband who was an actor obtained a transfer to the theatre in Turda; as a result, I myself went to Turda. The ministry officials were very surprised at my request to be given a position in Turda instead of Cluj.

Then we moved to Braila, because the reconstruction in Ardeal was non-existent. I received a newspaper clipping from my parents with an announcement that they were building a Fiber Combine in Braila. I applied for a transfer, stating that I would like to go to Braila; it was with great difficulty that I received the transfer from Turda, where I worked after finishing my studies.

When the artificial [synthetic] fibers combine was built in 1963, I moved from Turda and came to Braila, because they gave apartments to those who worked at the combine. Otherwise, I might have never returned to Braila. I loved my father very much and this was another reason for my return. I moved there and my father died soon afterwards, in February 1964.

My mother died in February 1973. Silviu died in February 1989 as well. I mean to say that they all died in the month of February: both my mother, and my father, and my brother. That's how it came to pass. My parents are buried in Braila, in the Jewish cemetery. I believe that there was still a rabbi in Braila when my father died.

The grief was so great in those days that I'm not really sure of this. The religious ceremony was as it is nowadays, meaning that our rituals are much shorter and less pompous, which is to say that



the priest [the rabbi] puts on less of an act. Actors and priests are alike in nature, in my opinion. I even had a photograph once taken on the occasion of the blessing of my father's tombstone. We observe the Yahrzeit, meaning the 'Commemoration of the dead.'

My husband's name is Nicolae Ciocoiu. He is 5 years older than me. Actually, we met for the first time on the beach in Braila. He didn't live in Braila, but he had come there on a tour. I was still in school when we met; we saw each other again three years later, in Bucharest.

We exchanged letters, and three years later I sat for the university admission exam in Cluj. However, my husband had attended the university in Bucharest. He was an actor then, playing for the Youth Theatre in Bucharest and he obtained a transfer to Cluj. I got married when I was in my 4th year at the university. We married in Cluj and were married only at the registrar's office, we had no religious ceremony.

After we got married we observed both the Christian and the Jewish holidays. We have an only child, a daughter, Ioana, who was born in 1971. My daughter attended the Nicolae Balcescu High School in Braila and the Faculty of Economic Sciences in Bucharest. She is living in Bucharest at present. We didn't give her a traditional Jewish education. She has a little boy named Avi who is circumcised. It was her husband who wanted the child to be circumcised, because he too comes from an interfaith family.

After we married we used to go to the theatre, to concerts. Also, I used to go to the Opera in Cluj three times a week. We also used to go to the cinema. Furthermore, there wasn't a single year when we didn't go on a holiday. After 1973 I started traveling abroad, too, but I was going alone for you weren't allowed to take your family with you.

I went to Israel, Turkey, Germany. I remember that once I received a negative answer to a visa request for traveling to Germany. My director saw that I was upset and asked me what the matter was; I told him that I had no support from local authorities. I know that he made a phone call and two days later I received the visa.

I couldn't say that Judaism played an important role in choosing my friends. I believe that my parents would have been more content if I had married a Jew. My father in particular wanted me to marry a Jew, but my parents were not against it when I married a Romanian and they even told me that it is with my husband I will be living, and not with them.

After our return to Braila we no longer lived with my parents but were given an apartment near the Sfantu' Constantin church; after the earthquake of 1977, when my daughter was of school age, we bought an apartment, for this was the period when it was possible to buy an apartment. We bought one located near the Sfantu Gheorghe church.

It wouldn't be fair to say that I had political views just because I was a member of the Communist party. I was literally forced to become a member of the Communist party because my position implied that I was going to be in charge of several employees, so I was told that I had to become a party member.

Yet I never denied being Jewish because I was never ashamed of it. However, I always felt different from those around me. Since my name after marriage is a Romanian one, Ciocoiu, I heard it said many times about Jews: 'jidanii' [Ed. note: Highly pejorative term for 'Jew']. I even admitted that I

don't mind using the word 'jidan,' but if others do it, it bothers me.

During communism I took part in agricultural activities and the August 23 celebration parades. It was mandatory for everyone and even more so for me as head of a compartment; I had to set an example. I fought with all my strength to keep my job, for I was also afraid that something unpleasant might happen to me.

During communism, I used to listen to the Free Europe [11](#) and Voice of America [12](#) radio stations. There were no Jewish newspapers or newspapers containing Jewish information.

When the state of Israel was established, we were filled with joy because the Jewish people has lived as a Diaspora from time immemorial, and finally Jews have their homeland. Of course I was overjoyed. With regard to my intention to move permanently to Israel, I can say that I wouldn't describe myself as courageous. I have a certain reticence for newness, which augmented under my husband's influence as well.

I also traveled to Israel, to attend the wedding of my nephew, the son of my sister Grete. My sister's family name is Avram. She married when she was living in Bucharest. Her son's name is Dan, but they call him Dany over there, and he changed his family name from Avram to Aviram, so that it sounds more Jewish. In our tradition, the parents of the groom and bride are the godfathers. There are two godfathers. My nephew wasn't born in Israel, he was born in Bucharest, but his parents left Romania when he was two and a half years old.

After 1989, I couldn't say how much my life has changed financially and socially. There is also the age factor. I was already too old when the revolution took place [13](#) and in addition there was the mad episode of retirement. Young people would write 'eligible for retirement' on my door, but I stubbornly continued to work and kept working until I was 60 and it hasn't made much difference.

Financially, I was better off and had more security during communism. I couldn't say that I am poorer at present, for in fact I am not, but before the revolution you could plan anything 3-4 years in advance and now it is impossible to do so for the upcoming month.

I must however admit that I receive support from my sister. My previous trip to Israel was no farther than last year and I will go there again on this year's Passover. I've been there many times. I never felt fear or lack of security when I was there. I was never afraid of anything over there. My sister lives in Tel Aviv, but she lives in a residential area, where nothing bad ever happened. She is now retired, just like me.

I don't receive aid from the Community, but there are plenty who do. I can say that nowadays there is quite a lot of activity at the Jewish Community in Braila owing to the fact that its secretary, David [David Iancu], is a great organizer who knows how to bring people together.

I don't remember a single occasion when Jews gathered on the Passover evening to celebrate the holidays together with the others. There are very few remaining Jews nowadays, and the young belong mostly to interfaith families. Mr. David knows how to bring them together, and he even convinces my husband to attend, who is a Christian.

Formerly in Braila, there used to be a house of prayer on Tamplari St., there was this synagogue, the Choral Temple, opposite the Community Center, there was one on Coroanei St., and there

might have been yet another one. I'm more familiar with the area around the Community Center, for this is where I spent my childhood.

[Ed. note: In 1930, there were 1140 Jews in the Community in Braila, while at present there are only 172 members, of whom only 72 are Jews, the remaining members being partners as a result of interfaith marriages. [http://www.obiectivbr.ro/date/2005\\_04\\_15/Z\\_social.htm](http://www.obiectivbr.ro/date/2005_04_15/Z_social.htm) ]

- **Glossary:**

## **1 Bulgaria in World War I**

Bulgaria entered the war in October 1915 on the side of the Central Powers. Its main aim was the revision of the Treaty of Bucharest: the acquisition of Macedonia. Bulgaria quickly overran most of Serbian Macedonia as well as parts of Serbia; in 1916 with German backing it entered Greece (Western Thrace and the hinterlands of Salonika).

After Romania surrendered to the Central Powers Bulgaria also recovered Southern Dobrudzha, which had been lost to Romania after the First Balkan War.

The Bulgarian advance to Greece was halted after British, French and Serbian troops landed in Salonika, while in the north Romania joined the Allies in 1916. Conditions at the front deteriorated rapidly and political support for the war eroded. The agrarians and socialist workers intensified their antiwar campaigns, and soldier committees were formed in the army.

A battle at Dobro Pole brought total retreat, and in ten days the Allies entered Bulgaria. On 29th September 1918 Bulgaria signed an armistice and withdrew from the war. The Treaty of Neuilly (November 1919) imposed by the Allies on Bulgaria, deprived the country of its World War I gains as well as its outlet to the Aegean Sea (Eastern Thrace).

## **2 Hungarian era (1940-1944)**

The expression Hungarian era refers to the period between 30 August 1940 - 15 October 1944 in Transylvania. As a result of the Trianon peace treaties in 1920 the eastern part of Hungary (Maramures, Crisana, Banat, Transylvania) was annexed to Romania.

Two million inhabitants of Hungarian nationality came under Romanian rule. In the summer of 1940, under pressure from Berlin and Rome, the Romanian government agreed to return Northern Transylvania, where the majority of the Hungarians lived, to Hungary. The anti-Jewish laws introduced in 1938 and 1939 in Hungary were also applied in Northern Transylvania.

Following the German occupation of Hungary on 19th March 1944, Jews from Northern Transylvania were deported to and killed in concentration camps along with Jews from all over Hungary except for Budapest. Northern Transylvania belonged to Hungary until the fall of 1944, when the Soviet troops entered and introduced a regime of military administration that sustained local autonomy.

The military administration ended on 9th March 1945 when the Romanian administration was reintroduced in all the Western territories lost in 1940.

### **3 KuK (Kaiserlich und Koeniglich) army**

The name 'Imperial and Royal' was used for the army of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as for other state institutions of the Monarchy originated from the dual political system.

Following the Compromise of 1867, which established the Dual Monarchy, Austrian emperor and Hungarian King Franz Joseph was the head of the state and also commander-in-chief of the army. Hence the name 'Imperial and Royal'.

### **4 10th May**

national holiday in the Romanian Monarchy between 1866 and 1947. It comprised three major events of the establishment of the Romanian Monarchy and state-building: on 10th May 1866 the first Romanian King, Carol I of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen swore on the Romanian laws; on 10th May 1877 it was also him who announced Romania's independence; on 10th May 1881, after the Great Powers acknowledged Carol I as king, the Romanian Monarchy was proclaimed.

The greatest emphasis was laid on the celebration of 10th May under the rule of Carol I (1866-1914), the greatest festivities were organized in 1881 (in honor of the Monarchy's proclamation) and in 1906, when they celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Monarchy's proclamation and the 40th anniversary of Carol's accession to the throne. The commemoration of 10th May was repealed in 1948, following the overthrow of the Romanian Monarchy in 1947.

### **5 Transnistria**

Area situated between the Bug and Dniester rivers and the Black Sea. The term is derived from the Romanian name for the Dniester (Nistru) and was coined after the occupation of the area by German and Romanian troops in World War II. After its occupation Transnistria became a place for deported Romanian Jews.

Systematic deportations began in September 1941. In the course of the next two months, all surviving Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina and a small part of the Jewish population of Old Romania were dispatched across the Dniester. This first wave of deportations reached almost 120,000 by mid-November 1941 when it was halted by Ion Antonescu, the Romanian dictator, upon intervention of the Council of Romanian Jewish Communities.

Deportations resumed at the beginning of the summer of 1942, affecting close to 5,000 Jews. A third series of deportations from Old Romania took place in July 1942, affecting Jews who had evaded forced labor decrees, as well as their families, communist sympathizers and Bessarabian Jews who had been in Old Romania and Transylvania during the Soviet occupation.

The most feared Transnistrian camps were Vapniarka, Ribnita, Berezovka, Tulcin and Iampol. Most of the Jews deported to camps in Transnistria died between 1941-1943 because of horrible living conditions, diseases and lack of food.

### **6 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.

## **7 Strohmann system**

sometimes called the Aladar system; Jewish business owners were forced to take on Christian partners in their companies, giving them a stake in the business. Sometimes Christians would take on this role out of friendship and not for profits.

This system came into being because of the anti-Jewish laws, which strongly restricted the economic options of Jewish entrepreneurs. In accordance with this law, a number of Jewish business licenses were revoked and no new licenses were issued. The Strohmann system insured a degree of survival for some Jewish businesses for varying lengths of time.

## **8 23 August 1944**

On that day the Romanian Army switched sides and changed its World War II alliances, which resulted in the state of war against the German Third Reich. The Royal head of the Romanian state, King Michael I, arrested the head of government, Marshal Ion Antonescu, who was unwilling to accept an unconditional surrender to the Allies.

## **9 Anti-Jewish laws in Romania**

The first anti-Jewish laws were introduced in 1938 by the Goga-Cuza government. Further anti-Jewish laws followed in 1940 and 1941, and the situation was getting gradually worse between 1941-1944 under the Antonescu regime.

According to these laws all Jews aged 18-40 living in villages were to be evacuated and concentrated in the capital town of each county. Jews from the region between the Siret and Prut Rivers were transported by wagons to the camps of Targu Jiu, Slobozia, Craiova etc. where they lived and died in misery.

More than 40,000 Jews were moved. All rural Jewish property, as well as houses owned by Jews in the city, were confiscated by the state, as part of the 'Romanisation campaign'. Marriages between Jews and Romanians were forbidden from August 1940, Jews were not allowed to have Romanian names, own rural properties, be public employees, lawyers, editors or janitors in public institutions, have a career in the army, own liquor stores, etc.

Jewish employees of commercial and industrial enterprises were fired, Jewish doctors could no longer practice and Jews were not allowed to own chemist shops. Jewish students were forbidden to study in Romanian schools.

## **10 Educational reform in Romania in 1948**

Based on the new Romanian constitution, introduced in 1948, the 1948 'educational reform' stated that public education is organized by the state only, and that public education is secular (this way the denominational and private schools were outlawed, and were soon nationalized), and at the same time it introduced compulsory and free elementary education for everyone.

According to the law it was compulsory to learn the Romanian language from the 1st grade, and in place of the French or Italian language the Russian language was introduced from the 4th grade. The compulsory elementary school became a 7-grade school, and was followed by a 4-grade high school.

According to the educational reform, ownership of school buildings, dormitories, canteens was transferred to the state, and the Ministry of Public Education became their administrant.

## **11 Radio Free Europe**

Radio station launched in 1949 at the instigation of the US government with headquarters in West Germany. The radio broadcast uncensored news and features, produced by Central and Eastern European émigrés, from Munich to countries of the Soviet block.

The radio station was jammed behind the Iron Curtain, team members were constantly harassed and several people were killed in terrorist attacks by the KGB. Radio Free Europe played a role in supporting dissident groups, inner resistance and will of freedom in the Eastern and Central European communist countries and thus it contributed to the downfall of the totalitarian regimes of the Soviet block. The headquarters of the radio have been in Prague since 1994.

## **12 Voice of America**

International broadcasting service funded by the U.S. government through the Broadcasting Board of Governors. Voice of America has been broadcasting since 1942, initially to Europe in various European languages from the US on short wave. During the cold war it grew increasingly popular in Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe as an information source.

## **13 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.