

# Fridric Iavet

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Arad

Romania

Interviewer: Oana Aioanei

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Mr. and Mrs. Iavet are together since they were classmates in school. Their daughters don't live in Arad, but their presence is felt everywhere in the house - photos of their families are displayed in the rooms. Also, in a glass case there is a picture with the Iavet family during their period in Uzbekistan. Mr. Fridric and Mrs. Iuliana are very hospitable. Probably that the period of time spent in Central Asia has a serious influence ... Their house is close to the center of Arad. It's not a very big house. Behind it there is a small garden with vegetables and a chicken coop. The dog, which is very playful, looks at us from outside through the window during the interview. Now, retired, they spend most of their time in the house. Mr. Iavet is the one who goes shopping in the morning. On Friday evenings he takes part with his wife in Oneg Sabbath, and on Saturday mornings he goes to the synagogue.

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## My family background

My maternal grandparents came from Poland, and their native tongue was German. Grandfather Hirschklau Jakob was born in Poland [Note: or more likely somewhere in Austro-Hungary, since he spoke German]. The Hirschklau grandparents lived in Hlyboka, called Adancata in Romanian. Hlyboka lies in the south of Ukraine (former Bukovina). There were many Ukrainians, Germans, Poles. Grandfather Jakob was a bookkeeper. He had a small mustache, and he was rather well off. He always wore a dark black suit and he had a hat. He wasn't very religious, but he came to the temple for the holidays. They were a big family. Grandparents had 7 children: mum was the eldest, then there was Manea, a sister, Frieda, Toni, Elsa and Berthold. They all lived in the same house. I don't know the name of my mother's mother, she died in 1910, when mum was 5 years old. My grandfather's second wife was called Frieda. She was the one I used to call 'grandmother', although she wasn't. I, as a child, did not even know that.

Grandfather Jakob had quite a big house, right on the way to Dymka (Dymka is at 4 km away from Hlyboka). The house was positioned with its length parallel to the street, it had two doors and four windows to the street, and the rest of the house faced the courtyard. The house was big, with a lot of rooms, I don't remember exactly how many. The furniture was massive, in gothic style. My grandparents had neither running water in the house, nor electricity. They used gas lamps, and the water was brought from the fountain. In front of the house there were a shop and a tavern - they belonged to the grandparents. The shop was mixed. As far as I know, somebody from the family sold in the shop and worked in the tavern. Probably the girls helped them out when they had time for it. On Saturdays, neither the tavern nor the shop were open.

My mother, Adela Hirschklau, was born on February 5th, 1905, in Hlyboka. During World War I she was in Vienna with her parents, and she went to school there. She was 10-12 years old by then. They took refuge there from Hlyboka. I don't know why they chose Vienna and I don't know what they did there for a living. Back then only my mother, Manea and Rosa were born. [The family came back, but Fridric doesn't know if his grandparents had had the shop before leaving to Vienna].

Manea was married to David Landberg, who worked as clerk at CFR ('Caile Ferate Romane', 'The Romanian Railway Company'). They had two sons: Leopold and Heine. Manea and Heine were shot by Romanian soldiers in Hlyboka at the beginning of the war, around July 1941. They hid in the cornfield, and when Heine ran away they caught him and shot him on the spot. Leopold was deported from Hlyboka and died in Transnistria. I was very fond of him. David was taken to Siberia. He is the only one left from the family. After he was imprisoned, he was drafted in the Russian army and he fought in both Japan and Germany. I remember he walked with a club, because of a leg injury.

Rosa had a daughter, Coca. They were both caught by the Germans in Poland and shot on the way. Her husband's name was Max. Elsa, Toni, Frieda, all three of them not married, died during the Holocaust. They were approximately 20 years of age when they died. They had just finished high school - Frieda was a teacher, and Elsa and Toni were clerks. Before the war they lived in Hlyboka.

My mother's brother, Berthold, was much younger than her. He was born in 1921 and he was drafted in the army by the Russians, in 1941. During the war he ended up in Moscow, where he settled in 1943. He married a Russian Jew, Esea, he divorced, and then he remarried - I don't know the name of the second wife. He did not have children with any of them. Berthold was an engineer and manager of a factory, but I don't know what occupations his wives they had. He was not a religious man. He visited us very often during my childhood. We got along very well with him, he was the only one of my mother's siblings that I dared to thou and thee. I met my uncle again when I visited Cernauti in 1968. He flew with the plane from Moscow. Uncle Berthold died in the 1980s. There's nobody else left from my mother's side now.

I remember that around the age of 5 or 6, my sister was ill. In order not to stay with her, I was taken to my maternal grandfather. It was like a holiday for me. My father came to me every day with a bag of chocolates. I had to be very good. I got along well with my grandparents.

Grandfather Jakob had a brother in Poland, who lived in Lvov. I do not remember his name. He visited us once, in 1938-1939, before the war, and he gave me 100 lei. A kilo of bread cost 1 leu and something back then, so with 100 lei one could to buy almost 100 kg of bread. 100 lei were a

lot of money. I remember that we walked him to the train station. I do not know what happened with my grandfather's family from Poland. They all certainly died [in the Holocaust], when the Germans came.

I know a lot less about the family from my father's side. My grandparents lived in Dymka commune, in Bukovina (today Ukraine). I don't know where they were born. In Dymka the majority of the inhabitants were Romanians - it was a Romanian commune. My grandparents from Dymka spoke Yiddish (their native tongue) at home, although the commune was Romanian. My paternal grandfather, David Jawetz, was an intellectual, a merchant. My grandmother, my father's mother, was also called Frieda. My grandfather had a beautiful house, one of the most beautiful houses in Dymka. It was a newly built house. They had some forest and some land, but they didn't work it alone. They also had a mixed shop with everything. They got along very well with their neighbors. They were very well seen because they owned the only shop and they sold on tick. Surely the shop wasn't open on Saturdays - the Jawetz grandparents were religious, Orthodox Jews. Aside from taking care of the shop, they worked in it, they also had a milk machine - it produced the cream. They were rather well off. They had a garden, but I don't remember them having animals. They lived with one of the daughters, Sofia, and with my father's brother-in-law. Grandfather David was an ill man ever since I knew him. He lied in bed all the time and he wore a beard. There was no synagogue in Dymka, but I believe he said his prayers daily. He was religious - he wore a kippah, but I don't know if that was all the time, because I visited them rather seldom.

My father, Leon Jawetz, was born in Dymka on January 30th, 1899. He graduated from high school, and during World War I he served in the army under Austro-Hungary, and he was in Czechoslovakia. He learned to be a surgeon's assistant in the army. Dad had four sisters: Leti, Sofia, Lotti and Berta.

Leti had a shop and a tavern in Hlyboka together with her husband, Schnarch. They had two children: Jakob and Elka, and they were a religious family. Only Leti and the children came back from Siberia, where they were taken during the Holocaust; her husband died there. Leti emigrated together with Jakob's family, who was married to Rita, and Elka's. Until then, they stayed in Cernauti, where Jakob worked in a textiles factory, and Elka was a worker. There were around 35 000 of them in Cernauti. After emigrating, Leti and Elka lived in Ramat Gan, and Jakob in Arad (Israel), where he worked in a textiles factory; he doesn't have any children. Elka is married to Leib Meidler, an electrician; they have a son, Isiu. Elka is the one who always calls me, every year, on holidays.

Sofia married Daniel Fuchs. They are the ones who had a forest, a shop and a milk-cream machine in Dymka. They lived together with grandfather David. Sofia was taken to Transnistria, but she came back, she emigrated to Israel in 1948 and she was a housewife there. Sofia and Daniel had two children: Ariel and Efraim. Ariel was an associate in a lithography with Israel Schaumberger, a cousin. His wife is from South Africa, they live in Ramat Gan, and they have two children - a boy and a girl. Efraim was an officer, then a colonel in the army. Now he is retired and lives in Beersheva. He also has two children.

Lotti lived in Stanesti, about 20 km away from Adancata. All the family - husband and children - were taken to Transnistria. The parents died there during the Holocaust. Out of the three children, Jakob and Frieda died in Transnistria, but Ariel, whom we all called Leib, and who in Israel was

called Leon, came back. He stayed in Cernauti for a while and married Elka. He emigrated together with auntie Ieti, Elka, Jakob and Rita. Leibu died in Israel.

Berta, who was married with Sami Schaumberger, was taken to Transnistria, where she also died during the Holocaust. They had a handmade goods shop - they sold lengths of fabrics for suits. Their children - Gustav, Israel, Miriam - live in Israel. Gustav, the eldest, was in the Soviet army in Belarus, for about 3 years, after being liberated from Transnistria. He left for Israel after about 10-15 years, not at the same time with his brothers, who, being younger, left to Israel directly from Transnistria, as orphans of war. Gustav was a math teacher in Cernauti, as well as in Israel. He has two children: Igor and Sonia. Igor served the army in Israel, and then he set up a lithography with Ariel Fuchs. Miriam is married to Mordechai, who comes from Poland. They live in Tel-Aviv and they have a haberdasher's shop. They have two children: a boy, Schmulik, very religious, and a girl, Pitzi.

## Growing up

My parents, Leon and Adela, got married in 1923. They also had a religious wedding at the synagogue in Hlyboka. It certainly was not an arranged marriage. My parents dressed according to the fashion, especially my mother cared about fashion. Lusia, my sister, was born on September 23rd, 1924, in Hlyboka. I was born on August 29th, 1930, also in Hlyboka.

Before having our own house, we rented a place from a German family, named Moor. I remember where the house was: on the way from the train station to the center of the town. I think we lived there since I was born until I was 6 or 7 years old. We had two rooms. They had a household - pigeons, hens. Back then, my parents had the shop in a different building. But there the shop was robbed several times by thieves from the neighboring villages. I remember that one time they made a hole in the wall. Then we demolished that building and we built our own house there. We had quite a difficult financial situation: daddy kept borrowing money from one place and giving it back to somebody else.

We built our house rather slowly, my dad built it, together with the shop, but it was not finished because of lack of funds. The foundation for the bathroom and two more rooms was built. 3 rooms, the kitchen and the hall were ready. The haberdasher's shop was in one room with a big window, facing the street, we had one more big room and a smaller one and across the big room there was the kitchen. The kitchen was not big. Mum, being a housewife, took care of it. We had a servant for a while, I think until 1940, but she didn't let her in the kitchen much, she didn't let her cook. The servant did the tidying around the house, the cleaning, maybe she peeled potatoes. In the shop my parents sold socks and buttons as well. I don't remember if it was open on Saturdays. When the Russians came, in 1940, instead of having the shop my father built a wall and turned it into a room.

We had massive furniture in our house. In my parents' room, above of the bed, there was a very delicate needlework in a big oval frame. My mum usually did a lot of needlework. I remember that we had a big picture made of linen, cut in bas-relief, so that human-like faces would appear. Back then people usually did a lot of needlework to put on the walls, for example, they embroidered on a piece of cloth with a different color, red or blue, a saying in German: "Arbeit macht das Leben" [There is no life without work]. She also liked to crochet.

We used wood for heating. We had a stove with an oven. In the courtyard we had a woodhouse made of timber. I worked in the garden together with my mum. We had a small garden, where we had beds with garlic, onions, carrots, peas. The garden was long; it was about 150 meters long. We also grew hens. We had a cat and a dog too. My dad had help when he worked with cereals.

We never went anywhere on vacation. I remember that my sister went to Campulung once, but we did not use to go anywhere with our parents. She left only once on a camp for children. My dad always found something to read in his spare time, and mum was busy with the household - she always had something to do in the house: needlework, she never went to bed early.

Dad was a radio salesman at Philips. He went from village to village and he received percents from what he sold. As it was a big town, 8.000-10.000 inhabitants, there were radios in Adancata. We also had a radio in our house. It ran on batteries, not with electricity. I think there was no electricity at that time, we used gas lamps. We had to change the batteries. I remember when I heard on the radio the Hungarian csardas [folk dance] for the first time. It impressed me very much, it was the first time I heard Hungarian music. There was also a Hungarian family from Szeged in Adancata. They were the only ones who spoke Hungarian. I learnt to say "one- two" in Hungarian from them.

In about 1936-1937 dad also had a manufacture. It produced fabric. Simultaneously with his work at Philips, my father worked at CAM ('Casa Autonom? de Monopol', 'The Independent Monopoly House'), also in Adancata. He was in charge of the wholesales, tobacco for example. Dad traveled a lot with his job. He was a representative, he did contracts with Philips, but he also marketed potatoes wagons. He went all the way to Constanta, Bucuresti, Ploiesti. I remember that in Constanta there was one man who always bought potatoes by the wagon - he was called Star Galateanu. From Bessarabia, my father brought around 10-15 cases of grapes. He always brought us something from his trips, toys for example.

My father's grandfather died when I was 6 years old, around 1936-1937, he is buried in Hlyboka in the Jewish cemetery. When grandfather David died I remember that my father traveled a lot. As he was on the train, when he had to recite the kaddish, he gathered 10 men and he recited the kaddish on the train.

As he was a good organizer, from 1940, when the Russians came to Hlyboka, until 1941, my father was a shareholder with 40% and manager in some sort of vegetables shop: they collected vegetables, fruits, cereals from villages and stewed them - for example the fruits - or shipped them in train wagons to Bessarabia or Dobrudja. Grandfather Jakob worked as a bookkeeper here because he had to give up his shop, due to the nationalization [1](#) of the houses. If I'm not mistaken, uncle Berthod, my mother's younger brother, was also my father's employee. I don't know if my father and my grandfather worked on Saturdays.

My father knew Yiddish, but he talked to us only in German, which was his native tongue, and ours too. Both parents spoke German. Although I don't speak Yiddish, I would understand it, because I speak German and Yiddish is similar to German. We had books at home, but when the legionaries [2](#) came to power, we buried two trunks with books in the back of the courtyard. Dad dug them out when the Russians came. Dad loved the poems of Heinrich Heine, Schiller, Goethe very much [some of the greatest German writers, 18th century] - slightly right wing writers. He liked to recite them in German. Dad also acted when I was small. So did mum. The acting evenings were held in a hall - cultural evenings were held. They read newspapers too - my father generally read German

newspapers. He also had press subscriptions - he received magazines from Czechoslovakia too, because he liked politics, verses, and poetry a lot.

As far as politics in my childhood is concerned, dad was threatened that if he didn't quit politics he would be imprisoned. The commissary called my grandfather David's attention to it, and he came and he kneeled in from of my father, asking him to give up politics. I know he was also beaten once, he had his arm in plaster, and his bone didn't heal for a long time. I think my father's inclination towards politics appeared when he was a young boy - he was a party member in the Social Democratic Party, a party that was illegal back then, during the legionaries' time. My father was very good friend of Lotar Radaceanu, who later became Minister of Labor. He didn't live in the same town with us, but he was also from Bukovina, from Cernauti I think. He was also president of the Social Democrat Party for a while. When the communists came, in the 1940s, he died under very dubious circumstances. I think he attended a meeting in Helsinki, and he was liquidated. My father did social democratic propaganda; he spoke at the gatherings of the Social Democratic Party. He had the gift of speech. He wrote articles in the local newspaper, Neue Zeit ['New Times'], an independent German newspaper [edited in Cernauti]. My father was a very well known man.

Hlyboka looked very well when I was a child. It was quite a big settlement and very widely spread. That's why it is called Adancata. There was also a forest there. I remember that there were some hills where I sledged during the winter, skied or skated. I think that Wednesday was our market day. My mother was in charge of the market. There were around 70-80 Jewish families in Adancata. The Germans were also many. Our neighbors were Germans. Jews didn't live apart from the others, but scattered. We got along very well - we had German neighbors. Only when the war broke out they changed, they grew colder, but towards everybody. The typical Jewish occupation was commerce. There were doctors too - about 3 in Adancata, a postmaster, intellectuals, but mainly traders. Until 1941 they lived well.

## **Our religious life**

There was only one synagogue in Adancata. There was no such thing as Neolog or Orthodox there. The ones who were more religious went there daily, the others once a week or only during the holidays. My father, for example, went there only during the holidays and on the anniversary of his parents' deaths. I never heard of Neolog and Orthodox until I came to Arad. I don't think we had a rabbi, but there has a cheder. I didn't go there, because my parents didn't want me to get spoilt. There were all sorts of children, they cursed sometimes, and they wanted to protect me. My father hired a melamed for me, but when nobody was home, I ran away. I locked him in the house and I left. My parents reprovded me, but they didn't beat me - only my mother hit me sometimes. I remember the melamed taught me the alphabet and how to say the prayers. He was in his forties and he wore a beard. He went from house to house and the taught children, but he didn't have many students, because most of them went to the cheder. Dad wanted me to learn at least what was necessary for the bar mitzvah, which didn't actually happen, because of our leaving to Asia.

For me religion means to be human first of all: not to lie, not to steal, not to do bad things. My parents didn't preach me about religion, but I have inherited a lot from them. I never heard my parents lying to me or to others. I didn't see such things in our house. They really gave us an education. I remember mum reprovded me once because she heard me cursing. When I was 8 or 9 years old she caught me smoking and she threatened that she would tell my father. I didn't smoke

after that. I wasn't a smoker or a drinker. I never drank beer, let alone brandy. I probably tasted it for the first time when I was 20 years old, when I was in Arad. My parents weren't drinkers either.

On holidays mum made all sorts of dishes: you mixed scraped potatoes with egg and yeast, and then let it leaven and then put it in the oven. After that it was cut into slices - it was an extraordinarily tasty dish. I believe it was also a traditional Jewish dish. Mum also made maize cake, from a mixture of corn flour, eggs, sugar, which was left to yeast and then put in the oven. Mum made all sorts of dishes: marinated meatballs and she put raisins in the sauce. She also made triangular dumplings parties: you cut the dough in a triangular shape, then fill it with marmalade or potatoes with fried onion, then boil them. Once uncle Berthold wanted to make a joke and told mum to fill one dumpling with feathers and gave it to a certain person. Mum, instead of giving it to the person Bertold said, gave it to him. I believe the dishes mum made were specific for the Bukovina area; in fact, they were Austrian and German dishes. She also made oblong dumplings, from scraped potatoes and eggs. She put inside plums or cottage cheese: a sort of slightly peppered cheese. When the dumplings were ready she rolled them in fried breadcrumbs - they were very good. There were occasions when she made 7-8 types of cakes at one time.

Holidays were very beautiful in our house; we observed the traditions one hundred percent. Mum lit the candles on Friday evenings - until 1940 when we left. My family went to the synagogue only on the high holidays, on New Year and Long Day. Dad and mum fasted, I think, on the Long Day. I also liked Pesach. You could always tell when there was a holiday in our house. Mum prepared everything so that there was an air of feasting. Moreover, we dressed in a more special way. Although we were not religious, she made all the traditional dishes. My favorite holiday was Purim. On Purim she made hamantashen, marmalade triangular dumplings. She loved to cook, especially deserts. I ran into a cousin of mine not long ago, Gustav, son of Sami and Berta, who told me that mum was renowned for her cakes and for the fact that she cooked several types of cakes: chocolate cake, hazelnut cake, 'mezes' [honey in Hungarian] cake, 'colaci' [milk loaf], 'cremes' [cream cake] with very thinly spread dough, kuglof [ring-cake], but different from the one we have here, with cocoa, poppy cake, apple strudel. There wasn't one week left without a cake. Until 1941...

My parents weren't very religious, but on Pesach we changed the tableware with the one we kept in the attic. We couldn't wait for the tableware to be brought downstairs. We probably visited our relatives on Pesach. We went to my maternal grandparents because they lived there, in Adancata. My maternal grandfather led the evening. I remember that on Pesach, when I was 5-6 years old, I liked to wait for Eliahu to come and empty his glass of wine. My other grandparents, from my father's side, were much older. Grandpa David was a sick man, he always lied in bed.

We always had guests in our house, every week on Friday and Saturday evenings, or on the high holidays. My parents had a lot of friends. They met very often. A few families gathered and played cards or other fun games: for example, you had to jump over a chair, and if you couldn't, you had to take off your coat. I was a child, but I remember some things - they talked, played domino or some other game. They met almost every week. My parents' friends were Jews and non-Jews alike.

I went to a German kindergarten. When I was there I learnt to play the piano, and I also learnt to play the violin in private, but I didn't go on with any of them. I only studied piano for a year, when I was 6-7 years old. I studied the violin for 6-7 months as well. I went to school in Adancata. I liked

mathematics the best. I learnt well, in general. I studied the first year of high school in 1940, in Cernauti. I was at Mihai Eminescu high school. Lusia, my sister, also graduated from the Fine Arts high school in Cernauti.

### The pre-war situation in Cernauti

Cernauti was a very beautiful town. It was Romania's second most important city, a multi-national city, with universities recognized all over Europe, newspapers in different languages - German, Romanian, Ukrainian, Polish. There was the Neue Zeit ['Timpuri Noi', 'New Times'] in German. When I visited Cernauti in 1968-69 it looked terrible. The population also changed about 95 percent. When I was there it was a very clean town. Some time ago it was called the 'small Vienna'. Downtown there was a very beautiful street for walking, Herrenstrasse - that is the 'gentlemen's street', with all sorts of shops. There were also trolleybuses and trams. The city was up a hill, and the surroundings were beautiful. The university had, and it still does, a splendid building, of the kind I haven't seen in Romania yet. It was an industrial city, with a lot of textile industry.

The change of the population was because of the fact that about 80% of the Jews, Poles, Germans, Romanians there left, and Russians and Ukrainians came instead. In 1940, right before the war, the Germans left - I remember that German officers came to solve the problems of those who were leaving. These officers were invited in Cernauti at the Russian military parade in 1941, two or three weeks before the war started. It was a blitz krieg; nobody expected it, especially because the Germans had a friendship and non-aggression treaty with the Russians. 99% of the Jews were taken to Transnistria. However, in Cernauti many of them stayed behind [escaped] thanks to mayor Popovici, who saved thousands of Jewish citizens. He has a monument in Israel at Yad Vashem. I also have relatives who escaped thanks to him.

The atmosphere was already tensed before the war, after 1936, especially when the Cuzists [2](#) and the legionaries governed. There were many pogroms back then. When the legionaries ruled, the [Cuza-Goga] Government received an ultimatum from England and France to remove this legionary government. The government was removed in 2-3 weeks and after that the period when the Germans took over Austria and Poland followed.

In 1939, when there were massive concentrations, there was an infantry division from Dorohoi in Adancata. The concentrations took place before the war started in Poland. There were many 'teteristi'. The 'teteristi' were the ones wearing a red and white ribbon, a sign that they graduated from high school. [Note: 'teteristii' were soldiers in the Romanian army conscripted for a shorter period of time]. There were always 4-5 soldiers coming in our house as guests - father invited them. I remember 3 or 4 brothers from Dorohoi who played the violin and sang as well. They were extraordinarily nice people. They sang Jewish songs. They were a lot of fun. We served them lunch every time they could get away from their regiment. They did their military service in Adancata. On September 1st, 1939, the war broke out in Poland. Romania had really good relations with Poland. There were also lots of refugees coming - they came in carts, or with trains, and we took food to the train station to help them. They came by the thousands. Part of them stopped in Romania, but the majority left for France because they had traditional relations with France. [Note: they had to take a detour through Romania because the Germans were advancing from the West.] Many of them probably left from there to the USA, because there is a large Polish community there nowadays. There are also many Jews in the USA.



My father's involvement in politics was the main reason why we took refuge. If we hadn't taken refuge, we would have been the first on the list. We left all of a sudden and our relatives stayed behind. They thought the Romanians were coming to liberate them, but that didn't happen at all. When we left we knew from the radio what was going on in Germany and Poland. We knew about Kristallnacht [4](#) from Germany, that the Jews had to clean the streets and so on.

### **Our life in Uzbekistan during the war**

During the war, between 1941-1944, we were all - our family - away in Uzbekistan. How did we leave for Uzbekistan? It wasn't our choice. There was no time for talks. Panic ruled. We traveled in a cart for two-three weeks to Ukraine and we stayed for a month there, in Zinco, Poltava region. Then they wanted to draft my dad in the army. He was very desperate, I went to the commissariat and I cried and I don't remember what happened, but they let him go. In Ukraine, where we first took refuge, people received us very well. They gave us food and I think we stayed in a rented house. Dad worked there for a month at the vegetables factory. After a month, the Germans drew closer. We went with the cart farther on, up to the town of Belgorod, region Voronezh, and then we got on a goods train and traveled as far as the train went. I don't know if my father knew or not the direction when we got on the train. We left the cart there. We passed through Ural, through Siberia, through Kazakhstan and we ended up in Uzbekistan, in the Buchara region. We lived in Kermine. When we got there, we slept in the street for a few nights. Mum had taken with her the eiderdown and pillows. Then we received a house, but there was no furniture in it - we slept on the floor. My dad and my sister started working. My father worked as a surgeon's assistant, and my sister was a clerk in a bread factory.

Everything was different: the population was Moslem, the traditions were different. I felt no rejection in Uzbekistan. Life was very hard, salaries were very small, the market was very expensive and generally their lifestyle was very different from ours. I was 11 years old when I arrived in Uzbekistan. I went to school there for only two years, but not all the time. I went to a school where they taught in Russian. I knew Russian from home because we had many Ukrainian neighbors, and Russian and Ukrainian are alike. There were native Jews in Uzbekistan, but there were also many Jews refugees from Ukraine, Bessarabia and Bukovina. From Ukraine there were also many Jews. I didn't make many friends there. I went to the market as well to earn money, although I was young. For example I bought sheets, which mother sew and made into clothes. The women wore veils. We went to the market in another commune or little town, mother stayed aside with the pile, and I sold two or three pieces at a time. The Uzbeks from villages used as means of transportation the donkeys and the camels. In the marketplace they came with the sacks on the back of the donkeys.

The food was very different from the one we had home. There was no pork or potatoes. Our greatest wish when we came back was for mum to make for us a pot of potatoes and a pot of corn mush. They ate turtle, though. Near our place there was a turtlery - they ate the liver and different parts of the turtle. The mutton was the most expensive, especially the 'caracal' kind. This kind of sheep had a tail that weighed 10-15 kg. Because it was too heavy, the Uzbeks put wheels under the tail, so that the sheep didn't get tired. You could also find horse and camel meat. The milk - camel's and sheep's milk - was very fat because of the climate. There was no cream - they used the skin of milk.

The fruits were very good, very sweet. The grapes had over 30% sugar, and people made raisins from the seedless grapes. The Uzbeks came to the marketplace with sacks of raisins to sell. They sold them in half a kilo or a kilo. If someone went into a teahouse, he would buy half a kilo of raisins to have with the tea. People drank a lot of tea in Uzbekistan, because the heat was very strong. We drank tea as well because the climate required it. They had a sort of green tea, which went very well without sugar, only with raisins. There were no chairs in the teahouse. People sat on the floor, and smoked pipe. They also sold peaches and apricots - fresh or dried. They were very tasty.

The cotton production was very high. There was also something similar to corn mush, made from some grains called 'jugara', a sort of corn with white ears. The taste was similar to corn. Uzbeks ate rice as well. The quality of the wheat was very good. The wheat harvest took place twice a year. The bread was light white - I have never eaten such good bread. After a while, because of the war, the bread started to be filled with straws. Those who didn't work received 300 grams of bread per day, and those who worked received 600 grams, it was very difficult. I helped a woman there who sold bread, and whatever she had extra she let me sell on the black market. They also ate something similar to the flat loaf of bread we had. The people had ovens in their courtyards. They used as fuel the dung from horses and cows: they gathered it in piles, dried it and they used it for heating. After the dung was dry, it caught fire, and when the oven was really hot, people stuck the flat loaves of bread to the oven walls; when they were ready, they fell from the walls into the oven.

My parents adopted a little girl from there - Alla. Dad worked in the hospital - the girl's father was on the front. Alla was born on March 31st, 1942, in Kermine. She was called Haia Katzefman, we gave her the name Alla, and then, after she moved to Israel, she got the name Haia back. I think the fact that she was Jewish was a coincidence. Her mother was hospitalized, and complained that she had a 6 weeks, or 6 months old child - I don't remember exactly - and dad said he would ask mum if she didn't want to take care of a child for 2-3 weeks. Mum agreed, and when Alla's mother died, people came to take her to an orphanage, but my parents didn't give her away.

During the war we listened to the radio every day, and I looked on the map to see where the front was, to know when we would leave home. I loved geography. Unfortunately I lived very hard times. I was 12-13 years back then and I listened to the radio daily, and I knew how the front advanced. At home we had listened Radio Free Europe [5](#), Voice of America, Kol Israel, but in Uzbekistan we didn't have a radio. There were only megaphones and newspapers, which said only what the Russians wanted.

## Post-war

We decided to leave for Ukraine immediately after the liberation. They didn't want to release my dad from the hospital - under the Russians it wasn't easy at all to change your job, but we all left all the same. I also worked during the holiday at a shop that supplied the army with vegetables, I went in villages, I had a cart and I gathered vegetables. When I wanted to go back to school in the 8th grade they didn't want to release me from work. I don't know how we solved it in the end, but they released me after all.

We left Kermine by train in 1944. I don't remember how many times we changed the train. Generally the train was full with military on their way to the front. The trains were loaded with warfare. It was a train with several floors. I remember it was extremely crowded, we had nowhere

to wash, there were lice...I don't know where we got the food from. It took us about two weeks to get home. At first we went to some relatives in Cernauti for a week, and then we went home to Hlyboka, where we lived from 1944 until 1946. Our house had a foundation for another two rooms. I remember I found an anti-tank bomb in the sand. Mum was very frightened.

When we came back from Asia there was already a certain hatred, because many had plundered and they didn't like the fact that we came back. When we came back no one admitted that they had taken things from our house. They didn't even give us back a document. On the other hand, when uncle Berthold from Moscow came back, a neighbor gave him back a sowing machine, pillows, an eiderdown, and some other things. We found our house inhabited by some Russians, but they released it immediately. Few Jews came back. The ones who were in Transnistria didn't even come back to Hlyboka, they went to Israel.

It was very sad when we came back from Asia, everything was like a graveyard. Both my maternal grandparents had been deported from Hlyboka: grandmother died on the way, and grandfather died during the Holocaust, in Transnistria. My paternal grandmother was shot on the way to Transnistria. Over 100 Jews were killed in Adancata in July 1941. They were buried in a mass grave. I went there with my wife and my cousins from my father's side - Gustav, Elka, Leibu, Jakob, who lived in Cernauti, in 1968. A monument was built with their names, but my cousin with his grandchildren and children were there last year [in 2002] and the monument was gone. It is like somebody wants to leave no marks.

Although we had obtained the house, dad decided that we should leave, thinking of us, the children. He knew we would have no future there. He went to Bucharest, where he knew Lotar Radaceanu, and he gave him a repartition to Arad. The prefect Vostinar from Arad gave his recommendation to UTA ('Uzinele Textile Arad', 'Arad Textiles Plants'); there was probably a vacancy. Dad worked during the first year as a stationary department inspector, and then he was head of the statistics department. He got along well with everybody. Mum and dad lived in Arad from 1946. Lusia worked as a clerk at UTA, and Alla went to school. I heard about our house in Hlyboka that it was demolished and something else was built instead. It was in the very center of the town. We received no compensations for the house.

We officially came to Arad in 1946 - we were repatriated. I believe the motive in the papers was the departure for Israel. We came to Romania in a cart. From home to the border there were only about 30 kilometers. Bukovina was a very clean and rich region. The difference wasn't very big. Austro-Hungary had been there and here as well, so the differences weren't very big. Arad was much more quiet and cleaner than it is now. Dad had been to Arad in 1936-37 and maybe he was the one who chose to be repartitioned here.

When we moved to Arad in 1946 we lived for about 2 years on 6, Virgil Rotareanu Street. After that, one of my dad's bosses, Fischer, who had a very beautiful house (on Mihai Viteazu Street, where Dermatology is today, on the first floor) gave dad two rooms and the kitchen, because otherwise the house would have been taken away from him, because he lived there only with his wife. He trusted my dad a lot - they even had papers. When the hospital was built there we were given a place to live on 1, Grigore Alexandrescu Street, on the second floor. That's where we lived until we bought this house in 1951.

I remember that when my father and I were at work, we received some wood at home, and mother carried it to the cellar alone. Then she fell ill, and the doctors didn't know what was wrong with her. Her health had been affected by all the journeys to Central Asia, to Romania, she couldn't diet. The marks of the war took their toll: she died of jaundice. Mother died in 1948, when she was 43 years old, and she is buried in the new Jewish cemetery from Gradiste, here in Arad. After mum died, I ran away from school to recite the kaddish in the synagogue. I went there every day for eleven months, and when I was in school, I ran out the window. It was a sort of a soul duty for me. The entire time mother was ill Alla stayed in the house of my future wife.

I went to the professional school here and I am a dental technician. When I graduated professional school I was the first in my class and all the school. I learnt although I didn't cram at home. I always got along well with my classmates. My native tongue is still German, but I speak Hungarian, Romanian and Russian as well.

### **Married life**

I am together with my wife Iuliana, nee Simon, since 1946. We got married in 1950. We didn't have a religious ceremony. She isn't Jewish and she was born on July 5th, 1929, in Arad. Her native tongue is Hungarian. She too is a dental technician - she graduated from the professional high school. After we got married we lived with my dad on Grigore Alexandrescu Street. My dad and my sister had one room, and we had the other; we shared the kitchen. Life was hard back then. Once I stood in a queue all night to get 3 meters of cloth for a suit. It was the first suit I ever had. It was dark blue with thin red stripes.

In 1950, when dad established that we would go and file for leaving for Israel, I didn't show up, and he realized that I wanted to get married, but that I was ashamed to confess it. After we got married, dad and Alla got the passport, but my wife and I and my sister didn't. We would have liked to go because life here was very hard and it had no perspectives for the future. We both agreed on that. Dad left for Israel in 1951, and I volunteered for army service because my wife was pregnant and I thought I had better get it over with sooner, so that I could go back home and help her. Dad would have wanted to give me a medical certificate to dodge the army, but I wanted to know everything was settled correctly. I served in Bucharest, in artillery, between 1950-1952. My wife managed in the meantime with her parents' help. Dad had left, but he had left the house to my wife's mother and sister.

My dad worked as a surgeon's assistant in Israel. He lived in Ramat Gan. When he arrived in Israel he found out the address of Alla's father [who lived in Russia, in the region of Bessarabia] from an uncle of hers who lives in USA. Alla went to meet her father in 1960 - she was about 20 years old. He received her coldly; she was upset that he didn't take an interest in her fate. Alla lived and worked as a kindergarten teacher in Mizra kibbutz. She met her husband, Sar-Shalom Eyal, there, in Mizra kibbutz, and they got married. He was an officer in the army, and 6 or 7 years ago he opened a salami factory in Iasi. Alla has four children: Gilad, Hila, Sai and Ran. I visited her for almost a month and I met her parents-in-law - they were from Poland: very nice people. Alla died in May 2003.

I think I got to have my own household easier than my parents. When I was 26, in 1956, I already had my house without any help. I worked very hard. I had a lab and I worked even 13-14 hours a day. I was already married and I had one of the girls. The other one was born at the end of 1956.

We got married early - I hadn't turned 20 by that time. I was as conscientious as possible all the time. I was head of the laboratory for 30 years and whenever I had inspections, they would take me along to control somewhere else, my work was that well organized.

In 1958 we filed again for emigration to Israel. I kept in touch with dad very often by means of letters. Dad kept writing me that life in Israel was very hard: he said that one can still find work there until he is 40, but that after that it is harder, life wasn't that easy. He himself lived in a tent there at first. My father died in 1961 in Tel Aviv. When dad died I recited the kaddish in his memory as well. I received the passport in 1964. We were announced that a person from Securitate [6](#) had already come to move into our house. But we gave up leaving. I had just signed up to buy a car, a Fiat 8-50, Iudit was 12-13 years old, and Adela was 7, and I asked myself what would I do in Israel, with two children growing up, I had a house, a car...However, I had work colleagues who left for Israel. There were two emigration waves: one in 1951 and one in 1964, when I got my passport. Many from Arad left then. There were approximately 10000 Jews in Arad, now there are only 300, and most of the families are mixed.

I have always been interested in politics. I believed the state had to proceed in such a manner as to create jobs, so that those who didn't want to work wouldn't have a job, but those who wanted to work could have living conditions. Because of the anti-Semitism I have experienced, communism drew me at first, because it theoretically defended the rights of all nationalities. Because I was young, inexperienced, and because I was reading the newspapers and listening to the radio, I couldn't realize what the truth was, but later I began to understand. I did pretty well under communism. I was head of the laboratory and, compared to others, I cannot complain. I wasn't a party member, I was only in the UTM, The Young Workers Union, while I was in the army. I had a managerial position, but I wasn't a party member, although my boss, doctor Muresan, told me to become a member to strengthen my position. I told him that I cannot do something I didn't believe in and that I would do my duty without being a party member. He went on insisting until my daughter left for Israel, after that he didn't say anything to me anymore. If you had relatives abroad you were followed all the time and you had to be careful what you talked about.

Today I can make the difference between communism and capitalism although each has its good and its bad sides. For example, what is good in communism: it gives every man the possibility to work, gives him a place to live. But on the other hand, the one with the possibilities has to lower to the level of the one who doesn't work anything, and then everything is leveled and there is no advantage, or an encouragement for the one who can do more as compared to the one who does nothing. We had in our lab a dental technician, who was an exceptionally kind boy, but who had the vice of drinking. He had been disciplinary moved to our department, and I was afraid, so that an accident wouldn't happen to him, because we worked with engines. In vain I talked to the head of stomatology to have him moved from our department. The good part of capitalism is that the hardworking and resourceful people can thrive. Moreover, in capitalism there is no obstruction of religion: one has to have the liberty to believe in whatever he wants. For as long as I was in Uzbekistan, I never heard of somebody asking you what your nationality was. We have this carryover of nationalism from even before the war. In Arad, for example, whenever the price of hens, or of something else went up in the market, people would say that the Jewish holidays were drawing in. When it rained in September, people said that the Jewish holidays were coming. The primitive man believed anything he heard.

I went with my wife to the cinema very often in our free time. I liked history, war movies. I have seen many Hungarian and Russian movies. I remember the title of a Hungarian movie: 'Two by two suddenly makes 5', and another very good Russian movie, 'The eagle'. Before we got married we went to the movies every week so that we could be together. We also went to the theater or to the swimming pool. We went to the theater two-three times a year, especially when there was a folk music. I loved football very much. We went to the matches together, we never missed one. My wife entered the gate, and I jumped the fence. I also like basketball, and handball, but I like football best. I was a UTA member, but I didn't do sports, I just paid my due. I was at a match in Bucharest once. A man, a supporter of 'Progresul' team, died of emotion when our team, UTA, scored. I accompanied the team UTA to Hunedoara as well, we drove the motorcycle through the snow all the way to Cluj, we went to Timisoara countless times. But for the last two years we stopped going to matches because since I had my eye surgery my distance vision is not so good anymore.

We went on holidays all over the country. The first time we went by motorcycle in 1959, and we drove the car in 1964. I went for treatment in Covasna for 15 years in a row, I drove my motorcycle as far as Constanta, I saw the monasteries in Moldavia, I went to Poiana Brasov. We went with the tent around the country as well. We had one month vacation, and we shared it: we took two weeks one time, and then we left again. We went with the tent at the seaside as well, where we stayed for 10 days. We generally went with tickets from ONT. I also went with my wife to the restaurant: we listened to music, ate a grilled steak.

## **My daughters**

We have two daughters, who were born in Arad: Iudit was born in 1951, and Adela in 1956. Iudit graduated from the dental techniques school in Arad. She observed the Christian holidays as well, because she grew up under the influence of her grandmother, my wife's mother. Adela, on the other hand, was very fond of me. I never influenced her. Adela also went to Talmud Torah classes. We observed both Christian and Jewish holidays at home, together. I didn't observe Sabbath because Saturdays were working days. The girls didn't have any problems because they were half Jewish. Adela even bragged about it. I didn't talk to them much about my time in Uzbekistan. I didn't want to influence them in any way. Iudit married a Jew from Arad, Stefan Weisz, an electrotechnics sub engineer, and Adela married an engineer from Gheorgheni, Geza Geller, in 1984. Adela graduated from the Faculty of Stomatology in Cluj and she lives in Gheorgheni, Harghita county, where she is a stomatolog. Geza's father had been to Auschwitz, but he came back - he died about two years ago [approximately in 2002]. Adela and Geza met in Cluj. He studied electrotechnics and they met at the Jewish canteen. They got married in 1984 in the Orthodox synagogue in Arad, and rabbi Neumann from Timisoara came to officiate the wedding.

Iudit got married earlier, in 1970. Back then there was a rabbi in Arad. Iudit emigrated in 1973 with her husband. Iudit has two children, Ariel and Sandra. Ariel was born in 1974 in Israel. Iudit lived at first in Israel, and then she left for Canada so that she wouldn't have to go in the army. Her husband was always away in the army, and life wasn't easy. They had a probation period in Greece, where they both worked - she worked as a dental technician. She had just graduated sanitary school here. They stayed in Israel for about two years. She now lives in Canada, in Toronto, and she works as a dental technician. We keep in touch over the phone. She visits us when she's on vacation. Ariel started studying at the dental school here in Arad, but he gave it up after 6-7 months. After he went back to Canada, he married Angela (her parents are from Russia)

and they have a girl, Vanessa. Ariel works at a telecommunications company. Sandra is 20 years old and she is a student.

My sister Lusia was a clerk in Arad, at UTA and at the Jewish community in Arad. She also got married here, in the synagogue. Her husband, Andrei Fuchs, was a bookkeeper at UTA. They had a boy, Stefan, who is an electronics engineer in Israel. She managed to emigrate in about 1982. She enlisted with her daughter-in-law, Agi. Her husband died here in the 1960s. She left with all her family and lived in Tel Aviv, where she was a pensioner. Lusia has two grandchildren - Roni and Dana. I have always kept in touch with my sister. She came very often in the country to visit us, every year. Every time she stayed for two-three weeks with us. In 1999 she suffered a severe accident - she was run over by a car and she was hospitalized. The last time she was in Romania was in 2000. I talked to her on the phone two days before she died, on February 26th, 2001, in Tel Aviv.

I have never had problems with anti-Semitism. But I don't like to hear the word 'stinking Jew'. I believe each nation should respect the others, because we are all people. I was happy when the Jewish state was born. After 2000 years, after being persecuted all the time, it was about time that Jews had their own state, where they wouldn't be cast out from. I was in Israel once before 1989 [7](#). I was impressed. It is very beautiful. I was impressed first of all by the rapid growth - in only 50 years. I was in Israel for a month. I spent two weeks in the Mizra kibbutz. There was truly equality among people. Even if you were a professor, you still got your turn at cleaning, in the kitchen, at picking apples, at grooming animals. Hens laid eggs there twice in 24 hours, they had electric light day and night. Cows gave approximately 60-70 liters of milk per day. Everyone from the kibbutz had the right to have a vacation abroad once a year, at the kibbutz's expense. I was surprised in Israel by the big difference between an Israeli and an Arab village, the Israeli towns, which are very developed - everything is so beautiful, with water and greens. In Israel I was at the border with Lebanon, in Askelon, Arad, Ardot - a very beautiful town. I was alone in Israel. My wife went when Ariel was born.

I had a cerebral spasm about 7 years ago, in 1996, on a Saturday, August 13th. Adela had been here with her husband, and that very day they left for Gheorgheni, in the morning, about 8 o'clock. I was lying in bed, with my head against the bed frame, and all of a sudden I told my wife I was dying. I felt my head would crack open. I took medicines and I recovered, but after that, for 2-3 weeks, I grew so thin I could barely stand. Since then there are some things I don't remember. The doctor recommended that I should eat only vegetable margarine, and not eat pork, fats, and eat only one egg a week, because my cholesterol is a bit high.

I started going to the synagogue only recently. I think the life of the community had never been so well organized as it has been during the last 20 years, now that Mr. Ionel Schelssinger is president. Although the Jews are few, the activity is good. People can go do gymnastics, they can go to the library, to Oneg Sabbath on Friday evenings, which are held in the canteen. Before there had to be a list with the people coming to the prayer, so that there would be 10 people, now 13-15 come, without any appointment. The interest has increased. I go with my wife on Friday evenings, and on Saturday mornings I go alone. We also go together on Pesach. We also observe New Year and the Long Day, when I don't eat. During the day, I like to go to the market, listen to a match on the radio, or I like to read a book or the local newspaper, 'Observatorul' ['The Observer'], to which I have a subscription. I also read our community's newspaper, 'Shalom'.

## Glossary

### **1 Nationalization in Romania**

The nationalization of industry and natural resources in Romania was laid down by the law of 11th June 1948. It was correlated with the forced collectivization of agriculture and the introduction of planned economy.

### **2 Legionary Movement (also known as the Legion of the Archangel Michael)**

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.

### **3 Goga-Cuza government**

Anti-Jewish and chauvinist government established in 1937, led by Octavian Goga, poet and Romanian nationalist, and Alexandru C. Cuza, professor of the University of Iasi, and well known for its radical anti-Semitic view. Goga and Cuza were the leaders of the National Christian Party, an extremist right-wing organization founded in 1935. After the elections of 1937 the Romanian king, Carol II, appointed the National Christian Party to form a minority government. The Goga-Cuza government had radically limited the rights of the Jewish population during their short rule; they barred Jews from the civil service and army and forbade them to buy property and practice certain professions. In February 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.

### **4 Kristallnacht**

Nazi anti-Jewish outrage on the night of 10th November 1938. It was officially provoked by the assassination of Ernst vom Rath, third secretary of the German embassy in Paris two days earlier by a Polish Jew named Herschel Grynszpan. Following the Germans' engineered atmosphere of tension, widespread attacks on Jews, Jewish property and synagogues took place throughout Germany and Austria. Shops were destroyed, warehouses, dwellings and synagogues were set on fire or otherwise destroyed. Many windows were broken and the action therefore became known as Kristallnacht (crystal night). At least 30,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps in Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald and Dachau. Though the German government attempted to present it as a spontaneous protest and punishment on the part of the Aryan, i.e. non-Jewish population, it



was, in fact, carried out by order of the Nazi leaders.

## **5 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.

## **6 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.

## **7 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.