

# Estera Sava

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Bucharest

Romania

Interviewer: Adriana Gheorghe

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*Estera Sava is a lady who takes care of her appearance. She is not very tall, has gray, short hair, and looks younger than her age (83). She lives on her own in a small but well maintained two-room flat located in an apartment building in the center of Bucharest. She is an active and communicative person who likes to keep up on everything that happens around her. She reads the newspapers – when this interview was conducted, she was following the ongoing electoral campaign with a critical eye. She keeps in touch with the Jewish Community, reads books, and preserves strong ties with her old acquaintances and the members of her family, who are spread across Israel and Germany. She is an optimistic person who, despite her life experience, would rather look at the full half of the glass, while still keeping in mind, with understanding but with no illusions, the empty half.*

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## My family history

My paternal grandfather's name was Meier Leib Rosenberg. I think he came from the Bacau County. He was born in 1861. I don't know if my grandfather had any siblings; if he did, I never heard of them. His native tongue was Yiddish, and he also spoke Romanian. I think these were the only languages he could speak; I never heard him use another. I can't recall what school he went to anymore. As far as I know, children used to attend the elementary grades and learn Hebrew, that is, the Hebrew alphabet. It was a school which belonged to the Jewish community and this is what children learnt. I don't know if he did any military service. For a while, he lived in the countryside – he was well-off –, and then he moved to Bacau. Down there, he owned a restaurant located in the same building where he lived with his family. As I remember it, the place wasn't a Jewish neighborhood, it was a very nice street inhabited by Romanian boyars. My grandparents lived in the center of the town. Theirs was an ordinary house, simple, like most houses used to be back then. It had three rooms. They didn't have a bathroom inside, the toilet was outside – I mean, they lacked the modern utilities. There was no electricity in those days – one hundred years ago... They used wood for heating. They got along very well with their neighbors. My paternal father was more of an austere man, but people thought highly of him and treated him with respect. As far as his clothes are concerned, he dressed in an ordinary way. I never saw caftans or sideburns at either of my grandfathers. My paternal grandfather did wear a goatee, but that was all. However, he was very

religious. He chaired the community for many years, in a time when the president was the one who gave to the community! He was very, very devout, very religious! Not observing [the holidays, the tradition] was out of the question, was inconceivable! We saw little of this paternal grandfather. He didn't visit us [too often]. When he did, he wouldn't even accept a glass of water from my father, because it wasn't kosher. And my mother would argue 'But, father...' 'No way,' he would reply, 'because you never know...' - 'Father, but I don't...' - 'No, no and no! Let it be, I know better!' It was the same thing with preserves: he wouldn't touch any of them, because they are among the foods that Jews consider not kosher. For instance, sweets, like preserves or cakes, shouldn't be eaten, no matter whether they were boiled or baked in the oven. So he didn't have preserves. 'No, no, no', he said, 'no, no, no.' [Ed. note: Baking a cake in the oven did not make it kosher if the ingredients weren't kosher to begin with.] I don't think he was into politics. I never heard of him being the member of some party. My grandfathers and my father went to vote, like any other citizen of this country, but they never joined any party. I don't know if they had any particular preferences either. They didn't express their political views; or, if they did, I wouldn't know, because - let's face it - I was only a child. There were no social or cultural organizations - Jews didn't have any such things.

My paternal grandmother was named Rifca Rosenberg I don't know her maiden name. I don't know where she was born - I think it was in Valea Rea, but I couldn't tell you for sure. I don't know the year of her birth either. I know nothing of her siblings. I never met them, only some of their grandchildren. I don't know what education she had but, in any case, my paternal grandmother came from a well-off and very modern family - they were all emancipated, they spoke French, they smoked, even the girls smoked! Think about what this meant one hundred years ago! The girls were very elegant, very stylish, they weren't cut from the same mold as my grandfather, who was honest and fair but, you know... [simpler and more conservative] My paternal grandmother was a housewife. Women didn't go to work back then. They spoke Yiddish at home. My grandmother wore ordinary clothes too. She didn't wear a kerchief, not to mention a wig. I think she was as religious as my grandfather, but [I can't be sure], because she died at such an early age... I know her life was shortened by some burglars who broke in at night, while my grandfather was away. Back then, they lived in the countryside, in Gropile, Bacau County. It was a burglary, not an anti-Semitic attack. She and the woman who helped her around the house [who wasn't Jewish] were beaten. The burglars broke in and beat her so bad that the next day, when my grandfather returned, he found her wandering through the village in her blood-stained nightgown, not aware of herself. Although he had her treated, my grandmother died only a few years later, in 1924 or 1925. I was 3 or 4 when that happened. My grandfather died the day the war was declared, in 1941, that very Sunday! He was 80. He hanged himself because of the war. He had many grandchildren and he knew what misfortunes were waiting for us. There, in Bacau, we had had troubles with the Legionaries [1](#) even before the war; now that the war had started, things were going to get worse.

My father had one brother and one sister. His sister was the eldest, he was the middle child, and his brother was the youngest. His sister's name was Toni. She was born in the countryside, in Bacau County. Tanti [Romanian for aunt] was a housewife and was very religious. Her children didn't carry on her religiousness, but she was very religious! Her husband's last name was Brill, and I think his first name was Iancu. He was a Jew too, and came from a very wealthy family who owned oil fields. However, he didn't succeed in his life, for he was a drunkard and a barfly. They had 11 children and they all lived to be adults. Three of them are still alive. I mean, I think they're still

alive, because they live in America, in Los Angeles. This is all I know about them. My aunt was ill for a long time; she spent eight months in hospital here, in Bucharest. I would go to her very often; two of her sons lived here, but they didn't go see her because of their wives. This is where she died and was buried. Tanti died about one year and nine months after my father died [around 1954].

My father's brother was named Max Rosenberg and he was born in 1890 in the countryside, in Bacau County. He lived in Bacau and this is where he died too - actually, I have a photo of his tomb. His education consisted of some high school and he worked all his life as an accountant for a large wholesale store owned by a man named Hursenbaun. My father's brother was highly esteemed in our town and he was the best accountant in the entire Moldavia! He once entered a contest where all the others were graduates of the Commerce Academy, today's ASE [Academia de Studii Economice - The Economical Studies Academy], while he had only done three years of high school. But he succeeded! He wasn't very religious, very devout. His wife was Jewish too and she was also from Bacau. I don't know how old she was. She may have been two years older or younger than he was, but I'm not sure which. I know her maiden name was Stormann and her first name was Rosa. My father's brother didn't have any children. He died in 1932, at the age of 42.

My father's name was Oisie Rosenberg He was born in 1887, in the countryside, in Bacau County. I think his place of birth was the commune of Gropile, but I couldn't tell that for sure. His native tongue was Yiddish, but he spoke Romanian with us. He finished high school and went to France. He lived in Paris for about 4 years, before World War I, because my grandfather had a sister there, and he sent him to study. Study is what he didn't do, however. He was into other things; he was a very handsome man and girls just wouldn't leave him alone. He came back right before the war started.

My mother's father was named Iosif Seidenberg. He was born in Sascut or in Adjud - in any case, that's the region where he came from. He was born in 1855. He became an orphan at a very early age. My maternal grandfather didn't have any sisters; I know he had a brother, but I have no idea what his first name was, because he died before we were old enough to remember these things. Apart from that, he had some cousins, a lot of them He had relatives in Adjud. His brother was also born in Adjud or in Sascut, just like him. I don't know when his brother died. I only remember seeing him once. He died shortly afterwards. I was still a child. I don't know what he did for a living. I suppose he was married, but I'm not sure. I don't know if he had any children either, but I never heard my grandfather speak about his brother's children. I think he didn't have any. So maybe he was married, but he didn't have children.

My maternal grandfather got married in Bacau County. He first lived in Helegiu for a few years, and then he moved to Valea Rea [Ed. note: Both localities are in Bacau County.], which is called Livezele today. We saw him quite seldom. He had six children. He ran a kosher butcher's shop located in the same courtyard where his house was. He was a butcher by trade; this is what he did his entire life. He went to the army because they caught him and drafted him against his will - he was a sturdy fellow, and so were all the members of our family. My maternal grandfather wore ordinary clothes and he was a very handsome man! Of course, he was religious too, he observed the tradition. He wasn't into politics either, and I don't know what his preferences were, because I was only a child back then. His native tongue was Yiddish, and he also spoke Romanian. I don't know what school he went to, but he could read and write. He was an evolved person, he read the newspaper all the time and he understood the political arena. My other grandfather, the paternal one, wasn't quite

like that. He read too, but he was caught into Jewish books most of the time.

In Valea Rea, Jews lived on one side of the Tazlau River, and the [Christian] Orthodox – on the other one. There was also a landowner there, who had his mansion on the Christians' street. The Jews in Valea Rea were from the middle class and there were no great differences between them. My grandparents got along well with their neighbors. My grandfather was very sociable; he would tell an occasional joke and would have a laugh once in a while – he was different [from the paternal grandfather, who was very austere]. The house of my maternal grandparents had two rooms and a large kitchen; they spent most of their day in the kitchen, where they also ate, and they slept in one of the rooms. They didn't have electricity or tap water. They used wood for heating. They lived in the countryside, but they didn't cultivate anything. However, since my grandfather was a butcher, he always had a cow around the house. They had a cart with two horses, and chickens – was there any household without chickens? My grandfather used the cart when he went to buy cattle. In the courtyard, he had arranged a place where he slaughtered cattle. My maternal grandparents didn't employ anyone to help them around the house.

My maternal grandmother's name was Tily Her maiden name was Sloser. I believe she was born in Valea Rea, because all her family was there. I don't know when she was born [around 1865]. I don't know if the families of my grandparents came from Russia, but I doubt it, because they didn't have Russian names. In any case, they had been here for centuries – they weren't newcomers or something. I don't know anything about my great-grandparents. My maternal grandmother had six or seven brothers, but I couldn't tell you much about them. I once met one of them – he died in Bacau forty-something years ago. All the brothers were named Sloser. Some of them had children. One of my grandmother's brothers was named Iancu Sloser, lived in Tetcani, in Bacau County too, in the vicinity of Moinesti, and had six children. The one who died later, Marcu, lived in Valea Rea and had three children: Sofica, Jeni and Ionas. Idel, who lived in Bacau, didn't have any children. There was also a sister who died at an early age and whom I never met. My grandmother's sister died in childbirth Then there was another brother, Moise, I think, who lived in Galati. I don't know whether he lived in the town or in some village near the town. We were very close to Iancu, who lived in Tetcani, and I can remember things about his family. His children were named Roza, Malvina, Bernat, Mauriciu, Beti and Izu – there were six of them. My family was friends with them, but they were much older than I was. This is how we were as a family: we stuck together, and even if a relative was poorer, we didn't renounce him or her. None of them is alive today. I couldn't say how religious they were, because we didn't live under the same roof. They were in Tetcani and we were in Bacau. And, when they got married, one of them moved to Barlad, another one to Onesti. Then the war [World War II] came, and keeping in touch with one's relatives was no longer a priority.

My maternal grandmother had been to school. Wherever there were Jews, there was a small school where children could learn their ABC's. She was a housewife. Her native tongue was Yiddish, but she could speak Romanian too. She wore ordinary clothes. She was very, very religious – nothing from the outside would make it inside my grandmother's house, not even bread! She wouldn't buy bread from the baker's. The whole town did it, but she baked bread at home! Not to mention the baker was a Jew! So everything she ate had to be cooked in the house! She didn't even buy oil – she made it herself. She grew geese and, well, since my grandfather was a butcher, she had all the meat she needed for soups and that sort of thing. My grandmother didn't let anyone milk the cow

except for herself. She was a very clean woman. When she didn't feel well – and that happened rather often, because she had problems with her health – my grandfather would say 'Let me milk the cow, don't go yourself...' – 'No way, because you don't wash your hands properly.' – 'But we boil the milk.' – 'Oh, give me a break with the milk, will you?'

My grandmother lived and died in Valea Rea. She died at an early age, around the year of 1925. I know that because, in 1925 or 1926, my aunt gave birth to a girl whom she named after my grandmother. So my grandmother died in 1925, at the age of 59 or 60. I remember my mother say 'Poor Mother, she died too soon, she hadn't even turned 60.' She was ill, she had a cancer. First she had a problem with an eye, and then the illness moved to her liver. She lied in bed for a long time. Her suffering lasted many years. My grandfather died in 1949, in Valea Rea, at the age of 94.

My mother had five siblings. There was a constant difference of two years between consecutive siblings; the only exception was a difference of four years between a sister and a brother, because there had been a seventh child who died. My mother was the second child. The eldest was Isaac Seidenberg, born around 1891. He had a misfortune: he married Paulina, a Jewish girl who was poor, but of a rare beauty, lived with her for seven years, and the girl got a breast cancer. She tormented herself for a year, and then she died. My mother was followed by Fani, born in 1895. She married a Jew named Saul Ancilovici. Then came that four-year difference between Fani and Moritz, who was born in 1899. He married Nora, a Jewish woman. Two years after Moritz was born, the fifth child saw the light of day: Marcu, in 1901 or so. He never married and died at an early age, 42. He had a heart attack and died in the street, in Bacau. The youngest of the siblings was Rebeca, born in 1903. She was also the last to die. Her husband's name was Haim Haimovici. All my mother's siblings, except for the one who died at an early age, left for Israel. This is where they all passed away, but I don't know the exact dates. I remember Moritz died at some point in 1977. It was the year of the earthquake [in Romania]. Isaac had died a good number of years before him, but I couldn't tell you when.

My mother's name was Toni, nee Seidenberg. She was born somewhere in Bacau County I believe it was in the commune of Helegiu. She was a few years younger than my father. She was born in 1893 or so. Her native tongue was Yiddish, but she spoke Romanian too. She learnt everything children could learn at that time; she went to a Romanian elementary school, a public school, not a special one. Then she became a housewife. My mother was a woman who took care of her appearance and she had extraordinary outfits made for her! She would never wear the same dress at two weddings! She had seamstresses working for her. But no seamstress would work for her twice, because my mother was very nagging; she had them come over to her place and followed their every move.

My parents' marriage was a true love match. This is how they met. My father lived in Bacau and was as good as married. The legal marriage had already been performed and the wedding was to come in three weeks. He happened to pass by the small town of Valea Rea. He was friends with my mother's cousin. And my mother was there, in front of the butcher's shop. So he sees her and tells his friend: 'Sofico, who's this sweet girl?' – 'That's my cousin!' – 'I'd like to meet her!' And my mother's cousin says to him: 'Why on Earth would you want to meet her? You're getting married in three weeks! I'm having a dress made for your wedding...' You see, my mother's cousin had been invited to the wedding. 'It doesn't matter, I want to meet her' – 'Get out of here, mind your own business. If he [her father] hears about it, he'll chase you around with an axe in his hand!' Her

father was a butcher, and these are rough people! But he says 'I'm not leaving this place until I get to meet her!' And so he did. He got divorced, and he never had his wedding, although he had nothing personal with the other woman. And, four years later, he married my mother. This is another story, because my maternal grandfather was always against this. They went to a wedding, and it was winter, and my mother, who wore a low-necked dress, caught a bronchopneumonia. You see, 90 years ago, this was a serious lung disease! It was no joke. They called the doctor, because that small town had its own hospital. And the doctor said: 'She's got a bronchopneumonia, it's quite complicated' and things like that. 'Well', my grandmother said, 'that's it, he got my daughter suffering from a lung disease, let her marry him, because he's the one she loves!' And she wired my father, who came to Valea Rea. No sooner did he get there, than my mother's fever began to vanish and she felt much better before the day was over. So they let her get engaged with my father and marry him. They had a civil ceremony and a religious one, before the rabbi, under the chuppah. The wedding was held in Valea Rea and it was a very beautiful one, as you can easily imagine if you take into account the fact that my grandmother was a butcher. All my father's relatives on his mother's side lived in Bucharest. And they came all the way to Valea Rea. Can you imagine? From Bucharest to Valea Rea! [Ed. note: approximately 300 kilometers] They were very elegant, very stylish, and they were impressed with the food that was served to them.

Then my father went to war in 1916 [Ed. note: the year when Romania joined World War I] and he caught the typhus. Poor him, he suffered so much! I hadn't been born yet, but my mother told me where he got the disease - it was somewhere around Targu Ocna or Onesti, there's another place there, but I forgot its name. This man in his company was from Valea Rea, my mother's place, and he came home one night, as there were only some 20 kilometers to go, he dropped by my mother's and told her: 'Your man has the typhus and he's lying in a ditch. And there's a lieutenant there, a pig from Oltenia, who was kicking him with his boot and asking him «Hey, jidane [Romanian slang for Jew], you're playing tricks with me? Pretending you're sick?» So you must hurry, because, if you don't, you'll lose him.' At that time, in 1916, the place was filled with Russians, who had got as far as... I don't know; here, in Wallachia, there were the Germans! My mother took one of her brothers, went to my father's company, and found him there. He was sick indeed. My mother was beautiful, extremely beautiful! When they took my father to the infirmary, they removed his personal effects; a picture of my mother was among them, in his pocket. When my mother came in through the gate of that place, the lieutenant was sitting at a table; he immediately pulled the drawer. She got closer and she said 'I am the wife of Oisie Rosenberg'. The man took out the picture and asked 'Is this you?' - 'Yes, this is me.' He got a little nervous because he realized someone had told her what was happening and made her come. He told her something and he quickly called for a sentry to escort her to where my father was. She wasn't supposed to get anywhere near that room. So she spoke with the medical orderly and with the doctor, she arranged for a woman to bring my father milk and to take care of him, because the place was 20 kilometers away from Valea Rea [she couldn't go there all the time]. When she came for the second time, she had to sleep over. The lieutenant asked her 'Where are you going to sleep tonight?' - 'I don't know where I'll sleep, I'll look around, ask these people.' He said 'I'll let you use my room' - 'Why would you let me have your room? I'll go sleep somewhere else.' - 'It's all right, I'll go sleep in a comrade's quarters.' However, during the night, he came to her! But he was a gentleman. My mother saw the door open and jumped off the bed. Back then, doors didn't have lockers. And the lieutenant told her 'Relax, I'm only here to check if you're satisfied with the accommodation.' My mother kept coming there. At some point, they allowed my father to come to the window. The first

time he saw her from there, he didn't recognize her! But my mother didn't recognize him either, because he had a beard and he was sick! So when he came to the window, not knowing who the woman was, he reached out for her, but my mother stepped back. She then spoke with the doctor again and they shaved my father and got him cleaned up. Anyway, it was because of the typhus that my father returned home weakened and with many missing teeth. When he started to feel better, my mother would go and chat with him. But, in any case, my father didn't have an easy time during the war.

[After World War I] my father worked for a lumber enterprise in Tisita, Vrancea County. At the time of my birth [in 1921], he owned a store in Nadesti, then in Nadisa. It was a small store and it was run by my father alone, without any other employees. He sold everything. He later worked as a clerk for the Singer sales office in Bacau – you know, the Singer sewing machines. I don't think he was into politics. He went to vote, but I don't know if he had any particular preferences – I was only a child back then and I don't remember. He wasn't a member of any social or cultural association.

My father and my mother were not two of a kind. My mother was more self-possessed, more uptight, and thriftier, what can I say? As for religion, she wasn't a bigot. Sure, she observed the Jewish rules, kept a kosher kitchen – that was out of the question –, but she wasn't a bigot. My father wasn't too religious either, why not admit it? He was an earnest and decent man, who observed certain precepts; for instance, he helped sick people or destitute girls who were getting married. He did a lot of good, he helped anyone he could, but he wasn't devout. He went to the temple, that's true, but he wasn't a bigot, like my [paternal] grandfather. My father mastered the rules of etiquette and had lived in a religious house, where he only learnt good things. So he taught us many things! He used to tell me: 'Always leave room for hello even if that person did you wrong; pretend you didn't notice! Let them regret they upset you instead of cursing you.' And he always said 'Be kind, give to others...' Oh, my God, what beautiful theories he had! He would tell us: 'Do not do wrong, for the wrong that you do will turn against you! There is no such thing as doing good and not getting good in return. There is no such thing as doing wrong and not getting wrong in return!'

My father was an open, generous man. If you asked him for a loan and he didn't have the money, he would rather go and borrow from others himself than turn you down. We weren't rich. My [paternal] grandfather helped as long as he lived, because he had the means. But there wasn't one man my father didn't help when help was needed, there wasn't one man or one woman he didn't attend at the wedding when he was asked to – we, the Jews, consider it an act of great generosity to attend someone at his or her wedding. 'Mr. Rosenberg, my daughter's getting married and I need a second nasi [each of the persons who attend the groom and the bride at the religious ceremony and are asked to perform the tasks required by the Christian ritual]...' We always have two nasi at a Jewish wedding. [Ed. note: Usually, there aren't any nasi at a Jewish wedding. In this particular case, it is probably a Christian influence.] 'So wouldn't you like to...' – 'All right.' And my father would come home and tell my mother: 'We're going to be nasi again.' – 'Again? Get out of here!' – 'Well, what was I supposed to do, I couldn't say no. The man came to me and I couldn't turn him down. You can't just make someone feel bad like that.' Also, when a boy was born, the fathers would come to my mother to ask for permission to name their sons after my maternal grandfather, who lived to be 94 [died in 1949]. And they would go: 'Mrs. Rosenberg, if it's a boy, will it be all right if I name him after your father?' It was said to bring good luck, because the man

was so old. And, of course, my father would be present at the baptism with a nice present, and things like that.

My parents had two girls and a boy. My brother was the youngest child. My sister's name was Anuta Rosenberg; after she got married in France, her last name changed to Martinet. She was born in 1916, a few weeks before the war began, in Tisita, Vrancea County, in the vicinity of the town of Marasesti. My sister was the perfect child. She studied very hard and always got the highest grades, whether it was in elementary school, in high school or in college. In 1937, when she graduated from high school, she left for Iasi, to pass the admission exam at the Medical School. Like I said, she was a very smart kid - after all, she had been one of the first in her graduating year! In Iasi, those anti-Semitic movements had already begun. So she was inside that large hall, waiting to be registered for the Medical School. Two young students showed up and started asking questions: 'What's your name?' - 'Popescu.' - 'What's your name?' - 'Rosenberg' - 'Step to the other side. Popescu, go over there; you, Jews, move to the other side.' Among them was a certain Maria Moise. When they heard the name Moise, they moved her with the Jews. But she actually came from a village near Iasi. When the selection was over, the Romanians were taken to be registered for the exam, while the Jews were told: 'You, jidanii, go home. We have no need for Jewish doctors!' The Moise girl started yelling: 'But I'm not a jidanca, I'm a Romanian! I come from the commune of...' whatever it was called. My sister immediately left the hall, went straight to the station, and took the first train home, to Bacau. She came back crying over the eight years she had spent studying in high school. 'What should I do?' My mother said: 'Well, you'll get married and that will be the end of it.' - 'But I didn't go to high school to return to the kitchen. You knew very well that I wanted to go to the Medical School from the very beginning!'

And she left for Padua, Italy in January, three months later than she was supposed to. Because there were many students there, and there were also five or six Jews from Bacau who worked there. A former high school classmate of hers was going too, so my sister said: 'See, Anne Sarf is leaving, so I'll go to Italy with her.' My father said: 'Now, why would you go to Italy? It costs a lot of money, how are we supposed to manage?' The persecutions [because of the numerus clausus] [2](#) had already begun and the situation of the Jews was deteriorating. But my sister said: 'I'm leaving, no matter what; I'm going over there, I'll do anything, I'll scrub the floors in restaurants or I'll wash dishes if I have to. But I need to go to the Medical School!' And she left on 1st January 1938. She couldn't leave earlier because she had to get the necessary papers and all; and my father needed some time to raise the money, to find someone here whom he could pay and whose relatives in Italy would give my sister the same amount there, because money could not be transferred directly. And so she went to college. Six months later, in June, when the 1st year was over, the exams came. She got the highest grades! The chairman of the examination committee congratulated her and asked her: 'Where are you from, Miss?' - 'Romania.' - 'How many languages do you speak?' - 'Romanian, French' - she mastered French and she knew a little German - 'and now', she said, 'I also speak Italian.' - 'And, may I say, your mastery of the Italian is better than a native Italian's, since you were able to express yourself the way you did in class and at the exam! For you, studying in Padua is a piece of cake.' She had figured that out herself. After all, there she was, only six months after her arrival, and she had got the highest grades and all her student-fellows wanted to touch her and carried her on their shoulders to bring them luck - you know how it is in college!



That summer, she came home and told our father: 'Father, I'm not going back to Italy. The classes there aren't bright at all. It's not what I had imagined I'd study. I'm going to France!' We had a relative there, Milu Stormann, the brother-in-law of one of my parents, who had also gone to the Medical School there, had married a French woman, and worked as a physician in some smaller town. Our father himself had spent four years in France in his youth. So he said: 'Well now, it's easier if you go to France, because we've got Milu there, we give the money to his parents here, and he will give you the same amount from his own money over there...' Because he really wanted to send some money to his parents in Bacau, but couldn't find a way, so this arrangement would suit him too. So she left for France, to Montpellier. When she got there, she wanted to enroll in the 2nd year! They checked, and told her: 'You can't, because you're coming from Italy and the classes there are considerably inferior. If you had studied for one year in Romania, we would have taken it into consideration.' You see, we used to have great universities: Iasi, Bucharest and Cluj! 'So it's impossible.' So she went to the dean's office; she pleaded, showed them her grades, and asked that she be allowed to attend the lectures of the 2nd year, explaining she was planning to pass the equivalence exams during the next session. They let her. And so she did. She succeeded at the equivalence exams and was able to continue. When she finished the 2nd year, she sent us a letter - actually, she sent us letters all the time - asking for some papers to be mailed to her. My mother asked her: 'But why do you need these papers? You took all the necessary papers with you when you left.' My mother immediately suspected she was planning to get married over there and wrote to her: 'Don't you dare get married in France, I won't agree to your marrying in France, because, if you do, I'll never see you again! There's a war coming, these are hard times, and I don't want to... You'd better... you'd better come home!' My sister wrote a moving letter to my mother, who had married our father for love, telling her: 'Mother, you of all people, you, who married Father because you loved him so much, how can you do this to me?' Eventually, my sister got married in France.

Her husband's last name was Martinet. He wasn't a Jew. He had a very good financial situation. He met her in class, in the dissection room. He used to go there to watch. He was from Paris, worked as an engineer, was specialized in photographic and medical equipment, and was an intern at the Medical School. So he met her, fell in love with her - she was very beautiful, and very clever if you think of how she had come from Italy and had proved herself worthy in Paris! Did I mention that she was pretty? So she got married. This meant that, beginning with the 3rd year, my father didn't have to send her that load of money anymore. Unfortunately, my sister's studying was in vain. She never got to practice as a physician. Before she could pass the last two exams, the Germans seized her and took her away... Her husband was fighting in the French army and, when they withdrew to the mountains, he told her: 'Anja, come with me, don't stay here all by yourself.' To which she replied: 'Well, what can I do? There's the hospital,' - she was working in a hospital - 'and I have two more exams to pass. What am I supposed to do? Postpone them, after I studied for six years? I worked too hard to do that... So let God's will be done.' Two days later, the Germans took her and moved her from camp to camp, because she was a doctor. Finally, she got to Auschwitz. Someone who had escaped from there told her husband about her, and her husband wrote to us. The former inmate remembered that they used my sister as a physician at first, and later they sacrificed her.

We had a hard time, because, after the war [World War II], all the sons and daughters who had gone to college abroad came back, except for my sister and another boy! A year went by, then two, and we couldn't understand. My mother would say: 'By God, even if she were at the end of the Earth, a smart girl like her would still give us some sort of sign!' All the postmen in Bacau had

learnt their lesson well: when sorting the mail in the morning, they had to pay particular attention to any letter addressed to my father! Then my mother went to a sister-in-law of hers, because it was her brother to whom we sent money. And she told her: 'I'd like to find out what happened. Please write to Milu and ask him to investigate!' Milu sent a letter to the Medical School. They answered, and so detailed, how she was taken, and everything! The school forwarded to my sister's husband the letter in which we were inquiring about her fate. He gave us all the details. He told us his wife and a fellow-student from Iasi had been seized in front of the hospital two days after he had left. After the war ended, he looked for her everywhere! But he couldn't find her. He accidentally came across someone who had been there - the Germans had also sent French people to the labor camps - and he was told the Nazis had used his wife as a physician, and then disposed of her. He spent seven years searching through cemeteries, hoping her name would come up somewhere. But this couldn't have happened, because she had... she had been killed there [in Auschwitz].

My brother's name was Aurel Rosenberg He was one year and eight months younger than me. He was born in the commune of Nadisa, Bacau County, in 1922. He went to elementary school, and then to a vocational school where he studied mechanics. He observed all the holidays that are commonly observed. I don't know how often he went to the synagogue, because we didn't live in the same town. Let me tell you that my brother had an awfully hard time after the war too! Right after 23rd August 1944 [3](#), he and a friend of his started an oil press. The business worked for a couple of years, then the trouble started, because it became forbidden to own an oil press. There were all sorts of inspections and all sorts of setups! You see, setups weren't something that happened only during the Persecutions; they also occurred afterwards! People were accused of having bought or sold what they weren't supposed to, for not having what they should have had or plainly for stealing... Those were dirty setups! My brother was convicted and had to do forced labor; he was imprisoned in a labor camp in Spantov, near Oltenita [in Calarasi County]; it was a rice field. He spent about two years and eight months there. All this happened because he was a Jew. The town was full of Legionaries, and they were the first to become Communists! They sought to satisfy their sadistic urges. After he got out, my brother worked in the vulcanization field. He lived in Bacau until 1978, when he left with his family for Israel.

My brother married a Jewish woman, Anuta, whose maiden name was Kertel. They had a son, Romeo Rosenberg. Romeo is married now, has two children, and is very devout. He lives in Israel, even though they don't really observe the religious tradition there. He never eats what he's not supposed to and he's a very earnest man! When his father died, he was only 17, because his parents had made him rather late. He had got admitted to college, but, in Israel, you're supposed to do the military service before you go to college. Knowing how things were in the army back then, his father worried a lot about his son and, being already very ill - he was ill before he left Romania - he had a heart attack and he died. He died in 1986 in Israel, in Ashdot; this is where he was buried. So the boy lost his father at 17 years old. It's the most dangerous age! He was the only one in his circle of friends who got admitted to college. These were all youngsters who came from Romania and knew one another from kindergarten. He went to the army, served for 3 years - this is how long it takes over there - and then he went to college. While a student, he and two fellow-students of his got employed to guard a factory. They were taking shifts. So he went to college and earned a salary at the same time. Besides, Israeli students get paid to go to college. He had to work, because he only had one parent to support him, his mother, who was a widow with a

pension. A very good kid. He called me last night: 'Tanti, I kiss you! How are you, tanti?' His mother – my sister-in-law – keeps telling him: 'Call Estera, let's see how she's doing!' A very, very good kid! He has two children of his own now: an elder daughter and a son.

## Growing up

I, Estera Rosenberg, was born on 2nd February 1921, in the commune of Prajesti, Bacau County. At home, we spoke Romanian more than we spoke Yiddish. My parents only used Yiddish between themselves, when they didn't want us to understand what they were talking about, and this is how we learnt a bit of it. I don't speak any other language, except for very little German. The village where I was born, Prajesti, was a Catholic village. I don't know if there were other Jews there. But we got along well with the neighbors. My mother included! She told me the story of my birth. I told you I was born on 2nd February, so you can imagine the blizzard outside. When my father went to get the midwife, the couple living next door, who weren't Jews, but Catholics, stayed with my mother until the midwife arrived. They made her tea and looked after her, and they didn't have any problem with that! One year later we moved to another village, Nadisa. We didn't stay there for too long either. When time came for us to go to school, we moved to the town of Bacau, because my sister's elementary school teacher told my mother: 'Mrs. Rosenberg, you'll bury this little girl's future if you stay in the countryside! Move to the town, for it would be a pity to waste such a perfect child!' And so we moved.

Bacau was a nice town. There was tap water and electricity, but not everywhere! There were still neighborhoods where people used water pumps and latrines. However, the streets in the center had plumbing and power. Some of the streets were paved, some of them weren't. There were horse-powered and ox-powered carts, and there were also motor cars. Buses connected the town to the localities situated 5-10 kilometers away. There were no trams in Bacau, and there aren't any today either. But the town remains a very nice place, tidy and all. There was a large marketplace, and a much smaller one, located only a few hundred meters away from the former. In our family, it was our father who went to the marketplace. I don't know where he shopped, whether he had his favorite places or not. There was also a fair. It took place every Thursday, outside the town, on a wasteland. People brought cattle, cereals, and things like that to trade. Once a year, on St. Peter's, there was a funfair too. They had all sorts of amusements and we were always keen to go – there was no way our parents could have avoided taking us there!

I couldn't say exactly how many Jews lived in Bacau when we moved there, but I think the town's entire population must have amounted to some 35,000 people. There were many synagogues. Two of them were really large and beautiful! Then we had a shoemakers' synagogue, a tailors' synagogue, and so on; there were at least six smaller ones. All of them were functional. I don't remember if they were Sephardic or Ashkenazic, but I doubt there were any Sephardim in our town. Each synagogue had its own cantor, who was in charge with the prayer service, and its own gabbai. The town only had one rabbi. However, for a number of years, when I was a child, there wasn't even one rabbi in Bacau. There was one in Buhusi, and people used to go there. Then Rabbi Safran came. But I'm telling you that, in my childhood, there was no rabbi in Bacau. After Safran left, I don't know if there was another one to replace him right away. Later, a rabbi from Iasi arrived, only he was actually from Dorohoi. His name was Marinis. Eventually he moved to Bucharest, where he lived for 20 years before passing away.

The Jews in Bacau had all sorts of occupations! There were tradesmen, craftsmen, physicians, engineers, lawyers and all that! There weren't many Jewish butchers - most of the butchers were Romanian. But, since there were Jews living in town, there had to be some Jewish butchers too. They ran kosher shops. The hakham came, slaughtered the animals, and checked the meat; if it wasn't right, it had to be thrown away! I couldn't say there were more tradesmen than craftsmen or more tailors than shoemakers. I simply don't know what the ratios were.

We didn't really have Jewish neighbors when we stayed in Bacau. The town had, like any other town, its Jewish neighborhood, but, to be honest, we didn't live in it. So the people with whom I grew up were Romanians. Our neighbors were very open though. Besides, our family consisted of hard-working people. We have a saying: 'Don't mind them, they're hard-working people!' Which means they're okay.

This is how our house looked like. There was my brother's room, my parents' bedroom, the porch, and the girls' room. From this room, we entered an improvised bathroom, which didn't have tap water. We heated water in a boiler [using fire wood] and all. We had a garden and we bred animals. My mother always had servants. There was a permanent maid who helped her around the house. There were five of us and it was difficult for her to manage on her own. This girl wasn't Jewish. She was a destitute orphan whom we had taken under our protection, as she had no place to stay - my father had found her in the street, crying. She was very upset, because she had no parents and the people with whom she had lived had kicked her out. It was autumn. She stayed with us until she got married! As for a nanny, we never had one.

We had an extraordinary library, with all kinds of books. We even had a palmistry book! I don't know what we *didn't* have! We had literary works too, but they were only in Romanian. Many years after I got married, I came home and I noticed there were very few books left in the bookshelf. So I asked my father, may God rest his soul: 'Where are the books, Father?' And he went: 'I borrowed them and they were never returned. And, to be honest, I was ashamed to go to people and tell them «Listen, you didn't give me back that or that book!» If they didn't have the decency of returning those books, that's that!' Those were valuable books, written by famous authors. In my family, books were always picked depending on their author! We weren't rich, but we lived like human beings, I mean, we led a comfortable and civilized life. My father and my sister read a lot. I read too, from the age of 12 or 13. I read Rebreanu [Ed. note: Liviu Rebreanu (1885-1944), Romanian prose writer and playwright, author of the novels 'Padurea spanzuratilor' ('The Forest of the Hanged'), 'Ion', 'Rascoala' ('The Uprising'), 'Ciuleandra'], Teodoreanu [Ed. note: Ionel Teodoreanu (1897-1954), Romanian prose writer, author of the novels 'La Medeleni' ('In Medeleni'), 'Lorelei', and of the autobiographical work 'In casa bunicii' ('In the Grandparents' House')], Petrescu [Ed. note: Camil Petrescu (1894-1957), Romanian prose writer and playwright, author of the novels 'Ultima noapte de dragoste, intaia noapte de razboi', ('The Last Night of Love, the First Night of War'), 'Patul lui Procust' ('Procust's Bed'), and of the play 'Jocul ielelor' ('The Fairies' Dance')], all the major ones. My sister was five years older than me. I still remember her like it was yesterday, may God forgive her: 'Here, take this book, you should read it too!'. She read them first, and, if she thought I should read them too, she gave them to me. My father did the same. And then we'd discuss the book, we'd review it. Although we weren't rich, we kept ourselves up-to-date. My parents read the newspapers. I remember the newspaper boys like it was yesterday. They came by our house, threw the paper in the courtyard, and collected the money once a week or something

like that. My parents read 'Dimineata' [Ed. note: 'The Morning', Romanian information daily newspaper, published in Bucharest between 1904 and 1938, with interruptions], 'Curentul' [Ed. note: 'The Trend', Romanian information daily newspaper, published in Bucharest between 1928 and 1941], and my sister read 'Adevarul Literar si Artistic' [Ed. note: 'The Literary and Artistic Truth', weekly supplement of the 'Adevarul' ('The Truth') daily newspaper, published in Bucharest between 1920 and 1929]. It feels like yesterday. My mother read too. As for my father, he never went to bed before reading a book or a newspaper. That was unheard of.

Our parents went to the theater or to the cinema from time to time; so did we, the children. There wasn't a special theater for children, so we had to wait to grow a little older to go to the regular theater. Much later, a puppet theater was opened in Bacau, but we had already become adults - this happened during the Communist regime. My parents had friends, acquaintances, neighbors, and they called on one another quite often. But it wasn't like it is today. Back then, life was much harder than it is now! Our family dined at the restaurant once in a while, and, two or three times every summer, we went to the park to eat mici [meat rolls usually made of minced beef that are spiced and grilled]. There weren't too many motor cars in those days. We had a horse carriage - that was the typical means of transportation Today, everyone's got a car. Back then, cars were very rare. We only had one horse, which we kept in the stable near our house. My father was the one who took care of that horse. Every morning, he would currycomb it, give it water, and feed it. A horse wasn't that expensive to keep. All you needed was food for it. Of course, not everyone could afford a horse carriage. But my father found it natural, because he had got used to it in his youth, while still living with his parents. And I loved that carriage; I even drove it! We didn't use it too often though. My father took it once in a while, when he went out of town, to carry away or bring back all sorts of things.

We observed all the holidays. For instance, when the high holidays came, I remember we went to the temple, and then we came back, because, in the morning, one has to leave to the temple on an empty stomach. At about 10 a.m. there was a break, and people returned home and had some liqueur and a cookie. Then they went back to the temple. At 2 p.m., when the service was over, people had lunch. They gathered together - members of the family, brothers and sisters who were visiting - and they congratulated one another. Of course we loved the holidays, there's no question about it. I observed the Yom Kippur. As a matter of fact, I have been observing it since the age of 14. My mother told me: 'Sweetie, you're still a kid, you'll have enough time for fasting when you grow up.' But I insisted on observing the holiday from the age of 14. Moreover, nowadays, if it's an ordinary day and the time for a meal comes, I have to eat, otherwise I get a stomach ache; on the contrary, on a fasting day - we have four great fasting periods per year - I am not hungry at all. It's in my blood. I can fast from 4 p.m. till the next afternoon and I don't feel a thing.

My favorite holiday was Purim, because it's the only happy holiday that we have. All the others are sad holidays. But on Purim, my mother would make a lot of cakes. We would share, we would celebrate, we would wear masks, we would call on people. My sister, who was older than me, would go to the balls that were organized. There was a ball of the Jewish Community, but it wasn't held every year! I remember there was once a wedding on a Purim night, and my sister went there wearing a mask and a very elegant outfit, and she had a very good time. Yes, this was a holiday we looked forward to. Then there was Chanukkah, when children were given money - the Chanukkah gelt, as they call it.

We also rejoiced when the Pesach approached, because we ate special dishes then! The meals prepared for Pesach are different from all the meals that are served during the year! Before Pesach, we removed the ordinary tableware, carried it to the attic, and brought back the special one, which wasn't chametz. During those eight Pesach days, the ordinary tableware wasn't even in the house, it stayed in the attic! And the special tableware replaced it. The house was cleaned, matzah was bought, we ate according to the ritual and we observed the tradition.

We, the children, used to go to the temple on the high holidays. But only our parents went there on Sabbath. Actually, we went as long as we were pretty young. When we grew older, we stayed at home and played. Well, my mother wasn't a bigot, like others, but we did observe all the holidays; that was the rule and there was no exception. We only ate poultry that had been slaughtered by the hakham. As for pork, my mother wouldn't have it inside our house. While my father ate downtown once in a while - although his own father was really devout -, my mother didn't.

I never went to the kindergarten, as there was no such thing back then. I learnt a few things from my sister, who was five years older than I was. In those days, one wasn't expected to learn to write before going to elementary school; even if you could write, you would still begin by drawing little lines and things like that. I went to elementary school in Bacau. It was an ordinary, public school. We began the day by reciting the [Christian] prayer [Our Father]. I loved history and geography, but I have no idea why! I didn't get along well with math. As for Romanian, I loved to read; I have always loved to read! I don't have talent for writing, my handwriting is bad, and I never liked the drawing classes. However, I drew beautiful maps for the geography classes. I never wondered what I was going to be when I'd grow up. My sister made up her mind while still a child: 'I want to be a doctor!' I have always been a motherly person. I like to cook, to make cakes, to knit. I never had problems with my teachers. Our elementary school teacher was a very special lady. She was strict, but I loved her very much. I remember I once met her in some doctor's waiting room - I was already married by then. She looked at me and asked me: 'Is that you?' - 'Yes, it's me, Mrs. Vasiliu!' - 'Why, look at you! I was wondering if I'd see you again before I'm gone!' You see, I had got married and I had left our town... She was a very nice lady. I couldn't think of any teacher whom I disliked. No way! Trust me: back in those days, elementary school teachers were real teachers, they were special persons. If a pupil was an idiot, it made no difference whether that pupil was a Jew or a Christian! I wasn't an idiot at all, but my parents made me quit school. The Persecutions were drawing near, and times were hard for us, because my sister was studying abroad, and my brother needed financial support too. So my parents made me quit after I had gone to high school for two years or so. The teacher of Romanian came to our place and told my father: 'Sir, you're committing a crime if you stop this girl from continuing her education!' And my father replied: 'Mister ...,' - I forgot the teacher's name - 'I have no choice; my financial situation won't let me do otherwise. She has to stay home!' So I never got to graduate from high school, and I got married at a very early age, 16.

I had some Jewish friends, but most of my friends were Romanians. Those girls were classmates and neighbors of mine. Do you know how social life was organized back then? According to neighborhoods! For instance, the adults from the same neighborhood hardly knew one another and greeted one another with 'Good afternoon, how are you?' and things like that. But their children were closer to one another, they were friends. We went to name anniversaries and other parties; in a way, the neighborhood life was similar to that in today's apartment houses. My friends came over

to my place; we would chat, laugh, tell jokes, play the gramophone and dance. My maternal grandfather, may God forgive him, loved to see us dance! Whenever he came by, he'd go: 'Come on, call Banci, Stefi and this, and that, and let's see you dance a little; do it for Grandpa!' He enjoyed watching us dance. When we, the girls, got together, we would go to the confectioner's or we would take a walk. At 4 kilometers away from Bacau, there's a village called Gheresti. It had a beautiful forest with a park. In the summer, the town hall organized field parties there. My friends and I used to go alone, without our parents. We also went to the ceremonies dedicated to the national holiday. I can't remember the details, but I know we attended them. We danced and had a good time. The town hall also organized balls; you needed an invitation to attend them. I only got to go to one ball or two, because I got married at such an early age. I was accompanied by my mother and I got a lot of invitations to dance. I was always a good dancer, and, when you're a good dancer, you get invited a lot. On 10th May [4](#), I went to the parade wearing a traditional costume. What a beautiful parade that was! There was this colonel, the head of the Garrison, and he had a white horse which he rode during the parade. It was very nice and I looked forward to that parade every year. We also went to the cemetery. There were Jewish heroes and Romanian heroes - many Jews had fallen in all those wars [Ed. note: Mrs. Sava refers to the Independence War (1877-1878), the Second Balkan War (1913), and World War I (1916-1918)]. We didn't have trips or summer camps back then. We didn't go anywhere in our vacations! Or, if we did, we only went to our maternal grandparents. I liked it over there and I was eager to go. Although my grandmother was dead, my aunt still lived there.

I can't remember how old I was when I first traveled by train, but it was before I got married. I think I was 13 or 14. I went to Buhusi, where I had been invited by the parents of a friend of mine [a Romanian girl]. She had come to Bacau, visiting some acquaintances of hers who lived in our neighborhood. She met me and she felt very close to me, so she insisted that I come to Buhusi the day there was a fair there - this was a major distraction. 'You *must* come', she said. So I went. This is when I first took the train [Ed. note: The distance from Bacau to Buhusi is 24 kilometers.]. I had traveled by bus before, when going to my grandfather's.

I used to do a lot of knitting, which I enjoyed. I have a picture of my sister sleighing, and she is wearing a sweater and a cap that were made by me. I wasn't a member of any club or association. In those days, there weren't any.

I never concealed the fact that I was Jewish. Everyone knew about it. Before the Persecutions, I never experienced any anti-Semitism. I couldn't say that, before the war, I felt there was a difference between the Romanians and the Jews. We, the children of the neighborhood, got together and played without paying attention to such things. Things were very nice before the Persecutions. Life was peaceful and beautiful. Jews and Romanians got along very well and partied together on New Year's Eve [1st January], on Christmas, on Purim. They came to our places and we went to theirs and we did everything together! We didn't have a Christmas tree with presents; we only gave presents on Chanukkah. All I remember from the pre-war period is my father coming home from town and saying: 'Armand Calinescu was killed.' [Ed. note: Armand Calinescu (1893-1939), Romanian liberal politician, member of the Parliament (1926-1937), minister, then prime-minister (March-September 1939), advocate of the traditional alliance with France and Great Britain, adversary of the Iron Guard, assassinated by a Legionary commando in Bucharest, in September 1939) Then he came one day and told us Duca had been killed too [Ed. note: I. G. Duca

(1879-1933), Romanian liberal politician, member of the Parliament from 1907, minister during World War I, president of the National Liberal Party, prime-minister (November-December 1933), adversary of the Iron Guard, assassinated by the Legionaries in Sinaia, in December 1933]. There were also the Zionists, who strived to get to Israel, to free the land of Israel. I was already married at the time when I remember them.

## My marriage

I got married at the age of 16 [in 1938]. My husband had been assigned to work in Bacau. After he met me, he said he wouldn't leave that place without me. He wasn't a Jew, he was a Christian-Orthodox. When I married him, my maternal grandfather went like this: 'Bring her back to us or else!' But the paternal grandfather, who was a former community president, said: 'Why should he bring her back? He loves her and she loves him; there's no point in separating them. It would be a crime to do that, a crime.' Well, my paternal grandfather was a very intelligent man.

My husband's name was Gheorghe Sava. His native tongue was Romanian. He was born in 1909. He had four siblings: two boys and two girls. There had been more of them, but some died in their childhood. Only one of his sisters is still alive today. She suffers from Alzheimer's disease. My husband was much older than I was. He was born in the commune of Domnita, Braila County. He went to elementary school there, and then he left to Rusetul, somewhere near Braila [Ed. note: actually in Buzau County], and he attended the arts and crafts high school there. He was a very good student and he graduated with the highest average. He went to the army, after which he had various jobs. When I met him, he was working for the Telephone Company. In the end, he worked there for 26 years. He had important tasks, he was honest and competent. His folks had nothing against my being a Jew. On the contrary, my mother-in-law loved me very much, and so did my father-in-law and all their neighbors. Whenever I went to their village, they acted as if the sun had risen - it was a true celebration! I remember this time when my husband went to visit them all by himself. Both of us were supposed to go to the countryside - we lived in Ploiesti -, but, in the evening before the departure, a cousin of mine from Bacau dropped by. We couldn't take her with us - I didn't want to disturb my mother-in-law -, so my husband had to take our daughter and leave me at home. When he got there, the first thing his mother asked was: 'But where's your wife?' - 'She had to stay at home; a cousin of hers came by.' - 'And that stopped you from bringing her with you? Never come here without her again. It's her I want to see!' Yes, she loved me very much, although she had two other daughters-in-law. And I would ask her: 'Mother, why do you love me more than Stancuta and Leontina? [the other two daughters-in-law] - 'Oh, but how can you possibly compare yourself to them?' - 'Come on, Mother...' What can I say? As far as the Jewish matter was concerned, my husband behaved like an angel!

When I got married, in 1938, they were just beginning to automatize the Telephone Company. My husband worked for this company and I went to all the places where they assigned him to go. A few weeks after I got married, we left for Oradea. From there, we moved to Timisoara, where we stayed for 4 months or so. Then we went to Cernauti, where we spent a few months. I know that, in 1938, we stayed in these three cities. When my husband was fired from Cernauti, because his wife was Jewish, I came back to Bacau, where I stayed for a few weeks. They sacked him when I was with child, with two months left before giving birth! You can realize what a blow that was! I was young, I hadn't even turned 18... I was still a child, what was I supposed to think? It was a real blow. So I hurried back home, to mother's, and this is where my baby was born. It was the fall of 1938. So I



stayed for about three weeks. And my father took my husband to Bucharest, to the headquarters of the Telephone Company, which was privately owned! My father spoke French. He went to my husband's manager – there were several people in the office – and addressed him in French: 'Parlez-vous francais?' [Do you speak French?] And the man said 'Oui.' [Yes] Then my father told him: 'Look, Mister, what is the reason for firing my son-in-law like that?' – 'Who fired him?' – 'The Legionary group in the Telephone Company!' On hearing that, the manager asked him: 'Do you suspect anyone?' – 'I don't, because I don't know them. But I suppose my son-in-law does.' My husband was called, and the same question was asked to him: 'Do you suspect anyone?' – 'I don't know, I couldn't tell.' – 'All right then, I'll find out myself!' Two or three years later, the head of the Legionary group in the Telephone Company committed suicide. He had pulled too many scams and I suppose the time had come for him to pay!

After this incident, my husband was appointed in Sibiu. I stayed with my parents, because I had to give birth. Two or three months after our daughter was born, I went after him. We stayed in Sibiu until August [1939]. He was called up and had to report for duty in Focsani. He stayed there for a few weeks. So I came back to Bacau again. I remained there until the spring came [1940], when he took me with him to Dorohoi. I stayed there until the Russians came, when Bessarabia [5](#) was taken away from us, in 1940. I returned home, to Bacau, while he and his subunit advanced past Dorohoi, but I can't remember where they quartered. It was in Moldavia, anyway.

When the Persecutions began, I was in Bacau. My husband had been called up, and I had come to stay with my parents. The things started all of a sudden. Can you imagine? The same neighbor who embraced my mother and kissed her three days ago wants to kill us now! Mark my words: we suffered a great deal during the Persecutions! I don't know exactly the month when it all began, but I think it was in the fall of 1939. This is when the Legionaries showed up. Before that, things had been undecided. I know what happened under their reign, when the Legionary police had its way. My father knew the president of the courthouse. They met in the street one day, and he told him: 'Listen, Rosenberg,' – the other man was Romanian – 'we're doomed! Look what's happening, look who's leading us!' The police was occupied by the Legionaries! The law enforcement officers did whatever the Legionaries told them to do, not what they wanted. Antonescu [6](#) unleashed the Legionaries only to annihilate them later. But Antonescu had a nervous condition; he was far from being normal!

My father wouldn't say anything in our presence. My sister was away, but my brother endured serious persecutions. He was sent to forced labor and my father did everything he could to have him spared. But it was impossible, because seizures were made by Romanian soldiers together with German soldiers, and there was nowhere to hide from them. You couldn't ask for shelter either, because you would have also got the one who was protecting you in trouble! Hiding Jews was a serious crime! The Yellow Star [7](#) was introduced, and, good God, we weren't allowed to go the marketplace before 11 a.m. Of course, we couldn't find anything to buy at that time! There was a war! A curfew was declared after 6 p.m.! If the police caught you not wearing the Yellow Star, they would take you to their headquarters! One day I went out to buy bread or something like that. A neighbor of ours, Badica, who was a subcommissioner, spotted me: 'Hey, where's your Star?' And he started to curse me. On seeing that, I went: 'Oh my, I forgot!' – 'Sure, you forgot!' I went back inside and we no longer felt like eating bread or doing anything else! He was the same neighbor who, before all that, would kiss me and call me 'Hey, beautiful!'

We went through many hardships indeed! Our closest neighbor kicked us out of our home! This neighbor, named Blaga, a very good friend of ours, had served as a warrant officer or something in the army, but he now worked in a factory. He came to us and told my father: 'You are to evacuate the house until tomorrow night!' My father got frightened, as you can imagine. 'I am to do what?' It was the fall of 1939, and the winter was close. We paid rent and our landlord – in those days, houses were privately owned, not State-owned – didn't have the courage to stand up for us. My father went out and came across an acquaintance of his who worked for CFR [Caile Ferate Romane, the national railroad company]. He wasn't a clerk; he worked on rolling stock, but he wasn't a train conductor either – I don't know what he did exactly. So this man saw my father and asked him: 'Mr. Rosenberg, what is wrong with you, why do you look so sad?' – 'Well, if you only knew what's on my mind! I feel like throwing myself in the Bistrita River! I don't know what to do!' – 'But what happened?' And my father told him everything. 'Relax,' said the man, 'stop tormenting yourself. I'll tell you what. I'm going to let you stay at my place.' He didn't have children. 'My wife and I will move to my mother-in-law's! That's it; I'll come by your place tomorrow morning to give you a hand.' My father only knew that man, they weren't close friends. But he was a real human being! Of course, we could only pack the things that our neighbor let us pack, not what we wanted! And so we moved on Postei St., paying rent to that railroad employee. We stayed there during the war. When it ended, we didn't come back to the old place. Instead, we moved on a street at the outskirts – a very nice place. Then the Communists kicked us out from that one too and sent us to the end of the Earth. Not everyone gave us a hard time. However, of all our neighbors – people we had always been nice to –, there was only one, a young girl, a friend of mine, who stood up for us in the street. So this child of 16-18 years stood up, not her parents. She told them: 'Aren't you ashamed of yourselves? Yesterday, you were kissing their asses,' – this is exactly how she put it – 'and today you're out to kill the jidani!' It was very hard! The Persecutions gave us a very hard time; they were a terrible blow for us! To think that one week ago everything was fine, and today the whole world's turned upside down! Sure, there were some non-Jewish people who saved Jews, but there were so very few of them, because everyone was afraid. Those who got caught were sent to the front or were shot to death on the spot.

You see, they also wanted to shoot my father! A truck pulled by our house. It carried four Legionaries and one German soldier. All but the driver came inside and robbed us. They loaded everything they wanted into the truck! We had a number of jewels, like normal people do, right? They also seized my brother, a 16-year-old kid; they were going to take him to the Green House [Ed. note: this is how the headquarters of the Legionary movement were called], to beat him all night long! This sort of things happened all the time. After they left, I got dressed immediately. Lucica, my little girl, was only a few months old, or maybe 1 year – I can't remember. I took a carriage and I went after them, to prevent them from beating my brother! I got to the Green House ahead of them. I went to the guys who were there: 'Look, Sir...' – 'What are you doing here, Madam?' – 'I came to inform you that they took away my jewelry. Why did they do that? My husband bought those jewels!' That was true, by the way. Times were hard for my family, and my parents had been forced to sell many things so that we can survive! I continued: 'Now they're bringing my brother over, a 16-year-old! What did he do to them?' – 'But what's your name?' – 'Sava' – 'Sava?' – 'Yes, my husband is not Jewish, he's Romanian, and he's been called up for active duty.' – 'Well now, I wouldn't mind having such a jidovcuta myself!' Meanwhile, the others had arrived. They did return my jewels – that's all they gave me back. There weren't so many of them anyway: a ring, some earrings, and trifles like that. And they also let me take my brother back.

This is how things were. You had to live with the fear that they would come to get you. Not to mention the forced labor. They took them out of town to work, with no food. Do you think my brother was spared? No way, although he hadn't even turned 18! My father had to carry him food at the railroad site where they worked. At least he came home every night. It was awful. We counted the hours and the days, hoping it would all be over some day. The feeling of panic was unbearable! We went to bed in the evening not knowing what the next day would bring. Jews were being deported randomly. We just didn't know [who would be the next to go].

One evening, in Bacau, they gathered all the single girls aged from 16 to I don't know what, including two former schoolmates of my sister's from high school, and they took them to Transnistria [8](#). None of them returned! They were 30, 40, maybe more! Those two girls were sisters. Their mother watched them being taken to the police station and waited for 4 hours. When she saw they were escorting them to the railroad station, she decided to join them. You can imagine why, they were her only children, a physician's daughters. Their father had died a couple of years before. So the three of them went to Transnistria together But only the mother returned! One night, in Transnistria, they came and removed her girls from the camp, claiming they were taking them to work for the Germans. The inmates kept hearing gun shots all night, but they thought they came from the fighting. The girls never returned! After coming back, their mother looked for them everywhere! Eventually, she realized they couldn't be found anymore. She died after two years. She died from pain and sorrow, you see. It was excruciating, what can I say?

I was very young, so I can't remember every detail, but I know Jews weren't allowed to own anything, to run stores or to hold jobs; they were banned from everywhere! [Ed. note: A law was passed that was called the Statute of the Romanian Jews] [9](#) Jews had to survive from what they sold from their homes! We had such cases in our own family too. They didn't just quit their job, they were forced to. My mother's brothers, my father, and my brother became unemployed. My parents and my brother weren't deported though; they were lucky enough not to. They remained in Bacau. My sister wasn't the only one in our family who was taken to Auschwitz, where she found her end; there was also a cousin with her husband and her three children, two boys and a girl. They were from Bacau, but they lived in Transylvania [10](#), which was occupied by the Hungarians at the time [Ed. note: Northwestern Transylvania was attached to Hungary as a result of the Vienna Treaty.] [11](#) So they were deported to Auschwitz. The only ones who returned were this cousin and her daughter; her husband and the boys never came back. The mother and the daughter spent 6 months in a hospital - in Germany, I think -, because, when the Americans liberated them, they only weighed 30 kilograms! Then they came home, were sick for a while, and eventually left for Israel.

### **During the war**

A few days before the war began [Ed. note: Romania entered World War II on 22nd June 1941, when the Romanian Army attacked the Soviet Union alongside Germany and its allies.], the army let my husband go, because the Telephone Company kept filing requests - they wanted him back because he was an expert and experts were needed. The colonel who was the head of the subunit was missing; a new petition was received from the Telephone Company, so the major who was in charge told my father: 'Quickly, go to the clerk, arrange to get the papers, and tonight you'll be out of here!' Imagine my surprise when he showed up at our door. Everybody knew we were on the threshold of a war. When I saw him, I asked him: 'What are you doing here? Are you a deserter?' -

'Yes, I'm a deserter', he said, but he was laughing. And he told me how they had let him go. Only a few days later, the war began. His former subunit went to Russia and to the Don River; almost all of them died. If the beginning of the war had caught him there, I would have become an 18-year-old widow.

Then my husband was sent to work in Ploiesti. Lucica and I went with him. During the war, there wasn't one single Jew aged 16-55 in Ploiesti; it was an oil region and, you see, Jews were considered Communists and spies... The house we lived in also sheltered six Jewish families and six non-Jewish ones. We got along well with everyone, except for one single family - those were real pests, but there was nothing to do about it. We had female neighbors whose husbands or sons had been sent to labor camps. Some were in Buzau, some in Focsani, in the Vrancea region, and some were further away, in Transnistria. They weren't all in the same place, so there could be no communication between them. Some returned, some didn't. Of those who returned, some died in just a few months... I had three neighbors whose husbands were away and one neighbor whose sons had been sent to forced labor, because her husband was over 55. They didn't earn anything; they were in a pitiful situation. My husband would bring food and would fill bags with some of it, and he would tell me: 'Go to their places and give them these things and this food. Don't call them over here, don't insult them, don't put them in an embarrassing position! *You* go to them!' And I'd go and deliver those packages. My husband helped a lot of people, there's no arguing about that!

After the bombing started [Ed. note: The Prahova Valley was first bombed sporadically in the summer of 1941. The heavy bombing intended to destroy the refineries in the area only began in the spring of 1944.], I wasn't admitted inside the Telephone Company at all! My husband was the secretary of the section. At that time, the secretary of the section was a sort of deputy manager! So he held quite a position. But I couldn't enter the building, because I was a Jew and I was simply forbidden to! You see, the Telephone Company was the heart of the war [Ed. note: because it provided the means of communication that was essential to coordinate the operations], so how were they to let any Jew inside? One day, when the bombing began, my husband hurried home to pick me up - we were heading out of town. We got on a truck. On seeing me, a man who was already inside got off the truck, saying he wouldn't ride in the same vehicle with a jidan. The driver had no idea about this. My husband was sitting next to him. I went to the driver and told him what had happened. 'Well, there's something you can do', the man said. The following day they bombed us again and my husband came to pick me up again. The driver said: 'Mrs. Sava, you'll sit here, next to me!' He was a skinny guy, the truck was big, so there was enough room for me to sit next to him, at the steering wheel.

A guy was sent from Bucharest once - Captain Capatana was his name. He threatened to send my husband to the front if he didn't get rid of me. My husband said: 'I won't let go of my wife! She's an innocent child, have you seen her? And I have a kid! I have a kid with her! Why does this bother you?' - 'A man with your employment cannot be involved with a jidan!' My husband told him: 'Do what you will, Sir.' - 'I'll send you to the front!' - 'Then send me to the front! I can't help it.' His boss, the manager, supported him, because my husband was in charge with the entire section, which encompassed 5 counties!

They fired him three times because he was married to a Jewish woman, but he [the manager] kept getting him back! My daughter was considered Jewish too. All offspring from interethnic marriages was considered like that. So, if you were a Jew, all those close to you would have a hard time too,

even if they weren't Jewish. Or the simple fact that your grandfather had been a Jew was enough to get you in trouble. These were Hitler's laws, which had been immediately adopted by our authorities! Evil is always contagious; good, however, isn't!

An old woman came one day to beg. There were some Jewish beggars who used to come to the Jews who lived in our building. I had moved there recently. So she came and knocked on my door, asking for charity. I gave her something. I don't remember how much I gave her - there was a war and times weren't easy for anyone! She looked at the money, and then she gave me a strange look. I said: 'Oh, I hope I didn't give you too little!' To which she replied, a bit frightened: 'Actually, what you gave me is the total of what I get from *all* the others in this house!' I took her inside and I started to ask her all sorts of questions. She was a short old lady. She didn't have a pension, that's why she begged. She told me she lived on her own and survived by soliciting. And I told her: 'Look, Mammy, when you come back next week, on Thursday,' - she came every Thursday - 'bring a basket with you! And I'll give you food, alongside the money!' - 'All right, girl.' Half an hour after she was gone, another one showed up! She was also short, old, with worn out clothes. The story repeated itself - I gave her the money, she looked at me frightened, then I told her what I had told the other one. Then, every Thursday, they would come, and I would give them sugar, rice, pastas, oil, potatoes, and onions. They didn't accept any meat, because they were devout! They had told me: 'Girl, give me anything but meat!' When fall came, I canned fruits and vegetables, and I saved some just for them! The winter was close, and these women lacked warm clothes. I was like a child, so I gathered all the 12 families who lived in our house and told them: 'Look, you all know those two old women who come to beg.' - 'Yes,' one of my neighbors said, 'they praise you a lot when they come to us.' - 'Well, the winter is coming and we have to get them clothes and raise money for fire wood, otherwise they'll freeze to death. They've got no one!' All my neighbors listened to me. We raised the money for fire wood and we made them two thick sweaters. One neighbor gave them thick pants, shoes, clothes, caps - we really prepared them to face the winter! Bottom line: those women lived for 6 more years! For 6 years, they were taken care of by me, and, of course, by the others in our house; but I was the only one who gave them food! No one else gave them food! Food was a problem because there was a war. But I had a better situation, since my husband was employed; he toured the counties on business and brought back all sorts of things, which we'd share! This is how we were able to take care of these old women. I observed a biblical rule, didn't I? Without being a bigot! That's me! I don't do things to get my picture in the company newsletter. I do things because I feel I have to do them. I do what I can, and I do it right!

During the Persecutions, I didn't go to the temple too often, because I couldn't take that chance. Besides, with people desperately trying to find a safe place for themselves, there was hardly any religious activity at all. I used to attend the high holidays when I lived in Ploiesti. But I don't remember the name of the temple or the name of the street.

Our house in Ploiesti was located on the street where the prison was, Rudului St. One day, in 1942, I received a letter, a postcard, from home. My mother had written to me: 'I'm letting you know that Uncle Aron, the husband of my cousin, Sofica, has arrived to that place near you. See if you can help him in anyway.' That letter puzzled me, as I couldn't understand what was going on. We didn't have TV's or radio sets, so we couldn't have learnt about my uncle's arrest. This is what happened. The Jews who fought in World War I were decorated. The Romanians received 1st class decorations, and the Jews got 2nd class decorations. All those Jews were somewhat protected by certain laws

and they enjoyed a number of rights. After Antonescu came to power, those decorations were withdrawn. They claimed they had forged them. But I didn't know all this, so I wondered: 'What is the meaning of this letter?' I asked my husband: 'Tell me, can you figure out what my mother is saying here, because I can't.' My husband either had no idea, or knew, but didn't want to upset me. However, I doubt that he knew anything. Two days later, I took my little girl by the hand, and went to buy my ration of bread. And I saw a group of about 40 people marching in line. Among them, I spotted this cousin of my mother's, the husband of her cousin, together with other two acquaintances from Bacau. I immediately figured out what my mother meant [by that postcard]. I took my daughter back home and left her and my ration card with a neighbor: 'Madam, if you don't mind, take care of my girl until I come back, and, in case you haven't bought your bread yet, buy my ration too when you go over there.' She said: 'I haven't bought it yet, I'll go now.' I said: 'You see, I have something to do...' I didn't even tell her what it was all about. I wanted to follow the line. But I had to get dressed, get my purse and all that. The baker's was very close [so I wasn't ready for a long trip]. While I was getting prepared, the line passed. When I got to the street, they were out of sight. So I got on a carriage and asked to be taken to the Court-Martial. I immediately realized what was going on, because I had learnt from various people that Jews were being arrested. I didn't know about the veterans though, but I found out that day. The authorities would make up the worst stories just to destroy the Jews.

When I got there, they were already in the courtyard. I tried to get near them. The sentry stopped me and said: 'Madam, you are not allowed to go near [the prisoners].' - 'Let me go, an uncle of mine is there.' - 'Do you want to get me court-martialed, Madam?! Leave me alone, Miss!' I told him a few things, but he was very confused and scared, and didn't understand what I was saying. (Later, after he was discharged, he told me: 'You kept talking, and I didn't even realize you were talking to me!') Meanwhile, lawyers were walking to and fro before the Court-Martial, hoping to get a case. There were two sentries: a soldier and a prison guard. The latter didn't seem to mind if I approached the prisoners. So I walked forward, and a lawyer stopped me: 'What's the matter, lady?' - 'You see, two of my relatives are here; I want to get in touch with them, to hire a lawyer, to know what is going on.' He took me with him and told the sentries: 'Hey, she's my niece, don't bully her, let her speak!' Then I got even closer and told the lawyer: 'You know, I got news from home and...' In a few days, he wrote down everything I had to say, he got their names and everything. After a week or two, Counsel Cristian came from Bacau. He and my family had lived on the same street and I had grown up with his boys. He had become a rather important man. He took over the entire group of 48 people from our county to prove they were innocent. Meanwhile, I had made friends with two guards, so I could send them books, letters from home, food and things like that. Those guards who were helping me were grown-ups, not kids. They did something for me, I did something for them. I didn't give them money. But whenever I packed a parcel for the prisoners, I would pack one for the guards too. I made sure no one saw me giving them the parcels. We met in certain places - in stores, somewhere near my house -, at a certain hour. I would show up, give them the parcel, and tell them who it was for.

The trial went on for three or four months - it wasn't that long. Counsel Cristian would come every other week to attend the trial. He came to me and put a heap of money on my table... He left me money and I kept a list of all my expenses. I had to take the carriage all the time, because I lived very far from the Court-Martial, so I couldn't walk. Besides, it was summer and it was hot. So I had to pay for the ride, and then I had to buy them food and everything. I got receipts and kept track of

it all. He used to tell me: 'My dear, keep something for your trouble; you can't go through all this trouble for nothing.' - 'I won't do that, because this money comes from misery.' People would sell things from their homes to pay for the trial. And don't go thinking there weren't people who got double-crossed and lost their money. There were crooks in those days too! So-called lawyers who came and assured you 'Leave it all to me, I'll help you, I'll...', and then nothing happened. I didn't take one penny! I had acquired quite a reputation! They knew me both at the military prison and at the civilians' one. I helped a lot of people, and that almost got me arrested, because I once helped some escapees. I was accused of facilitating their escape, but they didn't have enough evidence. They [my uncle's group] got away. It was proven that they hadn't lied and so they were sent back home. But they weren't young people, they were old men, veterans, grown-ups! One day this uncle came to me - I called him uncle, because my mother was his wife's cousin. I lent him money to get home, because he didn't have any and had to pay for the train ticket. They got away, but this cost them a lot, because they had spent three or four months in prison, and times weren't easy at all!

### After the war

After the war, we tried to go back to a normal life as much as we could. But the former Legionaries were the first to become Communists! Let me give you an example. An aunt of mine in Bacau lived next to a family of Bessarabians named Berezinski. They were all alcoholics, youngsters and elderly alike! They had a boy, Toni, who was my age. He was a Legionary! However, to be honest, he didn't pick on the Jews who lived next to him. My aunt lived there with her three daughters, and he spared them. Well, guess who became the secretary of the [Communist] Party County Committee after 23rd August [1944] [3](#)! None other than Mister Berezinski. I didn't have any idea about this. A number of years passed and, in 1956, my husband was sent [on business] to Bacau; he was the head of the minister's inspection service and he had to be there because all the management had to be changed - the manager, the chief engineer and the head of personnel. So the minister told my husband: 'Go over there, Sava, and stick around for three or four months till you get the things on the right track. There's some fishy stuff going on there!' My husband went to Bacau, but he didn't stay for three months: he stayed for three years and three months! I had to keep going from Bacau to Bucharest, because our daughter was going to school here [in Bucharest]. After six months or so, I noticed my husband exchanged greetings with Toni Berezinski! I was shocked! I said to him: 'Where did you meet this guy?' - 'What kind of question is this? The man's the secretary of the Party County Committee!' - 'This guy is actually the secretary?!' - 'Yes, he is. Why do you ask?' - 'But he was a Legionary!' - 'So what if he was? Now he's the secretary of the County Committee!' He wouldn't tell me more. That same year, the Party got rid of him. But, for a good number of years, he had been the secretary of the Party County Committee! He pulled all sorts of scams, and he secured the future of his entire family! No comment...

All those who had done us wrong before 23rd August [1944] - this is when the Persecutions ended - suddenly changed anew. The man who had wanted to kill my father would embrace my mother, and kiss her and say 'Greetings, Madam'! My mother didn't say anything. We didn't talk back, because we couldn't. Guess who told me 'Greetings, Mrs. Sava!' after 23rd August! Jaca, the one who hadn't wanted to ride in the same truck with me when Ploiesti was being bombed because I was a Jew! So I asked my husband, who kept his leadership position after the war: 'Why do you still keep this guy?' That's the only question I asked him after the war. He said: 'The hell with him, he'll purge himself! He'll leave on his own initiative, because I'm not the only one who has a problem

with him – there’s also the manager, and many others. He behaved like an ass with everyone, not only with you.’ My husband was right! In no more than six months, the man applied for a transfer to Sibiu.

We lived in Ploiesti until 1947, when we moved to Constanta. My husband went there first, and then I had to go myself, to take a look at the place they were providing for us. I traveled from Ploiesti to Bucharest and, there, I got on a train heading for Constanta. It was composed of many cars; some of them had civilians, other had Russians. I picked a car that seemed less crowded by the looks of the door and found myself surrounded by Russians! As you can imagine, they wanted to jump me! But I was lucky the conductor showed up! So I told him: ‘Sir, save me from these guys, because they want to force me inside [the compartment].’ They were standing in the corridor and I immediately realized they were Russians. I wanted to get off, but I couldn’t, because they blocked my way out, saying: ‘Hey, stay with us, why would you go?’ What’s more, they didn’t speak Romanian. The conductor escorted me, opened the door between the cars and got me out of there. The Russians vividly protested. They came after me, to drag me back! Fortunately, the conductor went ‘Save her!’, and the other passengers came to my rescue. The Russians terrorized us for many years [after World War II]! After all, they were the ones claiming we were under [their] occupation. I once asked ‘What do you mean, «under occupation»?’ I was talking to some of them who could speak a little Romanian, and they said: ‘Not now, not tomorrow, not 10, not 30 years, you, under occupation!’ They meant that they will eventually occupy us, even if that was to happen more than 30 years later! That was their theory. [Ed. note: In the aftermath of World War II, the Soviet Union imposed puppet-regimes in the Eastern-European countries. In the very first years after the war, it was not yet certain what would happen to these countries in the long run – whether they would remain satellite states or they would be directly annexed by the Soviet Union. The case of Romania was even more ambiguous, since a part of its territory had already been annexed by the Soviet Union during the war: Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, a territory that is divided today between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.]

Apart from that, I didn’t have a hard time [in the early years of the Communist regime]. In 1947, right after a Communist Party branch was founded here, a man came to visit me. He wanted to determine me to join the party. They kept coming for a few months, but I refused. I told them: ‘I can’t, I have a child, and I’m also quite ill.’ – ‘Don’t say that, Comrade, come join us, we need young people!’ And all that. For a few months, I was active in UFDR [Uniunea Femeilor Democratice din Romania – Romanian Democratic Women’s Union]. But only for a few months, because there were many low-quality women there and I wasn’t used to that. I just can’t be mean, and I won’t stand foul play! So I gave up pretty soon. My husband got appointed Party member in a snap, because he was married to a Jew, and Russians trusted us. Being a Jew meant something to them! Besides, my husband was also a fair and competent man! You couldn’t pick on him for any reason. They needed such people, so his manager nominated him for membership at once, and they made him a Party member. However, this was quite a burden because of the things that were going on! There was no difference between the Nazi method and the Communist method! And many people died... [Ed. note: In Romania, the first two postwar decades were marked by a brutal repression against opponents to Communism and against the old intellectual and social elites who were decimated in prisons through physical violence and starvation. Another effective means of repression was the deportation to forced labor colonies; the most famous of which was the construction site of the Danube-Black Sea Canal, where inappropriate living and working condition



led to countless deaths by exhaustion and work-related accidents.] And think of the books and the libraries that were destroyed! They real were treasures! [Ed. note: Concurrently, efforts were made to erase and reinvent the history and the individual and collective identity, with censorship playing a major part in this process. Censorship had a dual nature: a preventive one, forbidding the publication of undesirable books, and a destructive one, seeking to eliminate both from public and private libraries books that had already been published.] Some of these books were written by Romanians, I mean, by some of ours.

I wasn't affected directly. I wasn't into politics. For me, politics meant my home, my family, my daughter. My husband minded his own job. Of course, there came that situation, when one had to queue to get this or that. [Ed. note: In the late 1970's, the shortage of consumer goods began. People had to wait in lines in order to buy them, because the supply was always inferior to the demand. The situation deteriorated dramatically in the final years of the Communism regime.] But I was used to waiting in line. I had done it during the war, so, from this point of view, I didn't feel the difference. I didn't discuss with anyone how I felt about the situation in the country. It's true, my husband used to listen to Free Europe [12](#). He would turn the radio on at 6 p.m. and listen. He wasn't too afraid, because he had retired, in 1970, after 42 years of employment.

People knew about what happened in 1956 [13](#) in Hungary. No one agreed! What a bloodshed that was! We knew about the Prague Spring [14](#), in 1968. We were delighted at what Ceausescu did. [Ed. note: Nicolae Ceausescu refused to take part in the invasion of Czechoslovakia alongside the troops of the other members of the Warsaw Pact, which boosted his image both internally and internationally.] Everyone supported him.

My daughter went to school after the war ended. She didn't go to the kindergarten, because there weren't any at that time. She started in Ploiesti, and then she attended an Israelite school for 2 years. When we left Ploiesti, in 1947, we discovered that the school in Constanta was very far away of our new place. So I wondered: 'What will I do? How are we supposed to move?' My mother said: 'Send the child to me, in Bacau. She'll stay with me for a while and that will solve your problem.' And she signed her up for the Israelite school. I don't know why they sent her there; they hadn't sent me to the Israelite school [when I was her age], although the school existed. But that was good for her, because she learnt some good things. Even today, she understands Yiddish, but she can't speak it. She was a very good student; it took her 3 weeks to acquire what the other children had learnt in one year and a half! The headmistress was also her teacher, and she loved Lucica very much. Whenever there was an inspection, she always had Luci answer first! She studied there in the second half of the 2nd year and in the 3rd year. And then she came to Constanta. In the 4th year of elementary school, she became a pioneer. She was in one of the very first pioneer detachments that were founded in Romania!

There was a ceremony, God, how could I forget it? I was so nervous! She was a good kid and she studied well, and my husband was a respected citizen, so they called me to her school and told me: 'You know, Madam, your little girl will soon be a pioneer. There are some rules that come with this...' They meant discipline and things like that. I had to make her a uniform - navy-blue skirt, white blouse; they supplied the scarves... The secretary of the Party County Committee was present. The ceremony took place in the schoolyard. The parents of the pioneers-to-be were there, alongside the parents of all the others. Only four or five pupils in a grade would get to be pioneers! And only starting with 4th year! Much later, the rule was changed: pupils would become pioneers in

the 2nd year. Speeches were held. The principal, who was also my daughter's teacher, talked about the children, explaining that screenings had revealed that their parents were good, honest people, that their families were united and so on and so forth. You see, they had screened as if they wanted to make them Party members! The Party secretary spoke too, and then someone from the Youth Organization said a few words. Finally, those red scarves were brought in on a cushion and they were given to the pioneers. 'Make sure you don't lose it', they told her. I can't remember if the anthem was played. It probably was, but I don't know anymore, it's more than 50 years from then.

Lucica finished high school, attended the 1st year of the Faculty of History, and then she got married. My husband wouldn't even hear about it, there was no talking with him on this! For a long time, he couldn't stand our son-in-law because he had made our daughter quit school. She was such a good student that she had been selected to go study in Russia! But what could he do? He had to accept it eventually, but he was so mad in the beginning! So my daughter quit everything and got married. But she lived a good life with her husband – he was a very good husband, a loyal and competent man with a strong character. He graduated from the Military Academy cum laude and worked in very good positions. He became a general at 39! He was very cultivated, and he had finished two faculties! And he was honest, too honest – this is what got him killed! So was honest, but, under the Communist regime, being honest and straightforward wasn't the good thing to do. Although he was an educated man, the Communists had also promoted uneducated people. Such people envied him, because, wherever he went, things got done well. He was esteemed for two reasons: he was educated and he was honest. I kept telling him: 'Dorule, stop picking on them, let them be...' – 'They can't touch me, Mother. They can't touch me, because I'm an honest man and nothing can be held against me. It's them the dirty ones! They've got their hands dirty!' So this is how it happened. His colleagues [set him up an accident]...

When he got married, Lucica's husband was an officer. At 22, he was appointed chief engineer in Kogalniceanu. While living there, Lucica went to a school for nurses. She was a nurse for a few years, and then she got transferred to a data center. She has a daughter, Roxana, born in 1960. Roxana in turn has two children: Matei and Diana. They now live in Germany, in Koln. Diana was born there. My daughter married a non-Jewish man and didn't observe the tradition in her family anymore. However, my granddaughter, Roxana, knows these things, because it was me who raised her! My daughter brought her to me from the maternity. She put her in my arms and the girl was with me all the time [until she grew up]. So the young ones know things about the Jewish tradition. Last fall, Diana told Roxana: 'Granny's holidays are coming, Mom. We should greet her!' And they greeted me, of course! They visited me last year, on Pesach, and I cooked them traditional food. And she told her mother: 'This is so good! Mom, tell Granny to make some more, so that it would last us on our way back!'

I lived in Constanta from 1947 till 1949, when we moved to Bucharest. I still live in Bucharest today. Our first place was a house with a garden, in which we lived for 12 years. I took care of that garden and made it the most beautiful in the entire neighborhood! We lived on Precupeti St., and the house was rented. We moved because we didn't have gas, and the place was very chilly. Because of that, I was ill during all those 12 years that we spent there! I had problems with my loins and I lied in bed for 6 months. We moved to this place. I have lived here since 1961 to the present day. It's a very solid apartment house. There were no problems at the 1977 earthquake or

at the last one [in the winter of 2004].

After I left home, I kept in touch with my parents all the time. We wrote letters to one another and we visited one another. My father died in 1952, at the age of 65. I felt so much pain when he passed away! It was in December. Ironically, two days before he died, I had got a letter from him: 'Please come to Bacau to spend a few days with us. Then I want you to take me to Bucharest with you, to spend the holidays at your place. It's more cheerful with you. Down here, we're getting old, you know!' I prepared myself to go to Bacau. The letter had arrived on Thursday. On Saturday, I told my husband: 'I want to go home and bring my father here.' He said: 'All right, you will leave on Monday, because that's also my payday.' And I had an afternoon train. 'You'll wait for me to come home, and then you'll go. And you bring Father here.' That Saturday morning, at 10, the phone rang and I learnt my father was dead. My God, I was speechless! Half of the town attended the funeral! My father's death came out of the blue. He was walking in the street yesterday, and today, at 10 a.m., he just died! He had a heart condition and had his fifth heart attack. I told my mother: 'Mother, only the prefect of Bacau had so many people at his funeral!' People regretted him! Both my parents and my grandparents were very good people! My father had a Jewish funeral.

After my father died, in 1952, my mother remarried, in 1956. Her second husband's name was Iancu Cozin. He was also a Jew. He had been born in Moinesti, and then he moved to Bacau. He was much older than my mother and he was a widower, just like her. He had his own family - two married daughters. One of them was named Toni, the other - I forgot. They weren't quite my mother's age, but a mere 10-15 years younger. They're dead now. My mother's second husband loved me - he called me 'my daughter'! When I would visit them, in Moinesti, he would go 'Come on, let me walk you around the town a little!' He would take me see everybody: 'I have visitors, my daughter's here, my daughter's here!' He would tell everybody I was his daughter. I don't know anything about his education. He had owned oil fields, but the Communists had nationalized [15](#) them. So he had opened a shoe store or something like that. He and my mother lived together for 7 years, before his death in 1963. My mother then left for Israel with my brother. They were the last in my family who left, in 1978.

In 1949, when the State of Israel was created, I was in Constanta. I had no idea about it! I had heard something, but, basically, we hardly knew anything. It all became clear to me when they started leaving, in 1949, 1950, 1951 [16](#), but I wasn't too enthusiastic about it. We weren't so keen to leave, you know, because it wasn't so easy! You know how people are - they're like sheep! If one goes, all the others follow. The first one of my relatives who went was a brother of my mother's, in 1950. In few years, they were all gone. My mother and brother were the last to leave, in 1978. I stayed. My husband had the job that he had, he was in an important position, and, had he applied, they would have rejected his application and sacked him. For my daughter, it would have been even more complicated! Her husband was an officer working for the Internal Affairs Ministry. There was no way they could leave! After my relatives went to Israel, I began to find out what was going on there. You can imagine it wasn't pleasant. Our phone was probably tapped, but I didn't have anything to hide, so it didn't really bother me; as for me, they might as well keep it under surveillance for as long as they liked. In 1983 I went to visit my relatives there. In 1986 my mother died in Israel, in Ashdod, at the age of 91. I didn't attend the funeral because I couldn't. It was during the regime of Ceausescu [17](#) and people were forbidden to go, weren't they?

I didn't get a job after the war either. My husband was always against it; he used to say: 'The woman must stay at home and mind her own business.' When times got harder, I figured a small pension [when I'd get old] wouldn't hurt, so I got hired. I only worked for a short time, in the 1960's and 1970's. I was employed by an auto repair company, in a workshop that made various fittings and was subordinated to the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications. Then I worked in a Lottery agency for a few years, on I. C. Bratianu Blvd. I retired in 1969 or 1970, because I got very sick. I had two major operations only a few months apart and I just couldn't go on.

I had many friends. I kept in touch with this one, Mandi, whom I grew up with. She's the one who stood up for us when they kicked us out of our house. But she didn't live in Bucharest, she lived in Gaesti. She used to come to visit me! I was also friends with the wives of my husband's coworkers.

In our spare time we would go to the theater or the cinema. We would go to any theater that had something on! We didn't have a favorite one, because all theaters featured the same topics; they were all the same! However, there were very good plays and film. I read, of course. The communists had a very good method: while necessities lacked, books were abundant! My husband brought books at home all the time. As for dining out, we did it constantly, once or twice a month. We would go eat a grilled stake. My husband would say: 'Why don't we go have a stake, two or three mici and a beer?'

We used to go on vacation to the seaside [by the Black Sea] or to the mountains. They wouldn't let us go abroad. My husband held an important position, my son-in-law was with the military, so we didn't even bother to ask for permission! My son-in-law did travel a lot, but only on his own [in work-related trips]; his wife wasn't allowed to join him. We once went to Bulgaria - I don't remember the exact year, I think it was in the late 1960's. It was a trip or something. A cousin of mine phoned me and suggested we'd go for one day to Bulgaria, to Ruse and to Golden Sands [Ed. note: Zlatni Pyassatsi National Park]. I told my husband about it, and he said: 'Sure, if you want to go, let's go.' It wasn't cheap, and it wasn't worth it, but we did go. The authorities knew their arithmetic back then! They paid you a salary that was enough for you to eat, dress, and indulge yourself once in a while.

My husband died in 1984 and he was buried here, at the Izvorul Nou Cemetery. My son-in-law died that same year. Actually, my son-in-law died before my husband. I moved to his retirement pension, because it was higher than mine with 400 lei. 20 years ago - I've been a retiree for 20 years now - an extra 400 lei every month meant a lot. So I moved to his pension.

I didn't encounter anti-Semitic manifestations after the war. Maybe, deep down inside, some still held the grudge. There were others who didn't know I was Jewish and spoke in negative terms about the Jews, but that's something else. I, for one, was never insulted on a personal level. Sure, there were some who told jokes about the Jews, or who tried to defame them: 'A-ha! They brought the Communists then left for Israel!' This isn't true though. Jews were actually given a hard time by the Communists, who took everything away from them! It was only after the Communists came that the Jews went bankrupt, because of the nationalization.

Because I had a mixed marriage, I observed both religions. I would go to the temple on Saturday and on holidays. My husband took me there and picked me up. My granddaughter would visit me at the time of the high holidays and things like that. My daughter and my granddaughter had a mixed education and they are familiar with the both types of holidays. We never made any difference

between being [Christian] Orthodox and Jewish. I am a believer, but I'm not a bigot – I couldn't say that I am. I'm someone who has observed the religious rules.

When the Revolution [18](#) came, I felt neither happy, nor sad! I knew what was going on. All my neighbors were drunk-happy, but I told them: 'Don't be too happy! Wait for five or six months, and you'll see!' Six months later, a neighbor of mine, a Hungarian lady who moved to Targu Mures, came to me and told me: 'You were so right!'

I wanted to go again [to Israel], I applied for this [1989], but they didn't approve my request. It was only after the Revolution that I got my okay. I went to them and inquired: 'Sir, I applied for going to Israel. Is my application still valid, or do I have to write another?' – 'Write a petition mentioning your name.' Two or three days later, I was informed my application had been approved six weeks ago! Because of the new regime and all! I went there [and wanted to emigrate], but they all told me: 'Why come here? Get real! You'll have a better life in Romania now!' My daughter told me: 'Mother, you go, and we'll file the necessary papers, and we'll all go!' A guy said the air was better in Romania. Others said it wasn't a good idea to move to Israel and things like that. Someone said: 'I don't know... You should first send your kids here, to see what it's all about. You don't want them to blame you for making them come here, do you?' Imagine that! He wanted to send them there. But this was right after the Revolution, and who could afford such a trip? My nephew was the only one who said: 'Tanti, come over here, and you'll see: it will be good for all of you here!' My daughter-in-law: 'Don't listen to him, he's just a kid and doesn't know what he's talking about!' He was 22 at the time, and he was a student. He made some plans for me, and I should have gone with those plans! But I didn't. I listened to the others and stayed. Otherwise, we'd all be there now! I would go there right now. But what can an 83-year-old like me do there?

The change in 1989 affected my financial situation. If it weren't for the help of the Federation, that is, the Joint [19](#), I would die of starvation! I'm also lucky because I was persecuted politically, so the provisions of Law no. 118 apply to me! Otherwise, I'd have a really hard time. After my husband died, I lived as a widow under the Communist regime for 6 years. But I managed to survive with my pension: I had everything I needed and I could also save 50-100 lei every month. So, at the end of every year, I would have an extra reserve of 500-600 lei. I can't do this now! It's been a long time since I went to a spa. I'll tell you straight: the management stinks! There's confusion and there's chaos! Now you're allowed to travel abroad, but... who has the money? You can no longer afford to go to a restaurant! This is what restaurants are for, right? They're for people to go to them! A neighbor of mine moved from here. He came back one day to collect his pension and told me: 'Let me tell you about my latest blunder. I went for a walk and I suddenly felt like eating a stake and two mici. So I got into a restaurant and I had two mici, a stake and a beer.' – 'And how much did you pay?' – 'Almost four hundred thousand!' Who can go to the theater now, when a ticket costs 150,000 lei? Why, that's my food for an entire week! I only go to the theater when my daughter takes me – she sometimes gets free tickets from someone. Otherwise, I couldn't afford it.... What about the cinema? Do you think I can go there? Take 'Orient Express', which is supposed to be very good. At 80,000 a ticket, do you think I can afford to go see it? I'm a retiree! And it's not just the food that costs money: there's the electricity, the phone, the other utilities! Every time I collect my pension, that's the first thing on my mind! All I have to do is talk a little more on the phone, and that's it! Since my phone subscription is free of charge, the bill will rise instantly! So I got to the stage where I can't even make a phone call! I'm also lucky because i ! jkl nt ation, that is, the JOing

Revolution, and who could afford such a trip? Fixed education and they

I remember my husband and I used to visit some cousins of mine, and we stayed at their place till 2 a.m.! Well, on our way back, we'd come across patrolmen with police dogs on the street, at 2 a.m. Now I don't have the guts to walk on a more secluded street in the middle of the day. Because they told us on TV: 'Stay away from secluded streets, do not walk near fences, do not wear earrings, bracelets, rings...' Then why did I buy the earrings and the bracelet? I can't believe what's going on now, with all these gangs attacking you and robbing you! My nephew who lives in Bucharest got his apartment broken into 10 years ago. He lives in Doamna Ghica [one of the large neighborhoods of Bucharest]. His wife's a teacher and her school was opposite the apartment house. She went out at 12 and returned at 3 p.m., because she had only had two classes that day. Well, meanwhile, they had broken into their place! In 10 years, they never called him to the police station to have him identify an item: 'Does this belong to you, Sir?' Not even once. They don't care. When he called the police, they asked him: 'Whom do you suspect?' - 'What do you mean? I don't suspect anyone!'

Our democracy cannot be compared to the German, French, English or American democracy. We're far from the management that takes place in other democracies! There's democracy in Israel too. Over there, people are free to do whatever they want too, but the situation looks totally different from ours. People can live a decent life and the elderly have everything they need. Down here, we have old people who are simply dying of starvation! So this democracy didn't do anything for the old and the needy! No way! We thought things would turn out differently. I thought measures would be taken so that everybody may live well! But look at all these beggars that we have - they're so many! And the homeless children! How is this possible? For me, it's all the same. I'm the outskirts of my life, on the final run. What I have now will last me for what's left of my life. But I think of all this youth that's coming from behind! What can life offer them?...

I still keep in touch with the synagogue. I'm actually the most loyal temple-goer - no one comes to the temple as often as I do, at all the ceremonies! The Sabbath begins like this: the candles must be lit on Friday evening. I have a calendar and I light the candles according to that calendar - to make sure I don't do it too late or too early. The following day, I prepare my food and, of course, I light the candles again. In the morning I go to the temple. But, like I told you, I'm not a bigot. I do it because it's the natural thing to do. If you're not religious, you're not human! I also go to this Circle of ours. We read newspaper articles, jokes, recipes, we knit, and we sometimes go places together: parks, and, once a year, the cemetery. We go visit our graves, at the Giurgiului Cemetery. When the Week of Charity came, I made a commitment. There's this lady that I go to; I buy her things and I stay with her. I also asked my boss to find me an old man who's sick and can't move - who can't come out of his home. I would go to his place and cook him a warm meal. Well, when I could, because I'm 83 years old myself. Then there's the president's wife, who has an assistance service of her own. For instance, she has the Braille service for the visually challenged. Once a week, she has a circle that we attend too. But it's not actually held every week.

I'm very sensitive to weather. When it's like this, I'm finished. Then look at my place. I had to wash laundry and dry it, cook, dust and sweep. I'm not a lazy person and I couldn't live in a pigsty. But I'm not a child anymore, I'm sick, I've got a heart condition, angina pectoris, gastritis and colitis. Only God knows what I eat, how much I eat, and if I eat! I don't have friends anymore. Everyone's dead, all of my friends. They all loved me. My neighbors respect me. I am very much esteemed in

this apartment house. I have been living here for 44 years.

There is an anti-Semitic trend [in today's Romanian society]. There is indeed. It's apparent! There are people who can't control themselves, primitive people. But you have to take them as they are, there's no other way! Anti-Semitism is very strong. You can sense it. This is how it was, how it is, and how it will always be! Anti-Semitism will never disappear! There are so few Jews left in Romania - pure Jews; they hardly amount to 4,000! Yet everyone's fighting against the Jews! You can see it everywhere you go. Okay, I'm a Jew, so I may sound biased. But some friends of mine and of my daughter's, pure [Christian] Orthodox Romanians, told me: 'Romania is an anti-Semitic country. We think all evil is done by the Jews.' Europe isn't doing any better. I examined the situation, and I may have a better judgment, because I'm older. And I'm telling you that the situation is very serious, because Europe is now marked by anti-Semitism just the way it was before Hitler came to power: everyone had something against the Jews, but they couldn't say much because the authorities didn't allow it. It's the same [now]: things are being kept smoldered. But what can we do? May God help us! God takes care of everyone! If He takes care of the Jews, that's fine with me; if He doesn't, that's fine with me too.

## Glossary:

### **1 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.

### **2 Numerus clausus in Romania**

In 1934 a law was passed, according to which 80 % of the employees in any firm had to be Romanians by ethnic origin. This established a numerus clausus in private firms, although it did not only concern Jews but also Hungarians and other Romanian citizens of non-Romanian ethnic origin. In 1935 the Christian Lawyers' Association was founded with the aim of revoking the licenses of Jewish lawyers who were already members of the bar and did not accept new registrations. The creation of this association gave an impetus to anti-Semitic professional associations all over Romania. At universities the academic authorities supported the numerus clausus program, introducing entrance examinations, and by 1935/36 this led to a considerable decrease in the number of Jewish students. The leading Romanian banks began to reject requests for credits from Jewish banks and industrial and commercial firms, and Jewish enterprises were burdened with heavy taxes. Many Jewish merchants and industrialists had to sell their firms at a loss when they became unprofitable under these oppressive measures.

### **3 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.

### **4 10th of May (Heroes' Day)**

national holiday in the Romanian Monarchy. It was to commemorate Romania's independence from the Ottoman Empire, granted in 1878 by the Treaty of Berlin. As a result of a parliamentary decision Carol I of [Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen](#) was proclaimed King of Romania on 10th May, 1881.

### **5 Annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union**

At the end of June 1940 the Soviet Union demanded Romania to withdraw its troops from Bessarabia and to abandon the territory. Romania withdrew its troops and administration in the same month and between 28th June and 3rd July, the Soviets occupied the region. At the same time Romania was obliged to give up Northern Transylvania to Hungary and Southern-Dobrudja to Bulgaria. These territorial losses influenced Romanian politics during World War II to a great extent.

### **6 Antonescu, Ion (1882-1946)**

Political and military leader of the Romanian state, president of the Ministers' Council from 1940 to 1944. In 1940 he formed a coalition with the Legionary leaders. From 1941 he introduced a dictatorial regime that continued to pursue the depreciation of the Romanian political system started by King Carol II. His strong anti-Semitic beliefs led to the persecution, deportation and killing of many Jews in Romania. He was arrested on 23rd August 1944 and sent into prison in the USSR until he was put on trial in the election year of 1946. He was sentenced to death for his crimes as a war criminal and shot in the same year.

### **7 Yellow star in Romania**

On 8th July 1941, Hitler decided that all Jews from the age of 6 from the Eastern territories had to wear the Star of David, made of yellow cloth and sewed onto the left side of their clothes. The Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs introduced this 'law' on 10th September 1941. Strangely enough, Marshal Antonescu made a decision on that very day ordering Jews not to wear the yellow star. Because of these contradicting orders, this 'law' was only implemented in a few counties in Bukovina and Bessarabia, and Jews there were forced to wear the yellow star.

### **8 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.

## **9 Statute of the Romanian Jews**

Decree no. 2650 issued on 8th August 1940 referring to the rights of Jews in Romania. The statute empowered the authorities to reconsider and even withdraw the citizenship of Jews, and legalized their exclusion from universities and other public educational institutions. According to the 7th paragraph of the law, Jews were forbidden to practice any public-related profession such as lawyer and professor. They were excluded from the board of directors of every company and had no right to carry on trade in villages, trade with alcohol, be soldiers, own or rent cinemas and publishing houses, be members of national sport clubs or own any real estates in Romania. Jews were prohibited to marry Romanians or to assume a Romanian name.

## **10 Transylvania**

Geographical and historic area (103 000 sq. kilometre) in Romania. It is located between the Carpathian Mountain range and the Serbian, Hungarian and Ukrainian border. Today's Transylvania is made up of four main regions: Banat, Crisana, Maramures and the historic Transylvanian territory. In 1526 at the Mohacs battle medieval Hungary fell apart; the central part of the country was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire, while in the Eastern part the autonomous Transylvanian Principality was founded. Nominally Transylvania belonged to the Ottoman Porte; the Sultan had a veto on electing the Prince, however in reality Transylvania maintained independent foreign as well as internal policy. The Transylvanian princes maintained the policy of religious freedom (first time in Europe) and recognized three nationalities: Hungarian, Szekler and Saxon (Transylvanian German). After the treaty of Karlowitz (1699) Transylvania and Hungary fell under the Habsburgs and the province was re-annexed to Hungary in 1867 as part of the Austrian-Hungarian compromise (Ausgleich). Transylvania was characterized by specific ethno-religious diversity. The Transylvanian princes were in favor of the Reformation in the 16th and 17th century and as a result Transylvania became a stronghold of the different protestant churches (Calvinist, Lutheran, Unitarian, etc.). During the Counter-Reformation and the long Habsburg supremacy the Catholic Church also gained significant power. Transylvania's Romanian population was also divided between the Eastern Orthodox and the Uniate Church (Greek Catholic). After the reception of the Jewish Religion by the Hungarian Parliament (1895) Jewish became a recognized religions in the country, which accelerated the ongoing Jewish assimilation in Transylvania as well as elsewhere in Hungary. After World War I Transylvania was given to Romania by the Trianon Treaty (1920). In 1920 Transylvania's population was 5,2 million, of which 3 million were Romanian, 1,4 million Hungarian, 510,000 Germans and 180,000 Jews. According to the Second Vienna Dictate its northern part was annexed to Hungary in 1940. After World War II the entire region was enclosed

to Romania by the Paris Peace Treaty. According to the last Romanian census (2002) Hungarians make 19% of the total population, and there are only several thousand Jews and Germans left. Despite the decrease of the Hungarian, German and Jewish element, Transylvania still preserves some of its multiethnic and multi-confessional tradition.

### **11 Second Vienna Dictate**

The Romanian and Hungarian governments carried on negotiations about the territorial partition of Transylvania in August 1940. Due to their conflict of interests, the negotiations turned out to be fruitless. In order to avoid violent conflict a German-Italian court of arbitration was set up, following Hitler's directives, which was also accepted by the parties. The verdict was pronounced on 30th August 1940 in Vienna: Hungary got back a territory of 43,000 km<sup>2</sup> with 2,5 million inhabitants. This territory (Northern Transylvania, Seklerland) was populated mainly by Hungarians (52% according to the Hungarian census and 38% according to the Romanian one) but at the same time more than 1 million Romanians got under the authority of Hungary. Although Romania had 19 days for capitulation, the Hungarian troops entered Transylvania on 5th September. The verdict was disapproved by several Western European countries and the US; the UK considered it a forced dictate and refused to recognize its validity.

### **12 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.

### **13 1956 Revolution**

It designates the Revolution, which started on 23rd October 1956 against Soviet rule and the communists in Hungary. It was started by student and worker demonstrations in Budapest started in which Stalin's gigantic statue was destroyed. Moderate communist leader Imre Nagy was appointed as prime minister and he promised reform and democratization. The Soviet Union withdrew its troops which had been stationing in Hungary since the end of World War II, but they returned after Nagy's announcement that Hungary would pull out of the Warsaw Pact to pursue a policy of neutrality. The Soviet army put an end to the rising on 4th November and mass repression and arrests started. About 200,000 Hungarians fled from the country. Nagy, and a number of his supporters were executed. Until 1989, the fall of the communist regime, the Revolution of 1956 was officially considered a counter-revolution.

### **14 Prague Spring**

The term Prague Spring designates the liberalization period in communist-ruled Czechoslovakia between 1967-1969. In 1967 Alexander Dubcek became the head of the Czech Communist Party

and promoted ideas of 'socialism with a human face', i.e. with more personal freedom and freedom of the press, and the rehabilitation of victims of Stalinism. In August 1968 Soviet troops, along with contingents from Poland, East Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria, occupied Prague and put an end to the reforms.

### **15 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.

### **16 Emigration wave in Romania after WWII**

#### **17 Ceausescu, Nicolae (1918-1989)**

Communist head of Romania between 1965 and 1989. He followed a policy of nationalism and non-intervention into the internal affairs of other countries. The internal political, economic and social situation was marked by the cult of his personality, as well as by terror, institutionalized by the Securitate, the Romanian political police. The Ceausescu regime was marked by disastrous economic schemes and became increasingly repressive and corrupt. There were frequent food shortages, lack of electricity and heating, which made everyday life unbearable. In December 1989 a popular uprising, joined by the army, led to the arrest and execution of both Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, who had been deputy Prime Minister since 1980.

#### **18 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.

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

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