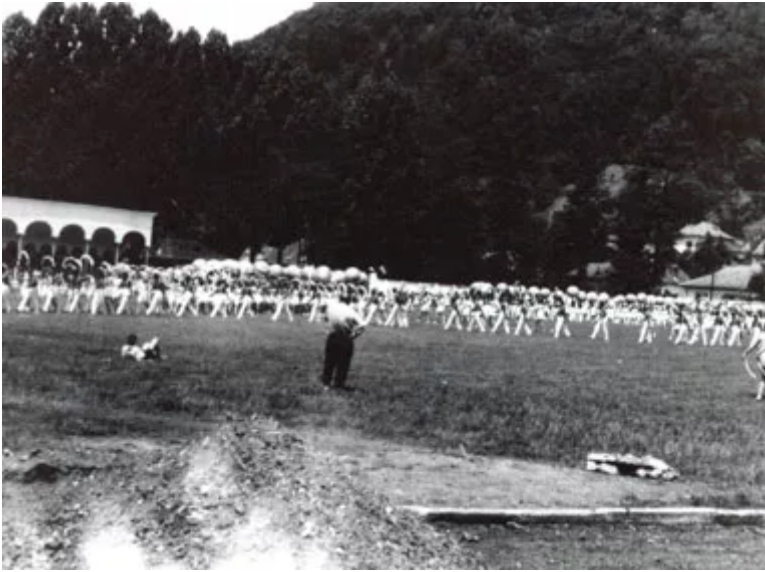


# Gymnastics Festival



This picture was taken at the sports ground in Nagyvarad, at the end of the 1930s. We always had these gymnastics festivities on 1st May or 10th May, this is probably one of the many. It was before the war [World War II], back then the most important holiday was 10th May. [Editor's note: 10th May was the national holiday of the Romanian Monarchy. Following the Peace Treaty of Berlin in 1878, the country has become completely free from the Turkish empire. 10th May was the national holiday of Romania during the Romanian Kingdom, because on that day, in 1881, King Charles 1st of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen was crowned king of Romania.] I have this picture from Andris. This is probably me. Because there are some girls there, in short skirts, no one wore shorts on the street. There were some gymnastics exercises we had to do together, we had to grab each others' hands and walk in circles.

We had to practice it, and they tortured us for weeks and months with it. They overtired us, and my mother told me she wouldn't let me go there anymore, because I was completely worn out every time I came home. But 10th May was a huge holiday, it was called 'zece mai' [10th of May in Romanian]. First of all there was the parade. The army and all the schools participated. In front of each of the groups they put out a board on which they wrote the name of the school, and they were wearing their uniforms, we were compelled to wear uniform. All the schools participated. Then there was a beauty contest for uniforms, and we were very proud of this. The Jewish high school for boys won. We had white trousers and blue jackets. They didn't know these were the national colors of the Jews, the white and blue, that is. And they were the most elegant. Each uniform was ironed, and when they showed up the whole stand and the people from the square in Nagyvarad began cheering. They were very handsome indeed. The parade took place on the main street of Nagyvarad. They started almost at one end and went on until the train station. There was also a jury there, and after the parade was over, they said: 'the Jews have won again.' They won this beauty contest several times, but not for long, because in 1940 we have been annexed to Hungary. And the parade was only organized on 10th May.

I saw King Charles once from quite close. We had to go to the station, because King Charles was coming from Bucharest, by train, his own train. We watched the red carpet... I don't know how I

ended up in the first row, I was standing very close to him. He was a handsome, tall, dandy man. I was very proud to say I saw King Charles. He came by his own train, a golden train; he was the only one who was allowed to use it.