

Pene Letzler



The photo was taken in a studio from Ploiesti, in the 1920s. This is my uncle, Pene Letzler, my mother's brother, in the Romanian Army uniform. Pene Letzler, my mother's brother, was born around 1890, in Ploiesti. He went to college in Bucharest and became a lawyer. He was a famous lawyer in Ploiesti and he was also involved in the Romanian politics - he was the deputy prefect of the Prahova County. He served as a lieutenant in World War I. Being a Jewish lawyer in the 1930's (when the anti-Semitic trends began in Romania) was not easy at all. He lived in Ploiesti and was married to a lady named Mili Letzler. She wasn't too rich and she wasn't too cultivated either, but the two of them were in love. She was Jewish. It was difficult for a rabbi's son to marry a non-Jewish woman, especially in a provincial Romanian town. They only had a daughter, Dora Letzler, who

studied Law too. The Letzlers had a very good financial situation. They were rather well-off, owned their house (which meant a lot back then) and lived on a main street in Ploiesti. Their house looked like a boyar's house [Ed. note: The boyars were the Romanian nobility. They usually owned estates and lived in houses built in the local style.]. It had a ground floor and an upper floor, a metal fence, an extra pavilion to shelter the maids, a place for the car and a place for growing pigeons. During World War II he was disbarred. He could no longer practice and, of course, he had to stop doing politics too. His file looked very bad. He was 100% bourgeois and he had become undesirable from a social point of view. He was wealthy enough to survive though. His daughter married a director from the Ministry, came to Bucharest and became a magistrate. She had to leave her office when the Communists came to power because her social origins were considered unhealthy [bourgeois] and she turned into a housewife. She brought her father to Bucharest. They sold the estate [in Ploiesti] and got enough money to live from and to buy a new estate in Bucharest, on Lacul Tei Ave. He died from skin cancer in the 1970's. His daughter died in the 1980's. She also suffered from a disease - it was something degenerative, related to the collagen, that couldn't be cured at the time. Pene was a rather modern Jew. He wasn't religious, he celebrated holidays mostly at home and he went to the synagogue very seldom. Though he wasn't religious in the mystical sense, he did observe the holidays and admitted being Jews.