Melitta Seiler

Melitta Seiler
Brasov
Romania
Interviewer: Andreea Laptes
Date of interview: August 2003

Melitta Seiler is a 74-year-old woman, who lives alone in a one-bedroom apartment in a building that also houses a Christian church. Her apartment, although small, is clean, and on the table you can see one of the macrames she has done herself, and of which she is very proud. Despite the fact that she has suffered a heart attack in 2002 and that she has to take care of her health, she is still a very active woman. She is still a coquette, takes care of her looks, dyes her hair blond regularly and keeps in touch with her friends from the community and with her son, Edward Friedel's family. Her granddaughters are the greatest joy of her life.

My family history

My paternal grandparents were Polish and lived in Zablotov [today Ukraine], but I never met them. My grandfather was drafted during World War I, and my father, Iosif Seiler, told me he died some time at the end of the war, it must have been in 1917 or 1918. I remember I once saw a photo of him dressed up in the Polish soldier uniform, but it was lost when we were deported. My grandmother was named Melitta Seiler and she died very soon after her husband's death; I was named after her. My father never knew for sure, but rumor had it that she killed herself because she couldn't take my grandfather's death. The Jewish community in Zablotov was rather religious, according to my father, and he was just a child at the time, and her death was not a topic to be discussed with the children.

They had two children, my father, Iosif Seiler, who was born in 1901, and another son, born in 1903; I think his name was Avram or Abraham. After their mother's death, their grandmother raised them. My father was 14 years old by then. I don't know if she had any help in raising them or not, maybe she wasn't very old, in those times people got married young. They fled to Vienna to escape World War I; their grandmother was afraid of the Russian Cossacks 1. I think his grandmother returned with his younger brother to Zablotov, and he remained in Vienna for a while, to learn a job. The grandmother died in Zablotov, I think.

My father's brother lived in Zablotov, he was married and he had three children: two daughters and one son. I don't know what he did for a living, but I think their financial state was rather modest, because they married young. One daughter was called Esther, but I don't remember the names of the others. Two or three years before World War II started, his wife, I don't remember her name, came to Cernauti with two children: one girl was sick, and my father helped her to get into a good hospital under my sister's name. After that they had to go back to Zablotov. My father kept in touch as much as he could with his brother's family. They were all murdered, right at the beginning of the war.

I remember very little about my maternal grandfather, Michael Sternschein. My mother told me that her father lived somewhere near Cernauti, and that he was rather well off. My grandmother - I don't remember her first name - lived in another village, and she was poor, the only child of a poor family, but she was very beautiful. My grandfather fell in love with her, and he kept going on horseback to her village, just to see her, during his courtship. After they married, she gave him beautiful children as well. My grandfather loved his family, and he adored my mother, because she was the youngest of all his children, eight years younger than his youngest son! She was just a child when all the others were already married. My mother told me that he used to get up early, go to the market and buy her fruits; he used to put them by her nightstand, so that she would find them when she woke up. He died in 1931, when I was still a child. I remember my mother said that he died the same year my sister, Erika Esther Ellenburgen, was born. He must have been in his sixties, because he was about 42 years old when my mother was born. He died of pneumonia, he insisted on taking a bath one chilly February morning, fell ill and died soon after that. I know from my mother that he was rather religious, he observed Sabbath very strictly, he didn't work; of course he went to the synagogue on all the high holidays, and all the food in his house was kosher. His father or his grandfather, I don't know exactly, had been a ruv [rabbi]. I don't know what he did for a living.

My grandparents were not dressed traditionally: my grandmother didn't wear a wig, and my grandfather didn't wear payes. They had their own house, but after my grandfather died, my grandmother came to live with my mother, Sara Hudi Seiler. Grandmother was already ill with sclerosis. One time she was in the courtyard, and my sister and I were playing. And she said, 'Melitta, bring me a glass of water!' And when I came back with the glass, she said to me, 'What do you want to give me, poison?' After that, Uncle Max, Max Sternschein, my mother's elder brother, took my grandmother to live with him. His children were already grown up, and he had servants; it was easier for him than it was for my mother. My grandmother died shortly after that, in her sixties, when I was three or four years old. I remember, I was in the room with my mother, and when grandmother died, my mother came to me, took off a string of red beads she was wearing and put them around my neck. She was already in mourning.

My maternal grandparents had six children: the eldest was Toni [Antonia] Bernhart, nee Sternschein, who married a Jew named Bernhart. I don't know when Toni was born, but she was older than my mother, she had been like a mother to her. She died in Transnistria 2 in the 1940s. She had two daughters, Sally and Neti Bernhart, who live in the USA now, but I don't know if they are married. Then there was Grete Knack, nee Sternschein, who married a German Jew; he was a gold merchant and he was rather well off. They lived in Germany. They had no children. There were also three brothers: Moritz Sternschein, who was married. He had one son and two daughters, but

he and his family died in Transnistria in 1944. Bernhart Sternschein was also married, and he had two daughters, Marlene and Antonia. And there was Max Sternschein, who was a photographer in Cernauti. He had one son, Vili Sternschein, and one daughter, Ani. She married and fled to Bessarabia 3. She was murdered there with her husband, but I don't know his name.

My father, Iosif Seiler, was born in Nepolokovtsy [Chernivtsi province, Ukraine], in a village near Cernauti, where his mother came to visit some of her relatives, in 1901. His mother tongue was German, and he studied in a school for chef d'hors d'oeuvre [school for preparing appetizers] in Vienna. He stayed there two or three years, and then he went back to Zablotov, but he no longer fit in that small town, so he came to work in Cernauti. He worked in a restaurant, but he didn't cook, he just knew a lot of recipes for fancy appetizers, salads, cold buffets with fish and so on, and supervised everything. And I don't know how, but he knew my mother's sister, Toni. And thus he was introduced to my mother, Sara Hudi Sternschein. She was born in Cernauti in 1905, and her mother tongue was also German. My father liked her very much, she was young, very elegant; she had been to Germany twice to her sister Grete's. The first time she went she was 16, and she stayed for one year. Grete helped her with an eye surgery my mother needed: she had her strabismus corrected at a famous clinic in Dresden. My father was a very handsome man, with black curly hair and dark blue eyes, and dimples. But unfortunately he suffered from paradentosis and lost his teeth when he was still young.

My father needed a passport to stay in Cernauti, and that cost a lot of money, so eventually he had to go back to Zablotov. But my mother's family made her head swim with what a good man he was, that he was an orphan but very hard working, and so on, so my mother eventually gave in and accepted to marry him. My maternal grandmother baked leika - it is some kind of brownish sponge cake with honey that Jews in Bukovina made for every wedding or high holiday. My grandfather took my mother and they went to Zablotov, where the engagement took place. My mother had some jewels with her, jewels she had from her sister Grete. She gave these jewels to my father to sell, so that he would have money to pay for his passport. But she told him that there would be no marriage until he did his military service, which he had to do in 1926, I think. Of course my mother changed her mind several times in this period, but they eventually got married in Cernauti when he came back from the army.

They got married in the synagogue, and then there was an elegant party; my father was dressed up in a tuxedo, and my mother had a very elegant silk dress and a veil, and a wonderful wedding bouquet made up of white roses and white lilac. However, my father never had Romanian citizenship, but he was allowed to stay in Cernauti because my mother was a Romanian citizen. He had to pay a tax every year for his passport, and he did so until World War II broke out.

Growing up

I was born in Cernauti in 1929, and my sister, Erika, in 1931. When I was born, my father hoped it would be a boy, but I came instead. And when Erika was born, he was sure it would be a boy that time, he even prepared his tuxedo! But again it was a girl. For all that, he loved us very much, and we loved him, he was a very good man.

We lived in a rented apartment that was in a two-storied house, and we had running water and electricity. Cernauti had electricity and running water, only in some villages they might have been missing. My grandmother used to have an oil lamp when I was very little, I remember that.

Anyway, the house also had a small garden, so my sister and I could play outside as well. The apartment had a hallway, two rooms, a balcony, a kitchen, a pantry and a toilet. We had the box for Keren Kayemet 4 in the house. We had books in the house, some religious ones and many novels because that's what my mother used to read. I don't remember authors, but I know she read good books, classics mainly, all in German; she didn't read cheap novels. She went to the public library in Cernauti regularly, she was very fond of books. My father didn't have so much time for reading, because he was working late. My mother always had two or three servants, at least before my sister was born, after that there was only a woman who came to clean twice a week. They were all Ruthenian Russians. I remember the woman came to do the laundry; she boiled it and then steamed it. Back then we used a pressing iron that was filled with embers, which made the iron hot. The laundry was always starched, and I know the woman went out on the balcony and then back inside, to air the embers and keep them burning.

There were several families living in that house, and I think only one was Jewish. I remember one family, the Bendelas: they were Romanian, and they spoke German beautifully. They lived upstairs, and their son used to tie a candy or a piece of chocolate on a string and lower it down to us, the kids. The owner of the house, an elderly woman, I don't remember if she was Jewish or not, lived downstairs, with her three sons. One of them was a lawyer, who liked my mother very much and used to court her. My mother also had a friend from her youth, but they visited rarely. There was another Jewish neighbor, he lived next to our house, he was a lawyer, and he always wore one of those bowler hats. He liked my mother very much, and us children as well. Whenever he saw me on the balcony on his way to the office, he used to call out in German, as a joke, with a funny accent, 'Melitta, was mache die Mame zu Hause?' instead of saying, Melitta, was macht die Mama zu Hause? [Melitta, what is mother doing?], although he spoke German perfectly. My father might have had acquaintances, but not real friends, he didn't have time for that. We kept in touch with my mother's relatives, especially Uncle Max, who had his own house behind the National Theater. He invited us over often.

Erika and I were allowed to play in the garden when we were a bit older, but my mother never let us wander the streets alone. My sister was always curious and independent; I remember she used to go out into the street, and one time a coach almost ran her over. I was more obedient and closer to my mother.

My mother was a good neighbor, but she didn't have time for visiting: she was busy with us, children, or with her needlework. She listened to the radio - we had no TV back then - or she used to take us out for a walk: usually in Volksgarten, the public park in Cernauti, which was very large, it even had tennis courts, or sometimes in the public park of the metropolitan seat in Cernauti. Our poor father, when he was free on Saturdays or Sundays, took us kids out to Volksgarten as well. I sat on one of his knees, my sister Erika on the other, and we used to comb him, fix his hair, we did all sorts of things to him and his clothes. But he let us have fun; he was a very kind and loving man. And there was no exception, every evening when he came home from work, he came to our room, where we were fast asleep most of the times. He always put something sweet, like candies or chocolate, on our nightstands. First thing in the morning, when we woke up, we would feel up the nightstand, with our eyes still closed, we knew there had to be something! The first question when we woke up was, 'Tata, was hast du uns gebracht?', that is, 'Father, what have you brought us?' He was indeed very kind.

The financial situation of the family was rather good until World War II broke out. My father worked very hard at a restaurant called Beer, after his owner. He worked very late, to pay for our clothes, school and vacations.

My father never went on a vacation with my mother or with us, as far as I remember, but he sent my mother and us somewhere near Cernauti for at least six weeks every summer. We went to Putna monastery [nunnery, located in Suceava county, 62 km north west of Suceava, built in the 15th century]. I remember playing there, and climbing the mountain from where Stefan the Great sent out his arrow to find the right spot for building his monastery. [Editor's note: Stefan the Great, ruler of Moldavia in the late 15th century, famous for his patriotism and wars against the Ottoman Empire.] We also went to some place, I don't remember the name, near Ceremus [river near Cernauti, today in Ukraine]. It was nothing fashionable, but it was very nice: we stayed in a rented house, and my mother didn't have to cook; my father sent us packages with fine delicacies. And when we came back, he always had a present for my mother. I remember one time he gave her a beautiful watch.

Every spring, before Pesach, or fall, before the holidays, my mother had something elegant ordered at the tailor's for her and for us. She had good taste, and she was a very elegant woman, very up-to-date with the fashion. When she went for a walk, she always wore gloves and a hat. Back then, there was a dress in fashion for young women and children, which came from Vienna I think, a Tyrolean model: the dirndl; it had a pleated skirt and pleated sleeves. It was worn with a small apron. My mother used to make one for us every summer, and she had one as well. When we went out, nobody thought she was our mother, everybody thought she was the nanny or an elder sister.

I used to accompany my mother when she went to the market. She always went on Monday, because Monday was the milchik [Yiddish for dairy products] day. The market place was very picturesque; the peasant women were dressed in their national costumes. I remember the women from Bukovina, from the outskirts of Cernauti, who wore their beautiful hota, their national costume. My mother bought a large piece of butter, wrapped in a bur leaf, and cheese in the shape of a pellet, because it had been kept in gauze. My mother bought poultry on Wednesday, and she took it to the hakham; back then we had no refrigerators, so it had to be well cleaned and well cooked. [In smaller places the hakham assumed several functions in the Jewish community, he acted as shochet, mohel, shammash, etc.] The hakham cut the bird, salted it, put it in water. Only after that it was ready to be cooked. And on Thursday, mother took us to the fish market. It was very impressive for us, because the fish was brought alive. They were swimming in some large tubs filled with water, and mum chose one, and said, 'I want this one!' Then the merchant got the fish out, hit it, and gave it to my mother, who took it home, and made the fish kosher. I don't remember exactly what she was doing, but I know she cleaned it, salted it and washed it several times. Running a household was more difficult back then, there was a lot to do.

My family didn't have a favorite shop; there was one in our street we bought small things from; but I remember, when we needed oil or sugar, father ordered it at the shop and it was delivered to us at home.

My mother was rather religious, she cooked kosher food and baked challah on Fridays; she observed Sabbath, she didn't light the fire on Sabbath, somebody else came to do it. My father was a good Jew as well, but he only went to the synagogue on the high holidays. He was working most

of the times. But he provided for his family, and he took care that we had nice presents, my mother and us, the children. On Chanukkah, we always received presents, like this dirndl dress we liked so much. On Pesach, the cleaning was done the day before, there was the searching for chametz, and there was special tableware we kept in a trunk in the attic. My mother used to throw out or give away all food, like flour, which she hadn't bought recently. She cooked on a kitchen range that was built into a wall and on Pesach she cleaned it, rubbed it, and put hot embers all over it, so that it was kosher. My mother always bought one hundred eggs: the hard-boiled eggs were minced together with small cut onion, oil and pepper. This appetizer was served with matzah. There were guests over at our house, or we were invited to my uncles, but I don't remember my father leading the seder. It was too long ago.

We went to the big temple on special occasions, like the high holidays or a wedding, and it was always full, you had to buy seats for this beforehand from the Jewish community: women sat on one side, and men on the other. My parents were always careful to buy seats before any high holiday. But there were several synagogues in Cernauti, apart from the big temple, and on Saturdays my mother took us girls to the one closest to our home. There was no difference made between Neolog 5 or Orthodox Jews, I first heard about it when I came to Brasov.

There were several sweets made on Purim: we cooked the traditional leika. We also did fluden, I think here in Transylvania it is called kimbla. This fluden was somewhat similar to strudel; it was made up of dough that was spread very, very thin on tablecloths in the house, thin as cigarette paper, and left to dry. Then there was a filling of ground nut kernels, mixed with sugar and honey. This filling was wrapped in the dough like a strudel, put in the griddle and cut into pieces before putting it in the oven. It can be served with jam as well, my mother did that when I got married, it was delicious! But it's very hard to make, I never made it. Of course we baked shelakhmones, and we gave them to neighbors; they came to us as well with gifts, even if they weren't Jewish, many Christians knew our holidays and respected them. We usually received eggs from them when it was the Orthodox Easter. I remember vaguely, that on Purim, it was customary for masked people to come to visit. Generally they were well received, people weren't afraid of letting strangers into their house back then. Mother used to tell me that the masks made fun of the hosts, cracked some jokes or were ironic, and the host had to guess who was behind the mask, if it was someone known. I don't remember them coming into our house, it may have happened when my mother wasn't married yet. But there was a lot of joy and celebrating in our house. We kids didn't dress up though, but I remember that there were Purim balls in town, and people were allowed to wear masks in the street.

My mother also baked kirhala, that is some sort of cookie: it was a dough with many eggs, I think, and it was cut into pieces before putting it in the oven. There was sugar sprinkled over them, and when it was done, the sides of the cookie would rise, so the cookie looked like a small ship. They melted in one's mouth, they were delicious.

On Jewish New Year's Eve there were always big preparations, everybody went to the big synagogue, and then we were invited to a party to one aunt or uncle, and there was a lot of food and drinking. Both my parents fasted on Yom Kippur, and so did I when I turned 13. But at that time, we were already in Transnistria, so food was scarce anyway. On Sukkot we went to the synagogue and celebrated, people danced with the Torah in the synagogue's courtyard, but we didn't build a sukkah ourselves. [People dance with the Torah on Simchat Torah, which is the last

day of Sukkot.]

The town I grew up in, Cernauti, was large, cultural, very cosmopolitan. There were six or seven cinemas, the National Theater, the Jewish Theater, and other wonderful buildings, like Dom Polski, that is the Polish House; one could even find symphonic music. The Jewish community in Cernauti was very large and powerful; however, I don't know exact numbers. There was the synagogue, very beautiful; I remember I was there for the last time when my cousin, Ani, Uncle Max's daughter, married there before World War II started. The rabbi, I don't know his name, wasn't very old, and he was the same who had married my mother. After the synagogue was razed to the ground during the persecution, before the war, the rabbi was murdered. There were mikves in Cernauti, but we didn't go.

There were several hakhamim in Cernauti, and no Jew ate poultry or veal if it hadn't been butchered by the hakham. There were also many functionaries: hakhamim, shochetim, rabbis. [Editor's note: in smaller Jewish communities the hakham could assume various functions, among them, that of a shochet, however in this case the interviewee probably missed to say shochet.] There were no Jewish neighborhoods in Cernauti, Jews lived scattered across the town. Jews had all sorts of jobs: tailors, watch menders, shoemakers, shopkeepers, doctors and lawyers, they could be anything before 1939, when the persecution under the Goga-Cuza government 6 began. And there was something else: Jewish restaurants, some of them with kosher food. My father worked for a quality restaurant, very central and fancy, where he made up the recipes for cold buffets, and important people came in to have an appetizer. The owner of the place was a Jew named Beer. And there was also a well-known Jewish restaurant, the Friedmann's. I still remember where it was. If I got off the train in Cernauti now, I could still find it, it was 'auf der Russischen Gasse', on the Russian street. It was a lacto-vegetarian restaurant, and everybody in Cernauti, Jewish or not, came to Friedmann's, he had wonderful delicacies with dairy products. It was a fashionable meeting place for ladies, who came there, ate and chatted for two or three hours. My mother also took us there a few times, and we always had maize cake, which was very popular. It was a dish made of corn flour, with a cream cheese filling, and sour cream on the side; it was awesome, I can tell you! There were also other recipes, and all kosher, nothing with meat was served.

We used to go and watch parades, I remember 10th May, the Heroes' Day 7, when King Carol II 8 came to Cernauti with his son, Michael 9. We were pupils in the third grade, I think, and my mother dressed up and came with us; we stayed in the front, and we saw the royal coach and all the royal retinue pass by. King Carol wore a feathered helmet, and Michael wore a beautiful uniform as well as his father.

I didn't have a Fraulein [governess] when I was little; my mother took care of me, with the help of the servants. Then I went to the state elementary school for the first four grades. I did the first grade of high school in the Holy Virgin high school, a nuns' high school. Each high school had a different uniform back then, and each pupil had a number. Half of our class was made up of Jews, and the other half of Romanians and Poles. We had religion classes, and we, Jewish girls, had a teacher of Jewish religion, and anti-Semitism was never an issue back then. All students paid a tax; and they all studied the same subjects in Romanian, except for religion, of course. I remember in high school I had thick, beautiful, chestnut-red hair, and I wore it in two plaits. During the breaks the boys were chasing me and pulling my plaits, saying, 'Melitta, du hast einen Wald im Kopf!', that is, 'Melitta, you have a forest in your head!'

I was good at mathematics, but I especially liked literature and history; I read a lot about famous painters and writers, I enjoyed it. I had friends in school, but not outside of it because my mother didn't let me wander in the town all alone. I don't remember names, it was a long time ago, but my friends were Jewish and Romanian alike.

I never went to cheder. Father told me later that he intended to send us both to an old Jew to learn, but the war broke out and he couldn't do that anymore. I finished my first year of high school in June 1940, and immediately after that the Russians came. We had to repeat the year, they brought new teachers from Russia and every school had to study in Russian. They also imposed mixed classes, boys and girls together. At first we laughed, made fun of the teachers, we didn't know Russian and the teachers didn't know German, so they couldn't understand us. But I never got into serious trouble with my teachers. We went on for a year and I could already speak Russian in 1941.

Father also bought a cottage piano for us girls, and once or twice a week we took piano lessons for two or three years, before the war started. We would go to an elderly Polish lady to learn, and could practice at home, because we had the cottage piano at home.

I went to the Jewish theater only once, when I was little. It was a big event, a very famous artist from the Yiddish theater was going to perform and sing as well, Sidi Tal. My mother took us girls to see her. She also took us to the cinema; we never missed a movie with Shirley Temple. After the Russians came, it was compulsory to go with the school to see Russian plays, Lev Tolstoy especially. I enjoyed them, too.

During the War

In the summer of 1941 the Romanian regime was reestablished, and Antonescu 10 came to power. The times were very troubled, and I remember in November we were told to pack a few things in a bundle and to be ready to go: we were supposed to be already dressed when the Romanian gendarmes would knock on our doors to take us away. The gendarmes came, and we were taken to some part of Cernauti, I don't know exactly to which, that was declared a ghetto. We were crowded, I don't know how many in one room, and we had to stay there for some days; after that, gendarmes with bayonets came and took us to the train station: they forced us to get on cattle wagons, we were so many in one wagon that one could hardly breathe. And this convoy went from Cernauti to Atachi, which was the northernmost point of Bessarabia, right near the bank of the Dnestr. It was a frightful journey and when the train stopped, they wouldn't let us get off right away, but when we did, we had to step in mud, thick mud that went up to our knees, because it was after a flood. Near the railroad there was a hillock, and they forced us to climb it, men, women and children and old people altogether, with everything we had brought. It was terrible, sick or old people fell in the thick mud, others pulled them out. Everybody had to make it to the top with their belongings. When we were on top, they ordered us to leave everything we had packed there, and then they chased us down the hillock again.

Then everybody had to follow a huge convoy that went to the bank of the Dnestr. There were thousands and thousands of people on the bank of the river, because several convoys had arrived, not just ours. It was night, it was dark, and the roaring of the Dnestr was frightening. Families were separated, voices cried out, yelled, called each other. The screams and the cries were terrible in that dark cold November night. Everybody had to cross the Dnestr on those ferries that carry carts and horses; only this time there were people instead. It went very slowly, and my family was there

all night until my father gave something he had saved, I don't know what, to somebody and we were finally on the ferry. You could hear shots being fired in the night, the screams of people being thrown in the river; it was terrible.

When we reached the other bank of Dnestr, we were already in Transnistria. We were in a suburb of Mohilev-Podolsk 11; it was a place with small shattered houses, and all looked and smelled like water closets. There were so many people trying to find a spot to rest! We were exhausted, and we just sat quietly near a wall until morning. In the morning the gendarmes told us, 'Everybody must be ready to leave!' A woman, who had probably come there some days before, told us, 'Good people, if you can, hide and don't go with this convoy!' There was a young couple of Jews, a bit younger than my parents and with no children, who had come with us, in the same wagon. When they heard the woman, they immediately set out to leave the building; my sister ran after them, and I after my sister. When we reached the main street, I turned around and saw that my parents weren't behind me, so I went back. I found them in the convoy, surrounded by gendarmes who screamed at people to move.

There were thousands and thousands of people in that convoy, the entire main street was full of people. My mother started to cry, my father cried out, 'Where's my daughter?!'; but my sister had disappeared with that Jewish family. The sentinels guarded the convoy, they were mostly Romanian, but I remember there was a German one as well. And my mother started to cry and plead, in German and Romanian, that she had lost a child, that all she wanted was to find her baby. Nobody looked at her, but she didn't stop crying. At one point, a young sentinel, a Romanian soldier, stopped, looked at us and said: 'Come with me!' We got out of the convoy, and set out for the small street where I last saw the couple of Jews with my sister. We didn't go very far, there were too many people, but we saw the woman coming towards us with my sister Erika. The soldier saw we found the girl, but he was a good soul, he said, as if he hadn't seen anything, 'Go find the girl, and when you do, come back.' That was our great luck, and that is why we survived, because we could stay in the city of Mohilev-Podolsk.

The convoy left the city, and we stayed behind, with some other people who knew it was better to stay. Mohilev-Podolsk was not a concentration camp surrounded by barbed wire, it was a ghetto. In the whole city there were no more Ukrainian Jews, they had all been slaughtered in Odessa and other places [during the Romanian occupation of Odessa] 12. The few Jews living there had been brought from over the Dnestr. After the convoy left and my parents weren't afraid to come out, my father started to look for a place to live. We found a Ukrainian woman who took us in; she was very poor, and full of lice, she was scratching herself all the time. My clean, beautiful mother was appalled, you can imagine. We stayed there only for a little while, and then we found another place. It was also in the ghetto, in the suburb, but the house belonged to some Ukrainians who were well off, they had a garden, and cows. My parents spoke with the owners, and they took us in. They had a little house near the stables, with a small kitchen, and one room, built on the bare ground. However, it was clean, and that's where we stayed.

My parents paid the rent with a few jewels my mother had been able to save: she had sown them in a small pocket in her suspenders. When they took us out of the train, they had no time to do any bodily search. It's said that the Ukrainians were anti-Semites, but it is not a rule, these people were kind for taking us in; moreover, they didn't ask for a high rent, they didn't insult us, and they gave us some milk or a tomato during summer, because we were starving. The hoziaika, that is the

owner [in Ukrainian], had two daughters: they were a little bit older than us, but we made friends, they didn't treat us badly; we even played together sometimes.

We lived only on maize flour, and my mother made a gir, some sort of soup, just boiled water sprinkled with maize flour. [Editor's note: The basic meaning of the Akkadian word 'gir' is a grain of carob seed.] Very rarely we could make maize mush, and my sister, who was always spoiled and fastidious about food, was always the first at the table, to make sure that nobody got a bigger piece. We sometimes had army bread, which gave my sister and I jaundice. Not to mention the subnutrition that gave my sister and I furunculous: we were full of puss, and my poor father washed us and dressed our wounds.

We lived there for three years, from 1941 to 1944, and the times were hard. German troops passed our small house several times, but we knew they were coming. I don't know how, but the news about them always spread fast; we were so afraid, we would hide in the small kitchen, and we didn't even breathe hard, for fear the Germans might hear us. I remember, during the winter, my sister and I went to the gate of the house - the house these Ukrainians had seemed a palace to us, although it was just a normal house - we saw carts, full of corpses piled up like boards, they were that thin; I don't know where they took them.

All around Mohilev there were concentration camps, surrounded by barbed wire. My future husband, doctor Jacques Friedel, was in one of them, and so was my mother's elder brother, Moritz Sternschein. He had been to Germany, where he married a German Jewish woman, and they fled Germany and came back to Cernauti when Hitler came to power. But he was deported to one of these camps with his wife and his three children. My uncle and his wife died before the liberation, and when the front came, their children were brought to Mohilev. My parents found them, but they didn't survive, they were all sick, with their bellies swollen. People died during summer because of typhoid fever, and during winter because of the cold and typhus. They wore only rags, they were underfed, you could see them ransacking garbage for a potato peel. The living conditions were disastrous; there were worms and lice everywhere. We never had lice, all that time, and that thanks to my mother: she was a clean, educated woman, and in the small house where we lived, she put a chair in front of the bed, so whoever would come in, would sit on the chair and not on the bed. She also brushed our hair with a small- toothed comb; we, girls, had beautiful hair and my mother didn't cut it. As far as I know there were no mass executions in Mohilev.

Time passed, and we were liberated by the Russian front in April 1944. The Russians installed an anti-aircraft cannon right behind the stable, in the courtyard where we lived. The sound of it was terrible! My father was drafted by force in the Russian army because he didn't hide like others did, and he went with the front to Stalingrad, as he later told us. So after Mohilev was liberated, and the news spread that Cernauti was liberated as well, my mother found herself alone, with two girls and without my father. We had to go back to Cernauti on foot, only when we reached a railway station could we travel by train for a few miles. The Russian convoys didn't care very much, they let us travel in goods trains. We walked and traveled for two weeks, I think, and when we got back home, all three of us had our hair full of lice. We found our apartment; it was completely empty, except for an iron bed, where we all slept. We didn't know, but that apartment was used by some Russians, and one night we just woke up with some of them in the room. We were so afraid that they would rape us; I was already 15 years old, and a beautiful girl, my mother was also a beautiful woman, my sister was rather skinny, but still, we were three defenseless women. We were terrified,

but they were good-hearted people, they left us alone.

After the War

Life was very hard during those two years, from 1944 to 1946. We girls went to school and we studied in Russian. My uncle Max Sternschein, who wasn't deported, helped us with what he could. Some permits for Jews to stay in Cernauti were issued by the Romanian authorities, for huge sums of money, and I think my uncle raised that money somehow. And he was lucky, because some Jews were deported later, even if they had paid a large sum of money to stay behind. When the Russians came, in 1940, Ani had just finished high school, she had passed her graduation exam. And Russians imposed that everybody who had graduated from high school was to go to Bessarabia to teach there. Uncle Max was desperate, but he couldn't do anything. So he married Ani in a hurry with a medicine student, one of her pretenders, so that she wouldn't be all alone and with no protection there. But the German front came, and they were massacred there, they weren't heard of again. He was still hoping to hear from Ani, his daughter. Uncle Max sent people to look for them, my mother kept asking everybody who went to or was coming from Bessarabia, and the answer was always the same: no Jews were left alive. Uncle Max had a very hard time accepting this, he adored his daughter.

Mainly we would live on what my mother took from some people. For example, somebody gave her a dress they didn't use anymore, and she went to the market and sold it for a few rubles, and that was our money for bread. Uncle Bernhart, who had been deported, came back with his wife and child; they had another daughter in Cernauti, after they returned, and soon after that they left for Israel. But we couldn't go anywhere; we were waiting for my father. My father managed to send us a package with clothes, and in 1946 he came home.

In the same year we left for Brasov, there was some sort of decree that Jews could go to Romania if they had Romanian citizenship; I remember I turned 17 the day we set foot in this town. We didn't choose the town, we were sent here. We had already experienced the Russians back in Cernauti, we knew what they were capable of, so we didn't hesitate about moving to Romania. We had two examples: the first time they came, in 1940, there were some rich people in Cernauti, some of them Jews, some of them Romanians. They were taken to Siberia [to the so-called Gulag camps] 13 , and they were never heard of again. Then, when we came back from Transnistria, in 1944, the NKVD 14 roamed the streets and made raids in houses during the night, taking people to forced labor to the Donets mines. [Editor's note: Donets, or Donbass, as it is also called, is the site of a major coalfield and an industrial region in Eastern Ukraine in the plain of the Rivers Donets and lower Dnieper.] It made no difference to them if you told them that you were a Jew and that you had just come back from deportation; they didn't care.

One night, they came to our house, but as we lived on the first floor, we heard them ringing the bells of the neighbors first. My mother knew who it was, so she immediately ran bare-foot and in her nightgown to the cellar. She hid and I had to open he door. And I was wearing a black silk dressing gown, a gift from my aunt, Grete, and I probably looked like a young woman, so the NKVD wanted to take me away. I told him I was still a pupil; he didn't believe me, but I showed him my notebook and he finally let me go. That fright I will never forget! There were people who were actually jumping off their balconies when the NKVD came to their door, they would do anything not to be taken to Donets, so we had a pretty good idea about who the Russians were. The first chance

we got to leave Cernauti, we did.

Life was very hard here in Brasov, because we had to live in a house with some Romanians, and we were so crowded, we had to live several families in one room. We had to share the room with one more family, and we slept on the floor at first, then we managed to build a cot and we slept there. After a year or two the family that lived with us left. My parents continued to stay there, but we girls eventually left: I got married, and Erika went to university in Bucharest, were she studied languages, Russian and English. My parents were never really over the trauma of being deported. All they thought about was our welfare, and not theirs: they wanted us to have good food, clothes, but my father never thought of buying an apartment, although it would have been possible back then, with a loan. Father worked as the manager of a food laboratory, and mother was a housewife.

We wanted to emigrate to Israel, we were a young family; my father filed for it, but he didn't get the approval, and I don't know if he tried again. I don't know the reasons for the rejection. Uncle Bernhart left with his family from Bucharest to Israel in 1947, but I don't know how they did it. Uncle Max left for Buenos Aires with his wife Suzie and his son Vili; they managed to do so because Suzie had some relatives there, and they helped her. Uncle Max died some time in the late 1950s I think. About Vili I only know that he married a Jewish woman who was from Romania as well, and that he became a diamond polisher.

Erika and I finished school here in Brasov. I finished the ten grades of high school in evening classes, and after that, at 19, I got a job. Although we were rather poor, my mother didn't want us to neglect our education. In the first two or three years after arriving in Brasov, we had private lessons of German literature and grammar with a teacher. After that we studied English with a teacher, Mrs. Rathaus. It was rather expensive, but I took those classes for about eight years, I only interrupted them when I was about to give birth to my son.

After she graduated, Erika became a Russian teacher here, in Brasov, and married a Jew, Alfred [Freddie] Ellenburgen in 1959. They had a good marriage, and they have a son, Marcel. Marcel married a Romanian, Iulia, and they live in Israel now, where he has two little boys.

I worked for three years in the bookkeeping department of T.A.P.L., which was the state organization that managed restaurants and the food industry. In the meantime, I took some accounting courses, and Mr. Rathaus, my teacher's husband, who was a pharmacist, helped me get a position as an accountant at Centrofarm. [Centrofarm was a state pharmaceutical company, which operated all over the country.] I worked there for three years, until 1955. I had no problems because of being Jewish in neither of these work places.

I was lucky that I made good friends with the young people from the Jewish community here. They were Pista Guth, Brauning, Loti Gros, and some other high school colleagues of theirs. They liked my sister and me a lot, so they introduced us in their circles and in Gordonia 15, a Zionist organization. They were very friendly, invited us to small five o'clock tea parties and so on. At Gordonia there was a young doctor, Bernhart, who liked me a lot, courted me, and he introduced me to a friend of his, doctor Orosz. He was a Hungarian, not a Jew, but he had many Jewish friends. Doctor Orosz courted me as well, we went out for walks, and during one of these walks we met doctor Jacques Friedel, my future husband. Jacques was born in Campulung Moldovenesc, but he studied medicine in Cluj-Napoca, and he was assigned to Brasov.

We got married in October 1953, in Brasov, in the Neolog synagogue here. It was a beautiful wedding, with a chuppah, the two hakhams from Brasov attended, I had many guests, friends and colleagues from work, three maids of honor, a choir, and the organ played. I remember a jeweler, Weinberger, who came to sing in my honor, he had a beautiful voice. I had a gorgeous dress, and a Biedermeier bouquet, made up of 35 rose buds. The coronet was also made up of small flowers. The party was in a restaurant, there was a band, and only kosher food, of course; my mother cooked, and she even made that famous fluden from Bukovina.

My son, Edward Friedel, was born in 1955. My husband, my son and I lived here, where I live today, in one room, which we received when Edward was one year old. Some time after that, my marriage with my husband fell apart, so we divorced in 1966, I took my maiden name again and I started working at the University of Brasov, the Faculty of Forestry, where I worked as a clerk. I worked there for 28 years, until I retired.

I was never a member of the Communist Party, nobody from the family was. We kept our mouth shut, but we didn't agree, of course, with what was going on. We had to participate in all the manifestations on 23rd August 16 or 1st May, especially because I worked in a university and the accent on propaganda was stronger here. We even had to sow the slogans on the placards, like 'Long live communism' 'Long live Ceausescu 17!'

My son had no problems in school because he was Jewish, we could go to the synagogue and we observed the high holidays at home. But we didn't follow the kashrut; it was too hard. Both my husband and I were religious, I lit candles every Friday and said the blessings, I cleaned the house on Pesach. However, we didn't dress up Edward for Purim. Edward also took some classes of Talmud Torah with somebody from the community, I don't remember with whom. He didn't study with his father, but he had to know a few things for his bar mitzvah.

My son, Edward, was a sincere enemy of the communist regime since he was in high school, and I told him to be careful about what he said or did, because he could get into serious trouble. But he still insisted that he wanted to go to Israel. And, since he was in my care, I told him that he would have to graduate from university first, and after that, if he still wanted to emigrate, I wouldn't stand in his way. He did as I told him, including the military service. I was the one who insisted on that as well, I thought it would make him more of a man, because in his childhood he was rather spoiled, but it was a mistake on my behalf. His father, as a doctor, could have given him some papers saying that he was sick and he would have dodged the military service, but I threatened to denounce him - my ex- husband - if he did so. So after Edward graduated from high school, he was a pontoneer and a sentinel at a prison in Braila. He told me that there were a lot of fights, with knives even, among some militaries. But he managed, and after that he went to the Faculty of Wood Industry here, in Brasov.

All this time, Edward lived with me. But our living conditions were terrible because we didn't have a private toilet or a hallway; so I decided to do something about it, got the necessary approvals and started to build a toilet and a hallway. I sent Edward to live with his father all this time; the mess was so big I couldn't even cook properly. In that time, Edward got involved with a girl, she was a colleague of his from university. Her family was rather well-off, and they ended up living together in her apartment. After Edward graduated, he wanted to marry her. I didn't exactly approve, because she was as vain as she was beautiful, but I was old fashioned: they lived together, they

have to get married, I thought. So they did, and they stayed together for two or three years. Meanwhile, she got a job in the dean's office at the university, where she met a lot of foreign students. She ended up with a Greek one, nine years younger than she was, and the marriage ended. Edward was very affected by all this; he had a nervous breakdown. He was in such a bad shape, I had to commit him to a hospital for two weeks, and feed him very well - which back then was a real problem - to heal him. [Editor's note: food was scarce during the last years of the communist regime; bread, milk, meat were given on food stamps.] He also stayed at Paraul Rece [resort and sanatorium in Transylvania] for two weeks, and after that he was okay again.

In 1986, he came to my office, and he said, 'Mama, sit down. I decided to emigrate to Israel, and please remember what you promised!' So as hard as it was to let my only child go away, I did. His father didn't approve at all, but Edward's mind was all made up, and within six months, I think, he was gone. I didn't want to join him, I had my friends here, my life, and he was just getting started.

He settled in Beer Sheva, and in the same year, he met Alice. She was a Sephardi Jew; she worked in a bank. Edward's savings were 50 dollars, and he went to the bank to see how he could invest the money, and that's how they met. They married the following year, in 1987. I thought it was too soon, but he was really lucky this time. Alice is a beautiful, special and generous woman, and a devoted mother to their children: they have two daughters, Orly was born in 1988, and Sigal born in 1989. I told him that, no matter how good their life was, he should think of himself as a billionaire, for having such healthy and beautiful children, and such a good wife. Edward works as a wood engineer at a good company, although he had to find a new job recently because the company he worked for fired people and he was among them. But he quickly found another job, an even better one.

I was happy to hear about the birth of the State of Israel, in spite of all the obstacles and hostile policies towards Jews I'd seen during those years. I've been to Israel several times, even before 1989. In 1975 I went to visit some friends of mine. There was one family, doctor Stern and his wife, Jews from Brasov, who had left for Israel some time ago, in 1954, I think. But first I went to Netanya, to visit the Kirschners, Karol and Chaia. I made friends with them in a very original manner. I was in the bus, on my way to Poiana Brasov [Poiana Brasov is Romania's premier ski resort located 12 km far from Brasov], and I heard a couple speak in English. I talked to them, and I found out that they were Jews who lived in Israel. They originally came from the Czech Republic, but they fled the country to escape Hitler when they were still very young. They were young, in their twenties, when that happened, and they ended up in India, were they both fought in the 9th Hebrew legion, led by Moshe Dayan 18. They liked me very much, they took me out, and when they left, they invited me to Israel. So I went to visit them for two weeks. After that I visited doctor Stern, who was in Beer Sheva. I was very impressed with everything I saw in the Israeli museum. All my friends spoiled me, and I was very touched that people weren't afraid of speaking their mind, of meeting in the street, of the living conditions. I went to Israel in 1983 as well, back to the Sterns. Then I went to visit Edward and Alice, who were living in her apartment back then; one time was in 1997 and the other last year. They have moved into a beautiful villa.

I used to listen to Radio Free Europe 19 at home after I got divorced, so from 1968 on, because I had more free time; I set the radio by the stove and at a low level, and I listened and knitted at the same time, especially during the night; my favorite was Niculai Munteanu. [He was a well-known Romanian editor who worked for Radio Free Europe in its headquarters in Munich, and did

broadcasts about Romanian politics.] That's where I heard the news about the wars in Israel. [Editor's note: the Six-Day-War 20 and the Yom Kippur War 21]

My father died in 1989, it was during the revolution [the Romanian Revolution of 1989] 22, and my mother died six weeks after him, in 1990. They were both buried in the Jewish cemetery. Because of the troubled times, I couldn't bring a rabbi or a chazzan for my father's funeral, there was just a minyan and somebody recited the Kaddish, but when mother died, I phoned Bucharest and they sent a chazzan to recite the prayer. I keep the Yahrzeit, I don't know the date after the Jewish calendar, but I light a candle on their birthdays and on the days they died. I was in mourning for 14 months after my parents, one year for each of them; even my underwear was black - that was the custom in Bukovina. I sat shivah for eight days after they died, I kneeled in a corner on the bare ground and cried, and after eight days I called my sister and we went round the house. Erika didn't sit shivah and she didn't go in mourning either.

I was happy when the Revolution of 1989 broke out, I hoped for better times, but my father was dying, my mother as well, so it was a black period for me. I saw all the events on TV, because I didn't go outside: I could hear shots and I was afraid.

I'm not sure things got better, but they have certainly changed. Of course, it's a relief to be allowed to say what you think, not to stay in a queue for three eggs for five hours and then not get them, and I was lucky with a certain law, which acknowledges that we were deported and gives us some advantages: 12 free train tickets, free radio-TV subscription, free bus tickets, and some free medicine, plus a small pension. But the dirt in the streets, the lack of civilization I see, and the anti-Semitism are all more often seen.

I receive a pension from the Germans, not very big, but it helps. I was involved in the Jewish community, I liked to pay visits to the community's office, or take some cookies there, at least until last year, when I had a severe heart attack and almost died. But I'm happy to be alive; I have a beautiful family. I did a lot of needlework in the last years, I have made beautiful gobelin tapestries. I also went to concerts or hiking, but now I have to take better care of my health.

Glossary

1 Cossack
A member of a people of southern European Russia and adjacent parts of Asia, noted as cavalrymen especially during tsarist times.

2 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.

3 Bessarabia

Historical area between the Prut and Dnestr rivers, in the southern part of Odessa region. Bessarabia was part of Russia until the Revolution of 1917. In 1918 it declared itself an independent republic, and later it united with Romania. The Treaty of Paris (1920) recognized the union but the Soviet Union never accepted this. In 1940 Romania was forced to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR. The two provinces had almost 4 million inhabitants, mostly Romanians. Although Romania reoccupied part of the territory during World War II the Romanian peace treaty of 1947 confirmed their belonging to the Soviet Union. Today it is part of Moldavia.

4 Keren Kayemet Leisrael (K

K.L.): Jewish National Fund (JNF) founded in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel. From its inception, the JNF was charged with the task of fundraising in Jewish communities for the purpose of purchasing land in the Land of Israel to create a homeland for the Jewish people. After 1948 the fund was used to improve and afforest the territories gained. Every Jewish family that wished to help the cause had a JNF money box, called the 'blue box'. They threw in at least one lei each day, while on Sabbath and high holidays they threw in as many lei as candles they lit for that holiday. This is how they partly used to collect the necessary funds. Now these boxes are known worldwide as a symbol of Zionism.

5 Neolog Jewry

Following a Congress in 1868/69 in Budapest, where the Jewish community was supposed to discuss several issues on which the opinion of the traditionalists and the modernizers differed and which aimed at uniting Hungarian Jews, Hungarian Jewry was officially split into two (later three) communities. They all created their own national community network. The Neologs were the modernizers, who opposed the Orthodox on various questions.

6 Goga-Cuza government

Anti-Jewish and chauvinist government established in 1937, led by Octavian Goga, poet and Romanian nationalist, and Alexandru C. Cuza, professor of the University of Iasi, and well known for its radical anti-Semitic view. Goga and Cuza were the leaders of the National Christian Party, an extremist right-wing organization founded in 1935. After the elections of 1937 the Romanian king, Carol II, appointed the National Christian Party to form a minority government. The Goga-Cuza government had radically limited the rights of the Jewish population during their short rule; they barred Jews from the civil service and army and forbade them to buy property and practice certain professions. In February 1938 King Carol established a royal dictatorship. He suspended the

Constitution of 1923 and introduced a new constitution that concentrated all legislative and executive powers in his hands, gave him total control over the judicial system and the press, and introduced a one-party system.

7 Heroes' Day

National Day of Romania before 1944, which was held on 10th May to commemorate the fact that Romania gained independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1877. This day was also the day of the Proclamation of the Romanian Kingdom since 1881, celebrated as such from that year on.

8 King Carol II (1893-1953)

King of Romania from 1930 to 1940. During his reign he tried to influence the course of Romanian political life, first through the manipulation of the rival Peasants' Party, the National Liberal Party and anti-Semitic factions. In 1938 King Carol established a royal dictatorship. He suspended the Constitution of 1923 and introduced a new constitution that concentrated all legislative and executive powers in his hands, gave him total control over the judicial system and the press, and introduced a one-party system. A contest between the king and the fascist Iron Guard ensued, with assassinations and massacres on both sides. Under Soviet and Hungarian pressure, Carol had to surrender parts of Romania to foreign rule in 1940 (Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR, the Cadrilater to Bulgaria and Northern Transylvania to Hungary). He was abdicated in favor of his son, Michael, and he fled abroad. He died in Portugal.

9 King Michael (b

1921): Son of King Carol II, King of Romania from 1927- 1930 under regency and from 1940-1947. When Carol II abdicated in 1940 Michael became king again but he only had a formal role in state affairs during Antonescu's dictatorial regime, which he overthrew in 1944. Michael turned Romania against fascist Germany and concluded an armistice with the Allied Powers. King Michael opposed the "sovietization" of Romania after World War II. When a communist regime was established in Romania in 1947, he was overthrown and exiled, and he was stripped from his Romanian citizenship a year later. Since the collapse of the communist rule in Romania in 1989, he has visited the country several times and his citizenship was restored in 1997.

10 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.

11 Mohilev-Podolsk

A town in Ukraine (Mohyliv-Podilsky), located on the Dniester river. It is one of the major crossing

points from Bessarabia (today the Moldovan Republic) to the Ukraine. After Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, the allied German and Romanian armies occupied Bessarabia and Bukovina, previously Soviet territories. In August 1941 the Romanians began to send Jewish deportees over the Dniester river to Transnistria, which was then under German occupation. More than 50,000 Jews marched through the town, approximately 15,000 were able to stay there. The others were deported to camps established in many towns of Transnistria.

12 Romanian occupation of Odessa

Romanian troops occupied Odessa in October 1941. They immediately enforced anti-Jewish measures. Following the Antonescu-ordered slaughter of the Jews of Odessa, the Romanian occupation authorities deported the survivors to camps in the Golta district: 54,000 to the Bogdanovka camp, 18,000 to the Akhmetchetka camp, and 8,000 to the Domanevka camp. In Bogdanovka all the Jews were shot, with the Romanian gendarmerie, the Ukrainian police, and Sonderkommando R, made up of Volksdeutsche, taking part. In January and February 1942, 12,000 Ukrainian Jews were murdered in the two other camps. A total of 185,000 Ukrainian Jews were murdered by Romanian and German army units.

13 Gulag

The Soviet system of forced labor camps in the remote regions of Siberia and the Far North, which was first established in 1919. However, it was not until the early 1930s that there was a significant number of inmates in the camps. By 1934 the Gulag, or the Main Directorate for Corrective Labor Camps, then under the Cheka's successor organization the NKVD, had several million inmates. The prisoners included murderers, thieves, and other common criminals, along with political and religious dissenters. The Gulag camps made significant contributions to the Soviet economy during the rule of Stalin. Conditions in the camps were extremely harsh. After Stalin died in 1953, the population of the camps was reduced significantly, and conditions for the inmates improved somewhat.

14 NKVD

People's Committee of Internal Affairs; it took over from the GPU, the state security agency, in 1934.

15 Gordonia

Pioneering Zionist youth movement founded in Galicia at the end of 1923. It became a world movement, which meticulously maintained its unique character as a Jewish, Zionist, and Erez Israel-oriented movement.

16 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.

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 Dayan, Moshe (1915-1981)
Israeli military leader and diplomat. In the 1930s he fought in the Haganah, an underground Jewish militia defending Israelis from Arab attacks, and he joined the British army in World War II. He was famous as a military strategist in the wars with Egypt, Syria and Jordan. He was minister of agriculture (1959-64) and minister of defense (1967-1974). After the Yom Kippur War in 1973, he resigned. In 1977 he became foreign minister and played a key role in the negotiation with Egypt, which ended with the Camp David Accords in 1978.

19 Radio Free Europe
The radio station was set up by the National Committee for a Free Europe, an American organization, funded by Congress through the CIA, in 1950 with headquarters in West Germany. The radio broadcast uncensored news and features from Munich to countries behind the Iron Curtain. The programs were produced by Central and Eastern European émigré editors, journalists and moderators. 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 communist countries behind the Iron Curtain and thus it contributed to the downfall of the totalitarian regimes of Central and Eastern Europe.

20 Six-Day-War
The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western.

21 Yom Kippur War
The Arab-Israeli War of 1973, also known as the Yom Kippur War or the Ramadan War, was a war between Israel on one side and Egypt and Syria on the other side. It was the fourth major military confrontation between Israel and the Arab states. The war lasted for three weeks: it started on 6th

October 1973 and ended on 22nd October on the Syrian front and on 26th October on the Egyptian front.

22 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.