

Fani Cojocariu

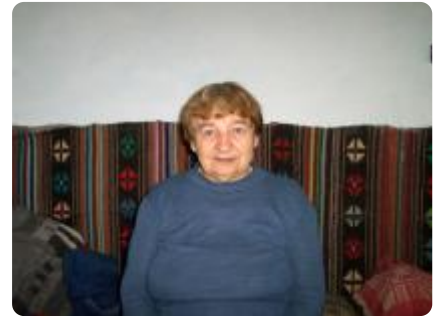
Fani Cojocariu

Dorohoi

Romania

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Interviewer: Eموke Major



Mrs. Fani Cojocariu is a short, rather plump person. She lives alone in a very small, one-room flat in a block of studio flats that, despite being located in downtown Dorohoi, is dark and derelict, for lack of maintenance. But after a lifetime of poverty and want, even this represents a high degree of comfort for Mrs. Fani. The room in which she lives is clean, orderly, the only luxury items being a telephone and a radio.

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My family background

The grandparents from my father's side were already dead when I was born. My grandfather's name was **Iancu Cojocariu**, and my grandmother's name was **Sura**. They lived in the countryside; they lived in Dumeni for a while [*Dumeni is located 12 km north-east of Dorohoi, in the county of Botosani*], I believe that's where their children were born, after which they moved to Cordareni [*Cordareni is located 19 km east of Dorohoi, in the county of Botosani*]. They settled in Dorohoi later on, that's where my grandparents died. My grandfather manufactured sheepskin coats, hats, singlets – as people wore in those days. And their name was supposed to be different, in fact. For my mother always told me: “This isn't the real name, the actual name. Our name was Segal.” Which is to say my father's name was supposed to be Segal. Cojocariu is a nickname as my grandfather was a furrier. They gave him this name, this nickname of “Cojocariu” [*Romanian for furrier*] after the job he had, and the name stuck, he was recorded in official documents with this name.

I don't remember my grandmother very well – I seem to remember she was a rather slim, thin woman, she didn't wear a wig. But I remember my grandfather well. He was a quiet man, tall, thin, scraggy – just like my father. He worked as long as he was able to, but he had diabetes during the latter part of his life, and they amputated his legs because of the diabetes, he lost both legs by the time he died. I couldn't say when they died, in what circumstances. I was a child then. It could have happened 4, 5 years prior to World War II, something like that, I reckon.

My father had other brothers and sisters. He had a brother who was such a beautiful man... He looked so fine, a bit on the plump side, with a much stronger build than my father's, he looked

better than my father, as if they weren't even brothers. This uncle came to see us every now and then from Braila or Barlad – something like that. Perhaps he had a family – I don't know. He came alone. He had another brother in Galati. I really didn't meet the one living in Galati.

And he had yet another brother, who was the most unfortunate of all of them, poor soul, he was more wretched, sort of... he was actually mentally challenged. I even know his first name – **Sloim Cojocariu**. He was never married. He lived at the home for the elderly. I don't know if someone from the family, if his parents committed him there, or if he went there on his own, but that's where he ended up, despite being young. And as if it weren't enough that he was wretched, he had such a tragic end, to boot... Oh, Lord! A funeral took place here, in Dorohoi, in 1940. A Jewish soldier who was killed during World War II was brought from Herta [*today Gertsu, the region of Chernivtsi*] to Dorohoi to be buried in the Jewish cemetery. Herta is now located in Ukraine, in the territories occupied by the Russians, by the Ukrainians, but it wasn't occupied at that time, it belonged to Romania. And among those who attended the funeral were both old and young, there were people of various ages, and a company of soldiers came to salute the Jewish soldier. And what do you think happened? The army was retreating from the war in those days [*from the front*], they passed through Dorohoi, and I don't know how it happened, they started shooting, and they shot all those who were attending the funeral. The uncle I was telling you about was shot there as well, for he had attended the funeral himself. [*Ed. note: At the end of June 1940, the Herta country from the county of Dorohoi was occupied by the Soviet Union, the city and the rest of the the county of Dorohoi becoming a corridor for the retreat of Romanian troops, on which occasion some Romanian military units carried out murders and robbery against the Jewish population. For instance, the anti-Jewish pogrom of July 1, 1940 in the city of Dorohoi.*]

My father had 2 sisters as well. I seem to remember they were living in Chernivtsi. But you should know they didn't correspond with my father, they didn't keep in touch. In fact, we know nothing of them anymore.

My father's name was **Avram Cojocariu**, he was born in 1898 in Dumeni, the place where his parents lived.

The name of the grandparents from my mother's side was **Leizer**. My grandmother's name was **Malca**. My grandmother was no longer alive when I was growing up, only my grandfather was, but I don't know his first name. My grandfather was like a rabbi: he was short, and he wore a large, long, white beard. He worked at the synagogue [*he held a position at the synagogue*], but I don't know if that was actually his occupation in life – I couldn't say what he did for a living anymore. Had I been around him for longer, I would have found out more, I would have learned more, but since I weren't... He too lived in Dorohoi, and he came to see us from time to time, but on rare occasions. He would come see us, and then we didn't see him for I don't know how long. His visits were as if on the run, and we didn't even have time to sit and talk, all the more so since we were just children. And what could we remember 70-75 years later? He treated us, his grandchildren, very nicely, he was a gentle, quiet person.

Oh my, you should know that my grandfather had many mishaps in his life. His first wife died when she was 36 – and how did she die! I remember this from my mother as she used to tell us what happened to her mother. There were several siblings in her family, they argued about the inheritance, things like that, and her other sisters and brothers hit the grandmother from my

mother's side in the back with a candlestick, and that was the cause of her death. What do you know. And my mother did so many good deeds for charity... She visited old women who lived alone and had no children, and she cut and brushed their hair, washed their hair, clipped their fingernails – that's what she told us. For that was her way of doing good deeds.

My grandfather was married a second time, but I don't know anything about his second wife. That's all I remember, that he had children from both his marriages, both from his first wife and from the second. My grandfather died long before the deportation started, but perhaps that was after the grandfather from my father's side died.

My mother – may God rest her soul, may she rest in peace – was the oldest of all my grandfather's children, her mother was his first wife. These were the children he had with his first wife: our mother, her sister, and a brother. And, being the eldest of the 3 children, our mother raised the other 2 after their mother died.

I knew my mother's sister, for she came to see us – she came all by herself. I no longer remember her name, I couldn't say for sure. Nowadays, I forget things instantly, how could I remember things that happened long ago? They lived in Botosani – I believe –, and her husband was a cabman on a hackney carriage – as there were in those days. Throughout her life, our aunt was always sickly, ailing, and she died young. She had three children – two daughters and a son. And we know nothing of those children. The time came when they got married, they came to see us now and then, but that was prior to the last war, too [*World War II*]. One of them, the eldest, was living in Darabani, she was married to a barber. The next was [*working*] in a store in Botosani, she came to see us now and then. But the son... I believe we never saw or met him. I heard talk of them leaving to Israel eventually, I reckon they did that after World War II. But who knows anymore? Many left for Israel, they placed an ad in the newspaper if they wanted to see some relatives, some in-laws, a cousin one more time, and they kept asking around and looking for one another until they managed to get in touch. Do we still have news of our cousins? We have no news of them anymore. They have no news of us, we have no news of them. That's all I know, that they left to Israel.

The name of my mother's brother was **Lupu Leizer**. He learned a tinker's trade – as they call it. But you see, my mother always wept and said: "Look, I was the eldest of the children, I raised him, for he was the youngest, and today he doesn't even come to see me." He lived right here, in Dorohoi. But what do you know? His wife made him estrange his family. And he had an only son, who did so well in school that he became a public prosecutor or a judge. But in the end, this family amounted to nothing. The parents died, the son died as well. I believe the son – he too was married with children – lived in Bacau. But he never corresponded with us [*wrote us letters*].

My grandfather's second wife had children of her own, but I no longer remember any details... Perhaps my mother told us about it, but I don't remember. So many years have passed since then...

My mother's maiden name was **Hana Leizer**. She was born in Dorohoi in 1898.

My parents got married in 1923. They met here, in Dorohoi, but I don't know the circumstances, they didn't tell us. My father probably came to the city to get married at some point, and he met my mother. They got married while he was doing his military service, that's what they told us. My father did his military service in Iasi, and they lived there, my mother lived in Iasi as well during my

father's military service. It could be that my father's military service lasted for 3 years – the military service was very long in those days. And our father told us how his officers loved him during the days of his military service – those people, the toffs, his superiors –, and how they cared for him.

And when my father finished his military service, they moved back to Dorohoi. They paid rent, and when my father went to rent a place, the owner would ask: "Do you have any children?" "Yes." That was it, they wouldn't want him anymore, they didn't rent him the room anymore. "Do you have any children?" "And how many children do you have?" – That was it! And that's how they kept going from place to place. Until my father set his mind to building a place of his own, so that he wouldn't have to pay other people anymore. And he obtained a narrow plot of land somewhere – as wide as the house, no wider –, for I don't know how they worked on building the house. So he secured a small plot of land, and paid a contractor to build the house. It was located near the train station, on a street that was once called Carmen Silva, formerly; it was called Republicii St. lately, and now it is called George Enescu. For the George Enescu Museum is located on that street as well, and they named the street George Enescu as well.

We had 2 rooms and a kitchen, and you passed from one into the other, they were in a row – like a train carriage. And there was a basement underneath for storing firewood – for we didn't have a shed in the courtyard –, and we stored food in that basement, odds and ends. Our street was close to the street, in the front, and we had to walk along such a narrow walkway to reach the stairs leading to the basement, so narrow that I scraped against the wall of the house when I walked along it. About half a meter wide – that's how wide the path to our courtyard was.

I was the youngest sister, and we were already living there when I was born, my other sisters were born elsewhere, when my parents paid rent. My eldest sister – Malca – was born in 1925, the second-born – Neti – in 1927, and I – Fani – in 1929. We were born 2 years apart.

Growing up

We had some relatives from my mother's side as well, their name was Groper, the Groper family. They were 3 brothers – Bernardt was one of them, I no longer know the names of the other ones –, and they had a very large store. And my mother and father used to tell me: "When you were born, they [*the Groper brothers*] came and said: <<We heard that a child was born to you, we want to name it after our mother.>>" For that's the Jewish tradition, people name children after dead relatives, so that the name is passed on, so that it isn't lost. [*Editor's note: The custom of paying to a woman to name her newborn after a dead was common. Giving the dead's name to the newborn was even considered as a mitzvah (ritual commandment or generally any act of human kindness).*] And, anyway, my parents accepted the name. When I grew a bit older, my parents used to send me to that store: "Go and tell them that you are Fani." For they didn't know me. The only time when they visited us was when they found out I was born. But did they come to see us afterwards? Did they ever come to see us? [No.] And I went to the respective shop. They said: "Oh... you are Fani?" "Yes." "Here, take a pair of socks." A pair of socks that cost 2, 3 lei – that's what they gave me. But I was hoping for something more... But had I not gone there, they wouldn't have come to see me at all. Niggardly people... I know they came to see me only once; a few candy in a little box – that's what they brought me.

We didn't have a happy childhood, as other children did. It is a known fact that Jews especially raise their children very well, they give them milk, butter... We saw none of those. We led a very hard life. God forbid! My father managed to build that house as best as he could, with toil and bitterness, but he didn't install any electricity, despite the fact that there was electricity downtown, and the post was in front of the house. I don't know, to have the post in front of the house and not to install electricity... Because that's what he thought: "We have to pay the bill for it eventually." And they couldn't afford it. We struggled with gas lamps our whole life! And whenever the lamp broke and they didn't have another one to replace it with, as we had no extra one, my father took it and glued it back together with paper. And just as no electricity was installed, they didn't make any terra cotta stoves, either. Had they at least built a brickwork stove or a kitchen range stove – they didn't do that either. They installed a tin stove in the room, with wood as fuel, and it only gave a little heat, as long as the fire was burning, after which it became cold. Tin gets cold, it doesn't stay warm like terra cotta. We were freezing. During winter, my mother – I remember – used to sweep whole basins of snow off the walls. During winter, we used to move from room to room until we reached the last room, and we were freezing with cold. My father bought potatoes for the winter, so that we had food to eat. We slept on the bed, and underneath the potatoes became as hard as stones. When we took the potatoes from underneath the bed, they rattled like stones! They froze inside the house. But you should see how water used to freeze... They didn't let us leave the tiniest amount of water lying about over night as it turned to solid ice.

And our life was full of hardship. Our parents were poor and ailing and ill – that's how they were, that's how I remember them. My mother was very anemic. And as the town of Chernivtsi was free in those days [*that is, it belonged to Romania*], that's where my father had her hospitalized on many occasions – for the town was larger; compared to Dorohoi, Chernivtsi is larger. On some occasions, he took us there as well. We went by carriage, by cart, as people travelled in those days. They were the same as today's carts, save for the fact that the wheels rumbled... Nowadays, wheels have tires, and they offer a completely different ride. They don't even call it a cart, they call it *faiton* (*faeton*), they came up with this name.

I remember, what a hard life we led, ever since we were children. More than anything, we grew up as if we were living in orphanages. Our parents were ill all their life. The front door of our house wasn't even locked, anyone at all could come in and take whatever they wanted. And we were out in the street. Our neighbors took pity on us and took a couple of us in, gave us shelter, food and a place to sleep. And that's how we grew up... I know they even put us in a nursery – I don't know who took us there.

My mother was a housewife, and my father was a shoemaker. They always worked at home, they had workers, apprentices – they had 2 workers hired at all times. Because back then things were not like today – we buy ready-made shoes in stores. Back then they were custom-made. My father had a lot of work, he knew his trade well.

My eldest sister, I tell you this in earnest – didn't observe the Saturday and worked on that day. But our parents and us, the other 2 sisters, we didn't work on Saturday. We didn't even light the fire. On Saturdays, my parents had someone come over to light the fire, even from the street, whomever happened to be around.

We had fowl at home, my father raised fowl – hens, ducks. As for slaughtering them, my mother took them to the hakham – that man who slaughters the fowl –, or it was my father who took them there. In the old days, the hakham even came at our house to slaughter the fowl, for there were many hakhamim here, in Dorohoi. I never looked when they slaughtered the fowl – I don't want to see the fowl being killed. We had very many hakhamim here, in our town, we had many rabbies – there aren't any left anymore.

They observed tradition, both my mother and my father. We had candlesticks and my mother lit the candles on Friday evening, she said the necessary prayer. I don't know how many candles she lit, in fact I think people say you should light an odd number of candles – either 3, or 5, something like that. My mother kept kosher, she had separate dishes for meat, for milk. She also had separate dishes for **Passover** – she took them down from the attic when Passover was approaching. For salt, for horseradish, for everything – all the dishes have to be replaced, to celebrate Passover.

Before Pesach, you gathered the flour and bread from inside the house, if any, and I believe you set it on fire, you burned it. And a rabbi came and wrote with chalk on the kitchen walls, I remember, that this chametz should go to Christians, not to Jews. *[Editor's note: the chametz is leavened dough, fermented food, or any substance that is forbidden to be used during Passover.]* But I had my own reckoning: "How so? Bread is so good all year long and all of a sudden you hate it on Passover? You develop a grudge against it and throw it away now?" And after all the chametz was removed from the house, as my father had customers from the countryside as well, they searched them when they entered the house: "You wouldn't happen to have any bread on you?" "Oh my, take the bread outside, don't enter the house with it!" Or if they happened to have wheat flour, perhaps that man – or woman, as was the case – happened to have bought some flour: "Oh my, oh my, it isn't allowed, it isn't allowed!"

Father went and bought matzah. Back then, there was a factory where they prepared matzah here, in the town, and father went there and bought it; or someone in charge of this brought it to us in a large basket or, if not, in a sack used especially for matzah. It wasn't like today, in little boxes. And he bought a lot of matzah.

My mother would start to peel potatoes... whole buckets of them. On Passover, potatoes are used especially instead of bread. Since you aren't allowed to eat bread... For matzah will never satisfy your appetite. You are also allowed to eat polenta, for a change, but people eat mostly potatoes on Passover. And what couldn't one cook from potatoes? People prepared meatballs from raw potatoes or, if not, from boiled potatoes... the things you can cook from potatoes. The same goes for matzah flour – what can't you make from it? Mother even used it to bake cookies, she made all sorts of things, she was such a good cook...

My father observed the Seder Nacht at home: he donned a tallit, and he read the Haggadah in Hebrew, he recited prayers. The celebration was prepared beautifully, with wine, with everything that is necessary. You don't eat matzah during the first evening, you aren't allowed to taste it. Even nowadays they still say that you aren't allowed to eat matzah on the first evening. You are only allowed to eat boiled potatoes, horseradish, and parsley roots – something like that. And eggs, I think. But I think they said you aren't allowed to eat meat on the first evening. The first evening was like a sort of fast. And on the second evening we ate matzah, and other, more varied dishes. On Seder Nacht we all had a glass on the table, and father gave wine to each child. I couldn't tell

you any details about the questions the father is asked [*mah nishtanah*] or about the opening of the door [*waiting for the prophet Elijah*]...

Father didn't lie on pillows. I seem to remember it is the rabbi who has to lie on the pillows. After World War II, when they celebrated Seder Nacht at the canteen of the Community, and rabbi Wasserman attended as well, he was dressed in white, he was wearing something resembling a robe – it appears that is the custom on Passover –, and I remember there was a white pillow for him to lie on. *[Editor's note: Mrs Cojocariu is referring here to the ritual of leaning. At several points during the Seder, participants lean to the left - when drinking the four cups of wine, eating the Afikoman etc. This ritual is associated with freedom. In ancient times only free people had the luxury of reclining while eating.]*

When our parents were still alive, we observed the fast on **Yom Kippur**. And we went to the synagogue – both our parents and us. My father always attended the synagogue. Back then, they performed the religious service both in the morning and in the evening as well – that's how it was formerly. Especially when the autumn holidays commenced, I don't know what holiday exactly – either on Sichis [*Sukkot*], which lasts for 8 days, or on I don't know what other holiday – he went there at the break of dawn to recite prayers. It was during the night, and he went to the synagogue to attend the religious service. This lasted 8 days, for he had to go there every day.

On Oisana Raba [*Hoshana Rabbah, the seventh day of Sukkot*], still during the autumn holidays, a Jew came to our house as well – from the synagogue, he was employed to do this – with a lemon and with some sort of branch bearing leaves. *[Editor's note: Etrog is the Hebrew name for the citron. It is well known as one of the four species used in the rituals of Sukkot. The three types of branches: lulav, myrtle (hadas) and willow (aravah) branches and the etrog are held together and waved in a special ceremony.]* And we smelled that lemon... Perhaps that man recited some prayers as well, I don't know, that's all he gave us – that lemon to smell it. Every day at dawn for several days in a row, he came with that lemon and that branch, as long as the holiday of Sichis [*Sukkot*] lasted. We didn't make a sukkah at home. But after World War II they built a sukkah at the Community canteen. They hung corn, grapes, and apples inside it, and we, the guests, ate our meals there, both lunch and dinner.

Purim was nice too, formerly, when there were many Jews. Children and even grown-ups wore masks – they covered their face with a mask, wore motley clothes, all sorts of things –, and they visited the people they knew, friends, to wish them well, and they were invited to come in, offered sweets. For people baked all sorts of cookies on Purim. Usually, people baked hamantashen, and some other dish – it was called fluden – which was stacked high, out of dough sheets stacked on top of one another and with filling in-between them, but it wasn't really filling, it was made from walnuts, or Turkish delight, something like that... and it was compacted, for it was very high... Where could you see the likes of that nowadays? You couldn't, that's for sure. I never wore a mask on Purim. Perhaps my father did, but I don't remember. Nevertheless, people came to our house wearing masks. I believe it was customary to send sweets to friends, but so many years have passed since then, how could I remember this anymore?

There were several synagogues when I was a child, we had approximately 10 synagogues in Dorohoi. But I don't remember which of them we attended and when we attended, for all of them were demolished. There was a mikveh in Dorohoi as well, but I never went there. It isn't for girls,

unmarried women. Women go there when they marry, and married women go there, too. I don't know whether my mother went there or not.

We learned Yiddish at home as children. We also spoke Romanian, but we spoke mostly Jewish [Yiddish]. We didn't learn Hebrew. Our parents were so skilled in reading the holy books... We don't know anything. Jewish children are sent to the cheder, to a teacher, as they say, at the age of 3, approximately, and they start to learn Hebrew – they start with the beginning, with the alphabet, and then they learn more things. Our parents didn't send us to the cheder. Here, in Dorohoi, both boys and girls went to the cheder, but we didn't, and that's why we can't read a word of Hebrew.

We studied at the Romanian school. Both Jews and Christians attended the Romanian school, mixed together. But there was no hatred or enmity, or persecutions against on account of our being Jewish. All in all, I graduated 4 grades. But you should know that's how it was back then. In Jewish families, for instance, if a child had 4 grades, it was enough. They taught them to read and write and then they quickly had to learn a trade – become either a barber, or a tailor, or a shoemaker... It wasn't like today, when everyone must go to college – back then it was unheard of. Children had to learn trades!

After graduating the 4 grades of primary school, both my sisters and I started a trade. We all chose different trades. The eldest was working for various employers, she learned a tailor's trade and worked as a tailor. Initially, the second-born started learning a tailor's trade as well and learned from a lady, but she abandoned it subsequently, and she learned knitting: vests, blouses, sweaters... For in those days, during World War II, right after the war, you couldn't find these things in stores, there was a shortage of fabrics as well. And she took me under her wing, and I helped her. For she could barely keep up with the workload. That's because she didn't have a knitting machine, you had to do it by hand, loop by loop and row after row – that was my expression –, and that takes time.

I myself was apprenticed to a tailor. Oh my, they were actually relatives of ours from my mother's side, Jews like us, their names were Hova and Ita – two sisters. Naturally, they were living together until they got married, and they had a workshop at home. Their family name was Rachita. They were many sisters, and their father had a cart drawn by horses. For Jews did this too in those days – they carried wood for various people, or something like that. And, God, how I learned a tailor's trade as a small child... Given the fact that they sent us to Transnistria when I was 12, I think they apprenticed me to a tailor when I was 9-10. Back then, pleated skirts were in fashion – the whole skirt was made of overlapping pleats. They were made from terylene, a fabric people wore in those days. And I was in charge of stitching them, so they could iron them. How was it that I managed to do that, how did I find the skills for that? Just an example, overcasting a girdle at the ends to prevent fraying – for people wore girdles in those days, it was fashionable. I just managed. But still, I didn't remain there afterwards, I quit.

During the War

They deported us to Transnistria [1](#) when I was 12. At first, they imposed some restrictions because we were Jewish – but I couldn't say what year that was. People started wearing the yellow star [2](#), we were allowed to go out for only 1 hour a day, that was all, the town authorities imposed those decisions. I believe you were allowed to go out for 1 hour in the morning, and that's when you had to buy something to eat, anything, and you had to hurry back home, you had no business being in

the street. And in 1941 the deportations started. The town's prefect lived just across the street from our house. And my mother went to talk to him, to see if we could stay. But he said: "Yes, everybody wants to stay, but everyone must leave!" That's what I remember. And yet there were some Jews who stayed, but they had some restrictions too, they were punished as well and didn't have a good life.

And they came to every house, telling us to come out. We took with us whatever we could – at least an eiderdown, or a pillow, or whatever else there was –, we paid for a cart to take us to the train station. There were train stock cars waiting for us there, and they crammed us in, I don't know how many persons in a stock car. And the furniture, and everything else, was left behind in the house. And what we took with us – we didn't manage to hold on to that, either. We travelled for a long time, I don't know the route of the train, for they added cars to this train in Chernivtsi as well, or somewhere else along the way we went in order to cross the Dniester. When we arrived in Atachi – it was located in Bessarabia – and the train came to a stop, they came up to the stock cars – whether they were soldiers or not, I couldn't say – and said: "Get off now and take with you whatever you can carry, we will bring you the rest by cart in the morning." A man told me: "Little girl," he says, "take my luggage for mine is better." How could he know his luggage was better than mine? Who knows what precious items he had inside, that's why he said it. But do you think I did that? Do you think I took his luggage? No. I carried mine, whatever I had, and his luggage was left behind in the train car.

It was night when we got off the train. But what darkness, what pitch darkness... We could see only mountains around us, such high mountains that it seemed they rose all the way into the sky. And how could you walk? Everyone got off the train, you stepped on people, you didn't even know where you were going – that's how dark and gloomy it was. We got separated, we lost our second-born sister, but we somehow managed to find her there, in the synagogue where they took us. In the morning as soon as we woke up in that synagogue, we saw it was all as if it had been machine-gunned [*destroyed*], it was all red with blood and there were holes, cracks everywhere in the walls. Who knows what happened there, how many people died there.

And wouldn't you know it, we could see them in the morning passing by and transporting the luggage from the train cars – they were taking them somewhere else, to the city hall, but not to us, in any case. That's how it was. And we ended up only with what we brought along with us. We were left with hardly anything. My father had taken some shoe-making tools with him – those were left behind in the train car as well.

They took us by boat from Atachi to Moghilev [3](#). In Moghilev, a Jew who had come there earlier, I believe he was a resident of Chernivtsi, told us: "Run, for they are taking you from here to a concentration camp!" And he asked us to give him a sum of money – for we exchanged some of our money in rubles –, he requested money to take us, our family, out of the group. And we somehow managed to slip away. It seems this convoy wasn't escorted, or the security wasn't that strict, anyone could manage to slip away. After that, we somehow ended up at a woman's place – she was a local, a Jewish Russian –, and she rented us a bed. Which is to say we had to pay for a bed in which 5 persons slept. How was that possible? It was the three of us and our 2 parents. Oh my, we couldn't stretch a leg, we couldn't move, that's how crammed we were! And some other persons, some other families stayed in that room, each with their own bed. And every morning she came to our bed and asked us for the money. And how long could the money last? My father had a

couple of suits, they were actually good-quality suits – one was navy blue, one was brown –, he started selling them in order to buy bread. And that’s what we said: “Oh my, we had no idea back home how good an onion can taste! We had no idea back home how good garlic can taste!” And the bread there was so black... It was simply as if it were baked from soil: it creaked when you chewed it, as if it were made from sand, but it was as dark as the darkest soil – that’s how the bread was.

Another thing – and suffice it that I mention it. We were ridden with lice... In that Russian woman’s room where we lived, there was an old man – a Russian like them, but he was Jewish. Oh my! He just sat there all day and looked for lice to kill them. That’s all he did. He eventually died one day. But until he died, he screamed all sorts of howls, animal-like. And to witness such circumstances, and to see with your own eyes someone die and agonize before dying... Well, may something like this never exist again! God forbid!

Afterwards, we left that place, we left that woman’s place, and we lived somewhere high up in a room inside the Town Hall – I remember it was a very large room. We didn’t pay for that, there was no one to pay money to, no one asked us for money. Oh my, and we slept on the floor –where could one get a bed –, during winter, and we had nothing to cover ourselves with. We were the only ones living in that room, but that room had many doors, on the left, on the right, leading to other rooms where other people lived, too. Oh my! Every day they took out the dead. People died of diseases, of hunger. When life became so hard... People came from a good life to such a hard life, to such an agony, how could they not fall ill? There was an outbreak of typhus – we didn’t catch it there. You saw men and women who had shaved their head – when you have typhus you must shave your head completely, I don’t know why. Many people didn’t have clothes to wear anymore, they wore burlap sacks.

A life of hardship commenced. Money – there wasn’t any. You could find anything, the market was well-supplied, with all goods, but there was no money to buy with. We didn’t consider stealing. We didn’t stoop to that. God forbid! We went begging – that, we did. We begged, and there were Jews who were a bit better-off, who could spare a crumb of bread, a piece of polenta, things like that... There were also Ukrainians there, in Moghilev, but we went to Jewish people.

For instance, people used to eat sweet peas there. But it was hard, it was several years old. They also eat yet another food there – lentils. And it boiled and boiled... In that large room where we lived there was a small stove next to a wall. And we started boiling corn, the variety people feed to fowls. Well, could it be boiled after it turns dry? How could it boil? We had nothing to eat. Some man came to see us, a local Ukrainian – he spoke Ukrainian, that is –, he handled horses, he was a coachman. He took pity on us and brought us some of the food that the horses ate. We didn’t have to pay him anything for it. It was a special mixture for horses, it was made of several ingredients: sweet peas, barley, oats. But it tasted so good after you boiled it... Extremely good! Also, when it came to drinking water: people formed queues for water, such long queues... There weren’t any fountains, but some pumps, some taps – as it were. And you had to go down into a basement, you had to descend some stairs into a basement, that’s where these water pipes were.

During the night we went to a sort of police station – it was called co-ordination –, and those who didn’t have a permit [*to stay there*], who had no right to stay there. At midnight, when people sleep the soundest, deepest sleep, they came and knocked on the door: “Do you have a permit?” “No.”

“Come, you must move on. To the concentration camps.” And children started screaming, mothers as well, all you could hear were screams, weeping... And they didn’t spare anyone then. They even detained their own compatriots, local Jews, they detained them and took them to concentration camps. This was done by some sort of police, but it also had Jews in its chain of command. There was a doctor here, in Dorohoi, his name was Danilov, and he had a brother who was involved in something like this. [Ed. note: Mrs. Cojocariu is referring here to the attorney Mihail Danilov. Hirt-Manheimer Aron, *Introduction and comments, from the book Siegfried Jagendorf, The Moghilev Miracle (Memoirs 1941-1944), Ed. Hasefer, Bucharest, 1997, p. 48.*] He took this up so that he could earn his living, so that he could provide for himself. He reckoned it would help him live a little better. But what a tragic end he had in the end... This was after the war, he was run over, either by a car or by a train, I can’t remember precisely. He didn’t live in Dorohoi, he lived in Romania in another city. And people said: “You see, God paid him his due.”

There was a mayor in Moghilev, who was a colonel in the army and filled the position of mayor. And my father went to see him one day and asked him to approve his request, that he should be allowed to stay as the town hall’s shoemaker. And he said “Yes.” And my father was issued a staying permit. But otherwise, if we didn’t have this permit, we wouldn’t have returned home, they would have taken us farther on, to a concentration camp, and we would have died God knows where. We stayed in Moghilev all the time. There was a small room in the Town Hall, somewhere on the ground floor, that’s where my father worked, and the employees used to come there to give him items that needed repair, a pair of shoes, anything. I don’t know if they paid him any money for this. How should I know? But our father befriended other Ukrainians as well, and he sometimes went to their homes. He had an iron leg that he used in order to hammer against the sole, a hammer, and I don’t know what else, and he went to their homes, he repaired this and that, and they gave him some food, which he brought home. Our mother didn’t work. It’s not as if you could find a job there. We moved from place to place, but still inside the Town Hall, for it was a large building, it was all connected, as they say, with corridors, and it had 3 exits. But it too was like after the war, it looked deserted. They also had offices there, but there were few of them. You moved on your own, nobody said anything about it. And we stayed in bed all day long. What could we do? How our childhood’s best years went by...

But when we arrived there [*in Moghilev*], you could hear: “Those from Dorohoi are going home!” As soon as we arrived there. And we heard those rumors for 2 years and 2 months. Until one day they put up posters either at the Town Hall or at the Police station – I don’t remember where that might have been –, to the effect that we were actually going home, those from Dorohoi were going home – only those from Dorohoi, I think. And before sending us home they put our clothes inside drying stoves in order to disinfect them, and we had to take a bath. Still, we returned home inside cattle cars again. And until we made it to these train cars... A table was placed somewhere in front of the train station, and that’s where they drew the paperwork for those who were returning home. And there were many people, and when your turn came there were so many papers to fill, and it took so long until your turn came... And it was late autumn and cold – I believe it was around November when we returned home –, and we said: “We can’t stay here like this, we’ll freeze to death. If only we were inside the train car, on the train, whatever the conditions, as long as we were there!” But it was better on the way back, they handed the people inside the train cars bread, carrots, pork lard, and onion. I am amazed they gave us something to eat then, I truly am! I don’t know who provided the food for us, some management structure, they gave it to us on the way back. And

when we reached Dorohoi, the Community director – who left to Israel and is no longer alive, his name was Rolick – welcomed us at the train station with hot tea.

We couldn't enter our own house, for it was occupied by a Christian woman. But we were in luck, for do you know what happened? The Jews returned home, and the Christians left – they were seeking refuge, as they said. The employees from the Town Hall, from various institutions, from everywhere, they all left. They weren't fired, they simply feared the war, they feared that there will be a war there and that's why they left. The Christian woman who was occupying our house left in the same manner, and we could take back our dear little home. And then the Community started giving us this and that, for there really was nothing left in the house. Everything was removed from the house after we left. For other people lived there – first a family, then a woman –, and they removed everything from the house. They gave us a small, square stove, and some planks to make a bed, so that we had something to sleep on.

And things still weren't well – the Russian army entered our country then. God, you were afraid to stay at home, for soldiers came and settled in most houses. A Russian soldier came to our house and took the door off its hinges. And do you know what they were doing in the countryside? People said: "They simply go and take a calf, a sheep, whatever there is, in order to slaughter it." That's how cheeky they were. They slowly discovered that my father was a shoemaker, that he worked as a shoemaker. And the Russians opened a shoemaker's workshop next to our house, they employed Russian shoemakers. We, girls, were quite big by then, all three of us, and, whenever a Russian entered our house, we used to hide behind our mother, stay close to her. But one of them said in Russian: "This is how Jewish girls live, under their mother's skirt?" In Russia, women too were enrolled in the army as soldiers. For there were actually many companies like that here, made up of Russian women. But I was so afraid... A young Russian came once, a handsome man, and he placed an order with my father for a pair of boots. The Russians had their own shoemaker's workshop next to our house, but he didn't place his order with them, he placed it with my father, he came to us for the boots. And my father made them just like that, in no time. They looked as if they came right out of the store, that's how good his workmanship was. Perhaps he paid my father, I don't know. But he was no common soldier, he was a higher-ranking officer. We stayed for 2 years in Moghilev, we started to understand a word or two, but we didn't speak Russian properly.

After the War

After the war, my father continued to work as a shoemaker. My mother didn't work. But actually, my mother didn't live for long. After returning from Transnistria, she only lived for a year. She almost died there, for she had developed such a bad case of asthma, and she gasped for air. And we barely failed to lose her. I don't know how we managed to keep her alive until our returning home! And when she made it home, she lived for one more year, after which we lost her. It was 1946, she was 48. She died in Iasi, in the hospital, for my father had taken her there. He so wanted to settle in Iasi.

At first, she was hospitalized for a month or longer here, in Dorohoi. And she asked him to take her to Iasi. And it turns out she also suffered from a nervous condition. When father took her from the hospital in Dorohoi, she only stayed home for a night, no longer, but boy, was she screaming and yelling... on and on, to Iasi, to Iasi, to Iasi! She kept saying she wanted to go to Iasi. Early at dawn, around 5 o'clock, I saw her to the station as well, she boarded the first morning train, and my

father went with her, while I returned home. He took her to the St. Spiridon Hospital in Iasi – that hospital was for patients with mental conditions, somewhat. And she lived there for another 3 months, approximately. We were quite big by then and we kept urging our father: “Go and take mother home.” “Why don’t you go there and take her home?” We kept expecting father to go there. But he had his trade, and he wouldn’t leave his work to go there... he simply wouldn’t! “I’ll go, I’ll go.” He said this one day, then the day after, then the day after that... three months passed by.

A woman from Dorohoi had someone, a relative of hers, committed to that hospital as well. And it turns out she was in the same reserve with my mother, for my mother sent word through that woman who had come to see her relative, she told her: “Tell him to come and take me home, I don’t want dying in a hospital to be on my conscience.” My father brought me along as well, and we went to Iasi. I don’t know what time it was when we set out, but we arrived late in the evening, and we put up at Jewish family, acquaintances of my father’s from the old days. We slept there, we left for the hospital in the morning, and when we arrived there, my father inquired: “Hana Cojocariu?” “But she is no more...” “Oh my!” – I was stunned. “But she is no more.” “Well, are you certain?!” – but my father wouldn’t believe it. He went and asked someone else as well, he asked some doctors, too... “No, for she died three days ago.” There, she wasn’t able to see her children, and her husband. And she always prayed not to die in a hospital. She was so young, but death was all she could think of! Death was all she could think of – may she not die in a hospital! And it was her fate to die in the hospital...

And we went to the Community [*the Jewish Community in Iasi*], for it was the Community that buried her. The custom in Iasi is to put the dead in a cart and to take them to the cemetery by cart. And the Jews there said the horse didn’t want to move at all, he just didn’t! The horse wouldn’t move – that’s what I remember. My father jotted down some directions at the Community, as to where we could find her, as to where we could find her grave, at least. And we went to the grave, it was recently dug, she was buried for 3 days. And there was a gravedigger there – he was digging another grave for a girl who somehow drowned, she was Jewish, too. Oh my, and I was crying so: “Dead though she may be, I still want to see her!” And that gravedigger took so much pity on me, caressed me, told me not to cry anymore, and that if the administrator weren’t there, he would dig her up so that I could see her.

Father told us he once went to Iasi, he struck a deal with a man who owned a cart, and he and that man took a large, heavy tombstone from another older, deserted cemetery, and he took it to my mother’s grave and inscribed her name on the tombstone. He did it during the night, so that no one could see him, for it is forbidden to take a tombstone from somewhere else. My father went to the grave on several occasions, for he had acquaintances there, and he travelled to Iasi repeatedly. But he always went there alone. He knew the location of the grave, he knew where our mother was buried, but we... Had we gone there once with him, perhaps we might have remembered something. But, as it is, we don’t know where our mother’s grave is. And I’ve been to that cemetery. Every year in Iasi they commemorate the Jews who were locked in airtight cattle cars [4](#) during the heat waves, and they were transported, and they had no water, and died there. And the Jewish Community in Dorohoi provided a bus for us, and I attended the commemoration myself together with my eldest sister. The second-born sister didn’t want to go, she said: “You go, I’m not going!” We did this for 2 years in a row, I believe – but many years have passed even since that

happened. And we arrived still in that cemetery where mother was buried as well. But what could we look for? It wasn't as if we knew how and where to find it. You must know your way about... That's what our father told us, that he placed a tombstone at her grave, but how could we recognize it? Especially after so many years, since no one went to her grave anymore, the writing must have faded away, and how could we find it?

After the war father developed a sclerosis as well, he became soft-minded. He had a case of hernia for about 30 years, and was afraid to undergo surgery. We lived together, how could I not know his situation... He was very fond of Iasi, for that's where he did his military service and where he lived, so he went there once, to see some old acquaintances. And he was struck by a sudden seizure, he lay down in the street, just like that, for he couldn't bear the pain, that's how bad it was. And people saw that, they called an ambulance, and they took him to the hospital. When he woke up in the hospital, he said: "No, I will not undergo surgery!" For all his life he was afraid of the knife. But the doctor said: "No, now that you are here, we must perform surgery." And he might have lifted a block of wood, something heavy, when he returned home, and his operation opened up. He liked to work – as Christians do, not as Jews do: he did everything around the house, he didn't have someone else do these things, he didn't pay someone else, he did these things himself. There was a very good Jewish surgeon here, in Dorohoi, and it was he who operated him the second time. The third time it was the same. But he told him on the last occasion: "I can't guarantee anything anymore." He told him straight to his face. And his last years were very tormented. He started smoking when he was 12 – he told us. And he still smoked while he was ill. But this is what happened! A particularly nasty growth appeared on his esophagus, a tumor, for he had seizures during the night on many occasions, he choked, he couldn't breathe, and we rushed to the hospital at 1, 2, 3 o'clock in the night in order to commit him. There was a hospital right on our street, near our parental home. I know that he carried on like that for 4 years. And he wasn't allowed to eat anything, for the food didn't reach his stomach, it stopped in his chest area. He died at 73, in 1971.

My father is buried here, in Dorohoi, at the Jewish cemetery. The Jewish custom is to dress the dead in white. Special clothes are tailored for this occasion, there are tailors who still make them. We sat shivah after our father died, all three of us. We sat shivah both after our mother and after our father. You place something on the floor, a carpet, a pillow, something, and you sit there for 8 days. And who could come to bring us food? We had to cook ourselves, we had to stand up, cook. And they say you aren't allowed to do that, it's a sin to stand up from there. But since we couldn't rely on anyone to bring us food... But I don't know anymore, whether you're supposed to sleep there during the night, or you can stand up and sleep on the bed. I don't remember that, I don't remember how we did that. And we paid someone, a Jew like us, who actually had a connection to our family, he was actually a friend of my father's as a young man – his name was Rabinovici, he had a store in the old days –, and he recited prayers for my father for an entire year. And that's what he said: "It would be good if you had his name mentioned in the prayer for the dead every month at the synagogue." And every month throughout the year I would buy liquor, crackers, according to Jewish customs.

When father fell ill and was so lost and neglectful, people said: "Oh my, what a handsome boy he was in his day, look what has become of him!" He became oblivious of himself. The years passed by, he was alone. And he told us what a ladies' man he was in his day – he wouldn't miss any ball whatsoever. But we, did we ever go to a ball in our life? We never went to balls. He went to parties

for us as well. We tended the house, mostly. As the room where we lived gave onto the street, we could see the Jews taking a stroll and talk and discuss. For the people living in the city used to stroll beyond the city limits, towards the train station, they walked to the train station, they were out for a walk – that was what they called a stroll out of the city. I used to say: “Look, they are out for a walk! We are going to bed now, we are in our bed, and people are out for a walk.” That’s how our life was, that’s how it went.

There were Zionists in Dorohoi as well. I wasn’t one, but there were young people who were getting ready for leaving to Israel, they went to chop wood, to gather grain, they learned any trade they could – which is to say they all went there to learn, to get used to doing that.

My eldest sister knew dressmaking, the second-born knitted, and I helped her. My eldest sister had a sewing machine. And then the second-born sister bought one, but she sold it, for it was old and she didn’t like it. She could sew her own clothes, make her own dresses, this and that. We worked at home. Sweaters, gloves, socks – we sewed most anything. People could see my sister was doing a good job, that she was skilled and talented even, and people came to her by word of mouth. They came to our house and placed an order, depending on what each of them wanted done. There was a time when Brasov wool was the material of choice – that was its actual name –, a sort of prime wool, as it were, dyed in all sorts of colors. But many people asked us why we didn’t get a steady job. A textile factory had been opened there for the first time, and people told us: “Girls, why don’t you apply for a job there? So that you might have some pension money when you grow old.” Well, none of us entered a steady job. We all carried on doing what we had been doing.

We lived together, all 3 of us, then we separated, my sisters moved out one after the other, they moved somewhere else. The eldest was the first to leave, she moved in a studio flat, while the second-born and me remained in our former parental home. Well, the second-born sister had started to catch on by then. For we led a very hard life there. We didn’t make a fire there after our father passed away, we stopped using the stoves. There was smoke everywhere in our house. Our house was located near the street, and in wintertime, during the most biting frost we opened the door. People passed in front of the door, and I used to say: “I wonder what these people are thinking. ‘Look, it’s too hot in there!’” But the stove let out so much smoke, you couldn’t see in front of you. So that’s why we didn’t have any heating anymore. By then, people started urging us. There were many Jews, they lived on every street. A woman used to come by our place, she told us: “Why don’t you leave? You have no family, you don’t have a proper house – why are you staying here instead of leaving?” For people were leaving for Israel in great numbers. But you think we heard that from only one Jew? Well, we didn’t manage to do this either, leaving, that is. And we stayed. There is a saying, to the effect that the worm gnaws its way inside a horseradish and says that one can live there as well. There are worms that eat and prefer horseradish, which is actually so hot. That’s how it was with us – just like the worm, we had gnawed our way inside the horseradish and wouldn’t leave anywhere, neither here, nor there, not for the world. Well, that’s how it was and that’s how we stayed.

Afterwards, the second-born sister moved out as well – this was already after the Revolution [after 1989] [5](#) –, and I was living there all by myself in a derelict house located near the street, and only gypsies lived on that street. I was so scared after nightfall... My sister once came here, and she said: “I can feel your loneliness, I can, you, living alone.” But that means they weren’t sincere, either. Why didn’t they take me to live with them? I could have lived either with one, or with the

other, for it was known it didn't do me any good to be living by myself. In a block of flats you live all by yourself, it's a different matter. There is a door to keep people from looking inside your house, it has no glass through which they could see you. I lived there alone for a few months, until a family of Christians took me in – their name was Atitenei, they are dead now. They had a house in the courtyard, like a kitchen, as it were. But they didn't cook there, they had the large house to themselves, like a villa, they had their own kitchen there. This was a house where they formerly kept tenants, girls, and the woman's husband came with a push-cart and helped me take from there the most useful, valuable items, and I moved there. In the meantime, I was given a studio flat, too, I believe it was in 1990, but, even though I had a studio flat, I still lived with them, slept over at their place. I lived with them for a year.

Then I too moved in a studio flat. I paid rent to IGO every month. Everyone bought the apartments, I was the only one who was paying a rent. I was afraid then they might evacuate me from the house. The things people do nowadays, the things that come to pass... Someone might go and pay a fat, handsome sum of money to these men who have come to power, and lo and behold they strike a deal with them and I am put out in the street. And I feared very much that this would happen. We had a Community canteen, and the woman who cooked there – the cook – told me: "Fani, draw a contract with them, for you will end up in the street." But what I bought with one hand I sold with the other. I donated it to the Community. And I receive a small help from them in return. But should I or shouldn't I? Not to mention I am a member of the Deportees Association [*the Association of Romanian Jews Victims of the Holocaust*], and that amounts to some support as well. One of our presidents, Feder – he is no longer alive –, he is the one who drew the necessary paperwork

I wasn't married. In fact, I mentioned this before: when you reach an older age you shouldn't mention you weren't married. For what would a stranger say? "Oh, the devil himself wouldn't marry her!" It no longer sounds right, not having been married, you should rather say: "I was, but my husband died." It is nicer than saying you weren't married – it means no one courted you. I didn't have any reasons for not getting married. My sisters were the ones who were picky. They didn't want to marry just anybody. For there were Jews here, but they were poorer, more inferior – they didn't want any of those, they wanted something better. Still, the young men of better condition wanted someone from a big family. We were in-between. And there you go, that's why they remained single. By then, people said: "If they didn't want to, why didn't you marry them?" I had a saying, I used to say: "Since they can wait, why should I hurry? I can wait too, can't I?" And furthermore, at this age, one of two would surely be no more...

I have no friends, I have no one. I have no one left. My eldest sister is living here, in Dorohoi, but I haven't spoken with her in 8 years [*since 1998*]. And I'm not the one to blame for that. She has always been like that. After all, we had the same mother and father. She bore such a grudge against her family... She didn't love mother, she didn't love father, as for her sisters, it goes without saying. And the second-born died 10-11 years ago [*around 1995-1996*]. I sat shivah after my sister too. I was living here, in the studio flat by the time when she passed away, poor soul. As far as working goes, I worked as long as my sister was still living. Afterwards, whom could I work for? I only started knitting as I still had some balls of wool around the house, all sorts of colors. Now I have come to the point where I no longer do anything.

I don't really travel anywhere. I'd go to Dorna, should I be able to. For I have been there 3 times, with some free tickets offered by the authorities. But it's hard to see myself get there, for that too is far away. I have also been to Borsec, I went there several times, but many years have passed since, this was actually before the Revolution. I didn't have to pay for the reservations to Borsec either, everything was free of charge, provided by the Community, for we were entitled to receive support with regard to food, reservations. And the Community had its own car – an Aro, a popular car in those days –, you showed up at the Community, got on the car there, and they took us by car to Borsec, and 14 days later – I think that's how long our stay was – the car came and took us back home. The Federation [*the Federation of Romanian Jewish Communities*] has 2 villas in Borsec. There is a villa that also has a canteen, and there is another one near the central bus station. We didn't want to be under the constant supervision of the boss, and we asked to be lodged at the one near the bus station. At the other villa, they also had a mikveh, and a synagogue inside the courtyard, and many rabbis came to recite prayers there, they wore very large felt hats, for they performed a religious service every morning and evening. Very many rabbis from England, America, Israel came there for treatment with their wives and children – the children had such nice sideburns, along the ears. I used to say: "Look, this is the only place where I can still see rabbis, since I can't make it to Israel." So many rabbis came to Borsec until approximately 20 years ago. They performed medical procedures in Borsec, all sorts of treatments, but I heard say long ago that it no longer exists. Perhaps they still come for the local waters, for there are springs there wherever you go. [Editor's note: Borsec, in Harghita county, is one of the most renowned regions of mineral water springs in Romania.] Borsec is very beautiful.

We had a Community canteen, it was in operation for about 30 years. It was a very good thing to have, this canteen. We had a meal we could count on, a piece of meat – for there was a dish with meat almost daily, it was rare when there wasn't meat on the menu. I had a reason to go out now and then, and it makes a difference to have the table set, ready for you. They brought me the food home lately, for I collapsed many times here, on the stairs of my block of flats. The canteen was closed a few years ago, for there are few Jews left, and there was no one to run it. In fact, I think we don't have a canteen anymore since 1994.

Years ago, they even organized a Seder Nacht at the canteen, but they stopped doing that long ago. We had a rabbi, his name was Wasserman, but he left to Israel, for he had 6 children there – 4 daughters and 2 sons. I think he left after 1990. And they stopped organizing the Seder Nacht ever since this rabbi left.

I can't observe the Yom Kippur fast. It happens all the time. It's as if the devil urges me to eat during the fast. I fast until 4 o'clock in the afternoon, at most, I can't fast longer than that, my stomach starts to gnaw – to weaken my will, wouldn't you know it!

Whatever tradition I still observe nowadays is the Sabbath. What more can I do? I don't work, don't wash, I steer clear of those things. I light candles on Friday evening, but I can't find those long white candles on the market, the kind that you must light on that occasion, nowadays candles come in small round metal cases, I still have some of those. I can buy long yellow candles, but you are allowed to burn yellow candles only on Chanukkah – you must light candles for 8 successive days on that occasion, but I don't really do that, to be honest. You must light an odd number of candles on Friday evening – either 1, or 3, or 5. I light 3 candles, for 3 persons: my mother, my father, and my sister. When I light them, I pray to God in Romanian or in Yiddish to give me strength, good

health, so that I can still walk on my legs, so that I can look after myself – I think about the situation I am in. But I see I pray in vain, for it is going from bad to worse.

I have a heart condition, I have a case of hernia, I have asthma just like my mother, and this is only to list just a few things I'm ailing from... But I have endured hardships ever since I was a child, I lived in the cold for so long in our home... I used to go to sleep with my feet numb with cold, and they wouldn't get warm all night long. That's how they stayed until I woke up in the morning, numb with cold. Where do you think my rheumatism comes from? And to think I still wish things were well.

Glossary

1 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.

2 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.

3 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.

4 Pogrom in Iasi and the Death Train

during the pogrom in Iasi (29th-30th June 1941) an estimated 4,000-8,000 people were killed on the grounds that Jews kept hidden weapons and had fired at Romanian and German soldiers. Thousands of people were boarded into two freight trains 100-150 people were crowded in each one of the sealed carriages. For several days, they were transported towards Podul Iloaiei and Calarasi and 65% of them died from asphyxiation and dehydration.

5 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.