Simon Meer

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Romania
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Interviewer: Emoke Major

Mr. Simon Meer was the president of the Jewish Community in Dorohoi during 1998-2005.

But even now he feels a very strong connection to the Community,
he insisted that all our meetings take place at the Community headquarters, during the work hours.

I didn't meet the present Community president, but the secretary and the accountant showed singular respect towards Mr. Meer.

- **My family history**

My father's parents were born in Dumbraveni, in the county of Botosani. [*Ed. note: Nowadays Dumbraveni belongs to the county of Suceava; it is located 27 km south-west of Botosani.*] My grandfather's name was Haim Meer, my grandmother's was Frida. My grandfather, my father's father, was a shoemaker. I didn't know them and I have no memories of the grandparents from my father's side. That's because I was sent to live in Dorohoi when I was 5, and I had nothing to do with them.

We went to see them as well when we went to the countryside to visit the parents during holidays, but it was very rarely. I think I went to see my grandmother with my parents only once, "Good afternoon." – "Good afternoon." she offered us a bite to eat, and we were off. For that village is large – the village of Dumbraveni –, they lived at a different end of the village, it was far from where we lived, and we didn't really go to see either my father's parents, or his brothers. But they were Jewish.

My father had 3 more brothers and a sister, they all lived in the village of Dumbraveni. My father's brothers and my father as well, learned the trade of shoemaking from their father, but, after they got married, seeing there was no parnose in shoemaking [*parnose (Yiddish): livelihood, living*] – as they say, you have no income –, they opened up stores. All 4 of them had small stores – general

stores, selling all sorts of goods – in the village. Dumbraveni was a large village, just like a city.

My father lived in Salageni, my father's other brothers had their stores near the village center. Nusan – Nusan is the Yiddish variant, but Nathan is the Romanian one – was one of my father's brothers; he knew Hebrew well, and he performed the religious service in the synagogue in Dumbraveni. He also read the Sefer Torah – and the Sefer Torah is very difficult to read, for there is no punctuation. Sama was the name of another of my father's brothers – Sauma in Yiddish, yet Sama in Romanian, in his identity card.

They had yet another brother, but I forgot his name. And they also had a sister who was a seamstress, I believe. In any case, they didn't receive an education. They were all married, they all had families there, children – the children left, they studied in Botosani, in other cities across the country. But I have no memories of them either. If I had nothing to do with them… I was a child of 5 when they brought me to Botosani, how could I remember whether I met them previously, if I played with them. But I have no news of them whatsoever.

In 1939, when the legionaries 1 came to power, my father's other brothers took refuge in Botosani. My father and mother were the only ones who came to Dorohoi – my mother being born there. My father's other 3 brothers went to Botosani, they weren't deported. The Jews from Botosani weren't deported. Only these regions were, those belonging to Bukovina – Campulung, Vatra Dornei, Humor, Radauti, Suceava – and it included us too, the region of Dorohoi, with the surrounding towns – Saveni, Darabani, Mihaileni.

My father was the eldest among his brothers. His name was Froim Meer, he was born in 1893, in Dumbraveni. My father fought during World War I, I don't know where exactly, but, in any case, I do know he did his military service with the 8th Regiment Dorobanti, Botosani. [*Ed. note: Dorobanti is located 17 km north of Botosani.*] He had a leg wound from the front, but he wasn't limping.

The grandparents from my mother's side were from Dorohoi. My grandfather's name was Hanina Cojocaru – for I also had a brother whom my mother named after her father, Hanina –, and my grandmother's name was **Hana** – Eni in Yiddish [*Ene*]. My grandfather was a furrier – he sewed sheepskin coats, hats. The old man especially, he went in the countyside, entered people's houses, people had skins for hats, coats, and he sewed them right there, on the spot. And that's how it was back then: for instance, if you were a shoemaker, your name was Shoemaker – the name for someone who made shoes. As my mother's father was a furrier, his name was Cojocaru [*Romanian for "furrier"*]. The grandfather from my mother's side died here, in Dorohoi, I didn't get to know him.

My grandmother was still alive when I was born, of all my grandparents she is the only one I remember. All 4 of us boys lived at an aunt's, her name was Ruhla Butnaru, and she actually sent us on many occasions to see our grandmother so that she wouldn't be all by herself, we slept over at her place so that she wouldn't sleep alone, as she was an elderly woman, a widow, so that she wouldn't be afraid. She was very fond of us, this grandmother from Dorohoi cared for us so much, as if we were her own children. We spoke both Yiddish and Romanian with her. She was a seamstress – for my mother, being her daughter, learned the trade from her. She sewed bed linen, underwear. My grandmother had a sewing machine, and she had many customers.

She wore regular clothes. A dress or a skirt with a blouse – that was her attire. She wore dark colors. She didn't cover her head. She only covered her head with a head kerchief on Friday evening, when she lit the candles for the Sabbath. She had her natural hair, which she braided it behind the back of her head and looped around, like that. No woman in our family wore a wig, as only the women [*wives*] of rabbis and hakhamim wore wigs – they wore their hair cut short and wore wigs.

The grandmother from Dorohoi wasn't deported; she died before the deportations took place.

My mother had 2 brothers and a sister. The eldest of the brothers was Elias Abramovici, the second born was Elisa Cojocaru, the third born was Ruhla Butnaru, their sister, and my mother was the youngest.

I can't quite figure why **Elias Abramovici** had the name of Abramovici and not Cojocaru. He had a store, he had a hardware store. He lived in Iasi, but he returned to live in Dorohoi; he died and was buried here, in Dorohoi, in the Jewish cemetery. His wife, aunt Ietti, left to Israel with their daughter – but he had died already. They had an only daughter, Sophie. My aunt is dead, too – only my cousin is still alive. Her married name is Sophie Peretz, she is married to Sapsa Peretz – he was born in Saveni. They live in Israel, but I don't know in what city.

My mother's other brother, **Elisa Cojocaru**, was married, but he didn't have any children. They lived in Bucecea, in the county of Botosani. [*Ed. note: A former borough, Bucecea is nowadays a village located 22 km west of Botosani, and 17 km north of Dumbraveni.*] He had a manufacture store – textiles, fabrics. They weren't deported, but they were evacuated from Bucecea to Botosani. They returned to Bucecea after World War II, and that's where they died, both he and his wife, I believe they died around 1946-1947.

My mother had a sister in Dorohoi, who raised me and my brothers since we were 5. Her official name was Ruhla Butnaru – Ruhal [*Rukhl*] in Yiddish, Rasela in Romanian. As long as she lived with her parents, my aunt was a seamstress too, just like my mother. Her husband, Moise Butnaru, cut to measure the leather for shoes – he cut the leather and made the vamps for shoes. He is buried here, in the Jewish cemetery in Dorohoi. My aunt died in Israel, she left there with my youngest brother, she lived in Rehovot. I forgot the year when she died, in any case, she was in her 80's by then.

My mother's name was Feiga – Feiga Cojocaru was her name. She was born in 1898, in Dorohoi. As the grandmother from my mother's side was a seamstress, my mother learned that trade from her as well.

I don't know how my parents met. I wasn't curious to find out. They lived in Dumbraveni for the most part, in the village of Salageni, a hamlet. The locality had several villages. [*Ed. note: Salageni is located 32 km south-west of Botosani.*] Dumbraveni was a large locality, with more than 20,000 inhabitants – that's how large it was. Poorer families lived there, as well as richer ones, and then there were also really well-to-do people who lived there in the village. 12 Jewish families lived there as well.

My father was a small merchant, he had a store, a sort of a grocery selling almost anything: food, salt, flour, oil, even cloths – he supplied the store with everything. He brought the merchandise

from Bucecea, a town located close to Dumbraveni, and from Botosani. He took a cart from the village, drawn by two horses, he went and brought a freight cart, so that he could supply the store with merchandise. So father was a merchant and mother was a seamstress:
she sewed underwear, bed linen: pillows, eiderdowns, odds and ends. And since she was a seamstress and was good with fabrics – manufacture, that's what they called them – they also sold fabrics at the store. She helped father when it came to fabrics. She was in charge of textiles.
My mother came to Dorohoi by cart, she brought us food, bought supplies, and took back with her rolls of fabrics, lengths of cloth. That's how we made a living.

We had a two-room house and the store was in one of the rooms. But we paid rent for the house, it wasn't ours. We had a few fruit trees in the courtyard – sour cherries, plums, that was about it. They kept a dog, a cat, but no other domestic animals whatsoever. No fowls, no kinds of animals. For holidays, my mother bought fowls from there, from the village. There were, thank God, plenty of places to buy from.

My mother – just like my aunt – was a woman who observed religion, popular, to be sure! She liked to dress elegantly. Well, a pretty little dress, a skirt, a blouse to wear – as she was a seamstress – she cut them, stitched them together and made her own clothes. But when it came to finer dresses, for special occasions, for holidays, she went to Dorohoi – for she was born there –, and she had them made there by dressmakers – well now – more professional ones. For on holidays she too went with my father to the synagogue in Dumbraveni, and she had to wear something a bit more special.

- **Growing up**

I, Simon Meer, was born in Burdujeni, Suceava, in 1927. [*Ed. note: Burdujeni is nowadays part of the city of Suceava.*] I don't know how this came about, my father's business wasn't doing well for a while – I wasn't born yet –, and they moved to Burdujeni, near Suceava, and later they returned to Dumbraveni from Burdujeni. And it was just my luck, the fact that I was born when they were living in Burdujeni. All my other brothers were born in Dumbraveni.

I was the second-born. I also had an older brother and two younger ones. The name of my elder brother was Iancu, Iacov in Hebrew. He is 2 years older than me, he was born in 1925. Then Moise was born after me – Moshe in Hebrew. He was born in 1929, he is 2 years younger than me. For I don't know how mother scheduled our birth, she gave birth every other year. Only Hanina, the youngest, the cadet, was much younger than Moise. [*Ed. note: He was probably born around 1935.*] He was named after the grandfather from my mother's side, I was named after a cousin of my mother's – Simon –, and Moise was named after my aunt's husband, Moise Butnaru.

Our parents lived in the countryside, and we, the children, lived in Dorohoi from the age of 5. We lived with our mother's sister, Ruhla Butnaru, who was a widow and looked after all 4 of us, boys, all 4 brothers. She was a widow, and she told our mother: "Listen, Foighe, – for my mother's name was Feiga, but they called her Foighe [*Foygl*] in Yiddish – send those rascals here, bring them to live with me, so that they may learn the talmud torah here, go to a Jewish school and learn a trade!" For what could we have learned in the countryside? And they brought all of us, brothers, to Dorohoi at an early age, we attended the talmud torah, the Jewish school, and then each of us learned a trade, a profession. We came one after another. As soon as we turned 5, they sent us

here. Iancu, the eldest, was the first to come here, followed by me.

My elder brother, Inacu, attended the talmud torah for 2 years, the Jewish school for 4 years, and then became a shop assistant – as they said in the old days –, a salesman in a shop selling chemicals and hardware. It was a private shop, as shops were in those days, before World War II, its owner was a certain Itcu Danilov. And when he left to Israel, in 1947, he was still a shop assistant. He didn't learn any trade. Moise learned tailoring. He was apprenticed to a tailor, the owner of the workshop was called Herman. In 1947, when he left to Israel, he hadn't finished his apprenticeship yet. And the cadet, Hanina, was about to find a job and learn a trade when he left to Israel. I believe he was 15 or 16 and hadn't tried any profession yet.

I came to Dorohoi in 1932. And I somewhat broke the relationship with my parents who lived in Dumbraveni. I went to the countryside only during school holidays. And what is more, even then I didn't spend too much time at home, I wandered, frolicked. I liked to take the herd in the fields to graze, and I went with girls and boys on the pasture where we took cattle, sheep to graze. I only spent 2-3 months a year with my parents, during the summer holiday. But here, in Dorohoi, I shared a bond with my mother's sister who looked after us, brought us up, taught us, and even went with us to Transnistria.

We also saw our mother when she came to Dorohoi. Father didn't, for he bought supplies from Bucecea, Burdujeni, Botosani. Mother came to Dorohoi by cart – for there are around 40-50 km from here to Dumbraveni [*there are 43 km from Dorohoi to Dumbraveni*] –, she came to see us, and by doing so, she bought supplies here, she loaded a cart with fabrics – materials for bed linen, for dresses, silk, cloths, all sorts of fabrics. She brought food when she came. Why, what do you think we lived on here? How do you think our aunt could feed us, four mouths to feed? Our parents provided us with clothing, shoes, everything.

Our aunt had her hands full with us: washing, ironing our clothes, feeding us, and taking care of us at school. She couldn't cope with all that, she used to hire a woman now and then to wash her clothes, then she ironed them. She too took good care of her household. She was – as it were – a true mother. What other woman takes up taking care of four rascals? Four boys. Well, had there been a girl at least. A girl helps with things, for she learns these household chores at an early age. But we were four boys.

Our aunt had her own house – a small house farther down the street, on this very street. [*Ed. note: The same street where the headquarters of the Jewish Community in Dorohoi is nowadays located, at present Spiru Haret St.*] Now there stands a new building where her house used to be. The house had 2 rooms. When we were in the first grades of elementary school, we slept in the same room with our aunt. We weren't ashamed, we were little back then. We were 5-7 years old when we attended the talmud torah, and we went to school until we were 14, then we lived there with her and learned a trade as well. But when we grew older, we – the boys – slept in the other room.

We spoke only Romanian at home, in our parents' home. Our parents also spoke Romanian to each other, especially since they lived in the countryside [– *where very few Jews lived*]. Even here, at my aunt's as well: I spoke to her in Romanian and she spoke to me in Yiddish. And I understood what she said perfectly well, but I didn't speak Yiddish. We were accustomed to speak only Romanian, all my brothers. My aunt called me Simola. Simon is Simen [*Shimen*] in Yiddish, and Simola is a pet name.

I learned Yiddish at the talmud torah. I attended the talmud torah for 2 years, between the age of 5 and 7. There were several talmud torahs in Dorohoi, for so many Jews lived here. There were 4 talmud torahs in Dorohoi for a population of 8,000 Jews. We attended the one closer to our home, the one on Petru Rares St. We went there every day at 8 in the morning, and stayed there 3-4 hours every day – they had discipline there as well. There were 2 groups of 20-25 children at the talmud torah. We only had one teacher, a man, who taught us Yiddish. They also taught Hebrew there, but mostly the alphabet.

I learned Hebrew in school, I had teachers specializing in Hebrew. I attended the Jewish school from 7 until 11 years old; all subject matters were taught in Romanian there, and there was one special subject matter, Hebrew. I remember the Hebrew teacher, his name was Marantz. His specialty was Hebrew. I couldn't say where he studied Hebrew, I no longer know that. But he spoke Romanian as well. We also studied religion subjects during Hebrew class, but mostly in Hebrew and less so in Yiddish. I learned Hebrew very easily. I remember the grades I had at Hebrew – I was a front-ranking pupil during the 4 years that I studied Hebrew. And when I traveled to Israel in 1969 I had a great difficulty remembering words in Hebrew – I remembered very little. Any language, if you don't speak it, if you don't use it, you forget it.

There were children, pupils at school who spoke Yiddish. They spoke Yiddish at home with their parents from an early age, and then they spoke Yiddish with the other children as well. But since we spoke Romanian at home, we kept speaking that. For instance, we went out at school during breaks, and some children spoke, conversed in Yiddish, others in Romanian. I spoke Romanian all the time.

But there were only Jewish children at that school. Each of the classes had 30-40 pupils. For some grades there were even parallel classes – for instance, during 1st grade, if there were too many pupils, there were 2 parallel classes. There were only 4 grades of primary school at the Jewish school. There were no mixed classes before the war, the boys studied separately, and so did the girls. The building was divided in two by means of a plywood wall – the boys on one side, the girls on the other.

There were classrooms for boys and classrooms for girls. But the courtyard outside was a joint one, we went there during breaks, met there, played there, boys and girls together. But if we were allowed to go out during breaks, we weren't allowed to enter the other side, the classrooms for girls. The building can still be seen nowadays, it is on A. I. Cuza St. – the only building that is still "alive," as it were. At present, it doesn't belong to the Community, now it must be given back again, now it must be taken over.

The name of the school principal was Herscovici. There were both male and female teachers. My schoolteacher from 1st grade until 4th grade was Mina Solomon – her name was Mina Solomon before getting married, and Mina Kohn after she got married. I had her as my schoolteacher during the 4 years. Starting with 2nd grade, I also had other teachers, teacher Macus – I forget what subject matter she taught –, principal Herscovici – I believe he taught history, geography. From my classmates, I remember Leibovici – a tall man –, and Opincaru. Most of them left to Israel, I don't know whether they're still living. I have no former classmates living here, in Dorohoi.

I attended the Jewish school for 4 years until 1938. I was in the 4th grade in 1938, for I fell ill right during 4th grade, before the end of the school year, and they took me to Iasi urgently, I underwent surgery and had my appendix removed. But I had already developed peritonitis, they actually took puss from inside my abdomen, and even worms. At that age. I don't even want to remember it... "Well now, son, you are one among many [*one of the few, that is*] who survived this operation." Back then, there were no antibiotics, things like those...

I was at the Jewish Hospital in Iasi. Professor Busureanu performed the surgery, he wasn't Jewish, he was Romanian, but the assisting professor was a certain Polack, who was Jewish. My mother came to the surgery, she hurried there from the countryside, and my aunt left my other brothers at home and came to Iasi herself. I couldn't walk on my own feet when I got out of the hospital, for I had been lying in bed for over a month. And my aunt and my mother carried me on their arms from the hospital to the street, to the cab – as cabs were in those days, hackney coaches –, and I came by coach to the train station. And from the train station, we left by train – there was a direct connection Iasi-Dorohoi.

After I finished school, the four grades, I was apprenticed and worked for an employer. I learned a dyer's trade and chemical laundry – that is my profession. Afterwards, during my apprenticeship, I attended the school for professions for apprentices for 3 years, I went there every day in the afternoon. Then, later on, I also attended the theoretical high school as part of the evening classes program. I attended there for 4 years. In the afternoon, after work, I attended classes. I graduated the theoretical high school as part of the evening classes program in 1962 or 1963.

My parents observed tradition, and my aunt, my grandmother, it goes without saying! But not all Jews observed tradition. Especially here, in Dorohoi, there were very many traders who didn't observe tradition, on many occasions they didn't even come to the synagogue on Saturdays – they were busy with commerce, business, and things like that. As a child, as long as I attended the talmud torah and the Jewish school, I went to the synagogue only on Friday evenings, on Saturdays, and on all holidays. During the week – I didn't. There were fanatic children who attended the synagogue every day in the morning. I wore my good clothes when I went to the synagogue, I wore my clothes for holidays: trousers, shirt, blouse, a beret to cover my head. I wore a beret ever since I was a child, now that I grew older – I wear caps, hats.

There were 24 synagogues in Dorohoi. Most of them were large, roomy synagogues. The smallest of them would fit 40-50 men, and there was a second room for the women. But there were some synagogues that could fit 150-200 people. But all the synagogues were full on holidays. The synagogue I used to go to ever since I was a child was the Rendarilor Synagogue – but it no longer exists, this synagogue disappeared. In fact, most of those who attended this synagogue were merchants. Each trade, each guild had its own synagogue. For instance, there was the Shoemakers' Synagogue, the Tailors' Synagogue, the Carpenters' Synagogue; cabmen and cart drivers had their own synagogue as well. That's where I happened to go, to the Rendarilor Synagogue, for that's where my grandfather went. He was no longer alive, but an uncle of mine was, one of my mother's brothers – Elias Abramovici –, meaning my grandfather's son, he went to that synagogue, too. And we, the boys, fell into the habit of going to our grandfather's and our uncle's synagogue.

The seats were bought by all the parishioners – everyone had their seat where they sat. The boys didn't sit next to their father, for those were reserved seats, bought by each parishioner who paid a tax to the synagogue for the seat they occupied at the synagogue. For us, children, there were benches with tables where we sat. There was a separate balcony for women upstairs, and from the outside, you could only see their heads, their faces. The women listened to the prayers being read downstairs, but they had a sort of a rabbi woman who read in the balcony for the women the same prayer the rabbi read for the men. My aunt, my mother's sister, the one who raised us, was very fanatical, she knew the prayers, and she was the one who read the prayer for the women on holidays.

My grandmother, who lived here, in Dorohoi, was very fanatical, and so was my aunt. On Friday evening, for instance, they set the table, lit the candles – before sitting down to eat, before entering the Sabbath, you had to light the candles. Grandmother used to light 3 and 5 candles – odd numbers. Sometimes she lit 3 candles, sometimes 5. There is also a short prayer that is recited when you light the candles. It is in Yiddish. And you must wear a kerchief to cover your head; you aren't allowed to light the candles without covering your head. Both my aunt and my grandmother covered their head with a kerchief. After the prayer is over, the woman who is reciting the prayer must say "Ghit Soibas!" – "Shabbat Tov" in Hebrew, meaning "A good Saturday." And after that, we sat down to eat. Sometimes, our grandmother invited us over. Not all four of us ate at our aunt's. Two of us used to eat at our grandmother's, two at our aunt's – we pleased everybody that way.

They only cooked kosher food in our family. Hens were taken only to the hakham to be slaughtered. Pork never entered our house, God forbid. During the week, we ate the bread we bought at the bakery, for there were so many bakeries in Dorohoi – owned by Jews –, you couldn't decide where to buy from. But it was mandatory to bake bread for Saturday, on Saturday you weren't allowed to buy bread from the store, from the bakery. On Friday, even the poorest Jew baked "coilici" for Saturday. [*Ed. note: Coilici is a variant for challah, similar to the word „kajlics" used by some Hungarian speaking Jews in Romania. Both words have the origin of the Hungarian word „kalacs".*] My grandmother had a little oven, but my aunt had a stove instead – the kitchen range protruded and inside the wall there was the iron plate oven, and that's where she baked the bread for Saturday, inside that iron plate oven. They baked coilici, regular bread, inside an elongated tray, either kneaded or as 3 or 4 rolls – my aunt, being younger, used to knead them. You didn't place the whole coilici on the table, you sliced it. When you sat down to eat, the bread was already sliced and placed on the table in a special plate, and everyone took a slice from there to eat.

They served a vorspeis on Friday evening – fish, traditionally, if you had it, if not, chicken breast meatballs, beiligfish. The fish was served boiled, not fried, and portioned, divided into portions for each individual person. If it were a smaller variety of crucian carp, every person ate a small fish, but if it were a large fish – a carp – it was sliced, and everyone received a piece on his plate, with a little amount of gravy – the fish gravy was dense, it had a gelatin-like consistency, for it was served cold. And if you didn't have fish, if you couldn't buy it at the market, you made beiligfish, meatballs served as vorspeis. Then they served soup – only chicken soup, never beef soup. They boiled homemade noodles for the soup, you made them using a rolling pin and then sliced them. After the soup, we had chicken meat. We ate beef during the week, but there was this tradition of eating

only poultry on the Sabbath. That's my experience of it. And then stewed fruit at the end of the meal. In the old days, in my day, people used to eat stewed fruit made from carrots and chickpea. Plums also – more recently. Chickpea is a bean similar to pea seed, and you mixed that with a bit of rice and sweetened it, and that was the 4th course. And you had this ritual every Saturday afternoon. They didn't make chulent. Chulent was prepared by the more fanatical families, relatives of rabbis, of hakhamim, but most people didn't.

From Friday evening until Sunday morning, she didn't light the fire anymore. But this despite the fact that there was someone – his name was Gheorgheol, Ghita, Gheorghe –, who went to Jewish homes and lit the fire for them on Saturdays, especially on the street where we lived, on Spiru Haret. My aunt and my grandmother lived close to each other, and we had a neighbor, a woman named Profira, who used to come over and lit the fire for both of them. My aunt, I recall, called her: "Prosira, Prosira, come on over!" She made the fire on Saturday in the afternoon, so that we could warm up the food – for the food was prepared on Friday, you didn't cook on Saturdays. And during winter, either Gheorgheol or Profira came and made the fire to last us from Friday evening until the Sabbath was over.

At home, in the countryside, they observed tradition as well, my mother was a fanatic herself, oh my! She too baked bread, lit the candles on Friday evening. It is less frequent for women go to the synagogue on Saturday; they go to the synagogue mostly on holidays. And mother went to the synagogue only on holidays. But father went to the synagogue on Saturday in the morning – he closed the store on Saturdays and Sundays. There were 12 Jewish families in Dumbraveni, and they had their own synagogue.

There was a large, systematized mill in Dumbraveni, its owner was Jewish as well, and he put up a room for a synagogue there, on the mill's premises, in an adjoining building. During the summer holiday, when I went to the countryside to see my parents, I went to that synagogue. It was nice – it had tables, chairs, an aron kodesh, an altar where they read the prayers, everything was fitted just as in a real synagogue. There was also a Holy Scroll – you couldn't have a synagogue without a Torah.

The religious service was performed by one of the Jews living there, in the village, who knew Hebrew well. In fact, he was one of my father's brothers, Nusan Meer. You couldn't bring someone to perform for so few Jewish people – you had to pay him, and where would you get the money from? From the 12 parishioners living there? In Dorohoi, there were plenty of them. There were hakhamim, there were people who performed the religious service, people paid by the Community. The owner also fitted a small room for the fowl slaughterhouse, and the hakham from Botosani came there especially for the purpose of sacrificing the fowl for Saturday. And mother went there, the hakham sacrificed the fowl, she came home and plucked the feathers. But our traditions forbid scalding the fowl in order to remove the feathers, you must pluck them. She plucked the feathers, then lit a piece of paper and singed the fowl in order to get rid of the traces of feathers left on the skin. That's the ritual.

We celebrated the holidays here, in Dorohoi, we didn't go home. Many times on holidays mother would rush off to Dorohoi, so that she could be with us at my aunt's, her sister's. But she stayed there only for a day or two, and then she went home.

A cleanup of the house was performed before Passover, whitewashing, things like those, so that everything was kosher – as they said. “May it be kosher like User’s daughter” – there was a joke that ran like that. People also joked. You performed the “Faslam am Chametz” – meaning selling everything that had to do with flour. My aunt and my grandmother wrapped a wooden spoon containing a bit of flour, took it outside, and set it on fire. You say something in Yiddish – “Bahart breten khumetz. Far brananem khumetz” [Ed. Note: …] . Chametz is the Hebrew term, khumetz is the Yiddish one; “farbranen” means burning – the burning of the chametz.

People prepare matzah on Passover, it is made from matzah flour – people bake special cookies from matzah flour. You don’t use wheat flour during the 8 days of Passover, you aren’t allowed to do that, you don’t eat bread. The dishes made from meat are prepared in the same way as during the rest of the year: soup, meatballs, steaks, stews, everything, everything. But you do this without using the dishes and ingredients that aren’t allowed during Passover. Both my grandmother and my aunt had separate dishes for Passover… Oh my! If my mother, who lived in the countryside, knew she had to have separate dishes for Passover! Had you entered the poorest of homes, the home of the poorest handicraftsman, not having separate dishes for the Passover holiday was inconceivable. The poorest man, the poorest family!

As long as we lived with our parents at home, we performed the Seder ceremony. After we came to Dorohoi, we never went home to the countryside on Passover to do the “uprahnam Seder” – meaning that a child should ask his father questions, the father should answer them, that’s what “uprahnam Seder” means –, performing the reading, that is; for there is a special prayer that is read during the Seder. Uncle Elias had his own children so we didn’t go to his place on the Seder. We celebrated with our aunt.

My aunt prepared special food for Passover, everything kosher, with no exception. And she organized the Passover meal, but without the Pesach reading – as they said, the Seder Nacht. The food we ate was the same as throughout the year, but it was prepared in the kosher dishes for Passover. There is this tradition as well: the foods especially are no different from regular ones, yet the baked items are. For instance, on Passover you are only allowed to bake using matzah flour and potatoes. People bake small breads from grated potatoes, they make a pudding using matzah, but it is sweetened.

Chanukkah and Purim are simpler than Pesach. Baked foods are predominant on that occasion. There is a baked dish that is prepared especially for Purim, hamantashen, and there are other foods baked especially for Purim – I forget which. It is the same on Chanukkah [*there are dishes baked especially for that occasion*].

People lit candles on Chanukkah – for 8 successive days here, in galut, for only 7 successive days in Israel – using a special candelabrum and yellow candles. [*Editor’ note: Chanukkah, also known as the Festival of Lights, is an eight-day Jewish holiday, which also commemorates the Macabbees’ uprising and the re-consecration of the Temple in Jerusalem. It is observed for eight nights, starting on the 25th day of Kislev according to the Hebrew calendar.*] Jews aren’t allowed to light yellow candles on Friday evening, only white ones. For Chanukkah, however, all the Jews bought yellow candles. The Chanukkah candelabrum was utterly simple: a stand with 8 small holes, 8 holes for placing the candles, which you stuck into a candlestick. And on the first evening, for instance, you lit one candle, two candles on the second evening, and so on until the eighth evening when you lit

all eight candles. And there is a separate candle [*shammash*], which is used to light the candles on Chanukkah. You don't light them with matches. You lit this candle using matches, then you held this candle and said a bruha [*broche - blessing*], a prayer that is recited, and you used it to light the Chanukkah candles. When we lived at my aunt's, it was us, the children, who lit the candles, but my aunt lit them as well.

When we were little, the boys and girls got together on Purim and went from house to house, as on Christmas caroling, as Romanians do on New Year's Eve. On Purim, we sang and received sweets, money. There were special Purim songs, in Yiddish. For instance, they say: "Aghitam piramoula, vidaghei foulah, der bort ist berlong, des vart ist berkronk." You said this by the window or they took you inside the house to sing on Purim. And here, in Dorohoi, just as we, Jewish boys, went with Christian boys on New Years's and on St. Vasile, so on Purim: we took along Christian boys who went with us. They, poor things, couldn't say the words or sing the songs, but received some sweets instead, or a coin – precisely, back then, when I was a child, there were coins with holes in the middle: 5 bani, 10 bani.

And just as Romanians sing "Plugusorul" on New Year's Eve and masked people wander the streets – so on Purim we wore masks on our faces, so that people couldn't recognize us. But I didn't have a full outfit, I wore the clothes and the pants I usually wore. I put on something else as well – a domino, meaning a black robe – over my clothes, and the mask to cover my face. But they wore uniforms here. My former employer – where I learned my trade – had a special wardrobe to lend, the outfit for Caluti [*Horses*], for New Year's Eve, for Capra [*Goat*], for everything, and he also had outfits he lent to children on Purim. And he received money in exchange for renting these outfits. But I didn't rent an outfit. Where could I come up with the money to pay him? But on Caluti, on St. Vasile, on New Year's Eve – those were specific outfits. He only didn't have Calutul [*the Horse*], other than that, my former employer had the entire outfit. Someone else had the Horse, and the team – as it was called –, the gang of children borrowed a horse from that person. There was a separate outfit for Capra, for Calut, for all who wore bells, including a sort of small drum like a barrel with a tuft of hair attached to it, which sounded like the bellow of a bull when you pulled it… It was simpler on Purim. On Purim, you wore a mask across your face so that people couldn't recognize you.

On the second day of Rosh Hashanah you went to a course of water – that was the custom, it was something traditional –, and you shook your pockets clean, you threw in the water everything you had in your pockets – meaning you cast away all the sins you committed during the year, you throw them into the water. People go taslich – meaning we are going there to shake our sins. In the morning, after the religious service was over at the synagogue, the Jews of Dorohoi went to do the taslich by the hundreds. We went at the town outskirts to the Jijia river, to a place they call Trestienii Bridge, and everyone shook their pockets clean there. [*Editor's note: The tashlich is an expression describing the symbolic casting away of sins. Devout Jews gather by a river and recite prescribed passages that speak of God's willingness to forgive a repentant sinner.*]

The Jewish bathhouse, the Community bathhouse was located across the street from where we lived, from my aunt's place. It was customary for Jewish people to go to the Community bathhouse on Friday. We, the boys, went to the bathhouse on Friday as well. The bathhouse is gone, they built a block of flats where it used to be. There was a room with bathtubs, there was a room with steam – a separate one for men, a separate one for women. I mostly went to the room with steam, I didn't

go to the one with bathtubs.

They poured water so that it dripped, so that there was more steam. And those water drops burned you. You couldn't stand the steam for long. But it was healthy, the steam was very healthy. And after you were exposed to the steam for a little while, your body burned a bit as a result of being exposed to the steam; if you wanted you could go into the other room and take a bath. There were no bathtubs in the steam room, but there were showers. That's where I bathed, that's where I lathered myself.

There was a mikveh as well, but I didn't go there. The clerics used to go to the mikveh: rabbis, hakhamim – as it were, the men of God. The grandmother living here, in Dorohoi, was very fanatical, she went to the mikveh every week. So did my aunt – we found out – before we came to live with her, when her husband was still living. But young people were content to go there only once, on the occasion of getting married. For back then, when a young couple got married, they had to go the mikveh before getting married, it was obligatory.

You weren't allowed to get married if you didn't go to the mikveh. And I went to the mikveh only once, before getting married. You descended below the bathroom floor, there was a specially built pool you had to enter and pour water onto yourself there, inside the mikveh. And there was someone who read a prayer for you. For the brides, there was a woman who could read the prayers, and for the boys, it was the rabbi who took you into the water and read a religious prayer for you. You had to go into the water pool up to your neck and then come out.

The bar mitzvah is the ceremony of donning the tefillin, performed when you are 13. They taught us at the talmud torah, prepared us for the bar mitzvah, so that when we turned 13 we knew how to don the tefillin – you must spin that belt 7 times around your arm and 5 times around your finger, and you wear that when reading the siddur, the prayer book. It was mandatory for every single boy to go to the synagogue with his parents, bring sweets there, prepare a festive meal. I went with my aunt. She baked some sweets – sponge cake, ginger bread –, took them there, and offered the parishioners who were there a glass of wine, liqueur, something to drink – one couldn't buy soft drinks in those days. The rabbi gave a speech in Yiddish inside the synagogue – there were rabbis who couldn't speak a word of Romanian –, giving directions to the young man as to how to observe religion, "… for you are of age now, so you must fit into the ranks of grown-ups, observe the same ritual…"

I too keep my tefillin at home. I have the tallit which is worn on every holiday, on Saturdays, Fridays in the synagogue. But the tefillin – those things that are worn around the head and hand –, you wear that only during the week. You don't wear them on holidays, you don't wear them on Saturday. So I wore them only too rarely – for I didn't go to the synagogue during the week, I didn't have the time. I didn't have this care, even when I was learning my trade, I didn't go to the synagogue during the week. In my days, in my childhood, when I donned the tefillin, I had Frenkel as a rabbi. It was rabbi Frenkel who performed my religious wedding as well.

Here, in Dorohoi, Christians and Jews got along very well. For instance, we, children, had Christian friends, they came over on Purim, on Chanukkah, and we went over on New Year's Eve. It was a nice life together. It was only when the odious Horia Sima [2] and the legionary movement [3] came to power, then the war, Hitler, it was only when chauvinism, racism began – that was the end of it. "Death to the Jews" – that's what they hollered but not all of them. Some instigators. They gave the

legionaries pistols and there you had it, they ruled the country.

There were many legionaries 1 in Dorohoi. There were a few nests of legionaries. There were nests of legionaries everywhere, on every street. There was a nest of legionaries right on my street, on Spiru Haret St. Oh my, they performed drills, armed with automatic weapons, pistols – of course, we weren't allowed to go out when they were marching in the street. We weren't allowed to go out. Only 1 hour a day. Such a life… The green shirt and the slanting belt across it – that was their mandatory summer uniform. They wore some sort of helmet on their head. During winter, they wore a navy blue coat, it was like a great coat, like a cloak, but they still wore a slanting belt on top of it, and a weapon, an automatic pistol. You could sometimes see them wearing army-like khaki uniforms, but most of them wore navy blue uniforms. They organized marches, and they sang in the street. They had their legionary songs. There was a song that went: "The guaaaard, the Captain…," "Long live the Guard/the Captain." And I remember them, for I was a child then.

I don't remember them having organized any special events here, in Dorohoi, I couldn't say they have. I only remember this, that the legionaries and the head of Security 4 from the Police station, commissioner Mercur, entered the synagogue during a Jewish wedding. There was a chuppah in the synagogue for performing the religious ceremony. And as the chuppah was of a dark red color: "That is the Bolshevik flag." And they arrested everyone in that synagogue attending the wedding – one of my brothers-in-law was among them –, they gathered them, took them to the police station, boarded them on a train and sent them to the Targu Jiu Labor Camp. There was a labor camp for political prisoners there, for communists. As it were… They convicted you for being a Communist without your being one. Who knew then what communist politics was, what Bolsheviks even were? For them, Bukovina 5, Bessarabia 6 especially was Bolshevik; they were on the border with the Russians, the Soviet Union. For my wife – she was a child of 10 – tells me that where she was taken in Transnistria, near the Bug river, there was a German occupation, and if the Germans heard you were from the Romanian Old Kingdom, they didn't treat you the way they treated those who were from Bukovina – for they were considered to be Bolsheviks, all those who were from Bukovina and Bessarabia.

- **During the War**

The pogrom took place on July 1st, 1940. That's when a part of the Romanian army who had been defeated on the Russian front had withdrawn here, at Herta [*today, Gertsa, the Chernivtsi region, Ukraine*], Chernivtsi. These were by then fragments of the army who hadn't fallen on the front, a few companies of soldiers that had remained out of 2 regiments – part of regiment 8 vanatori, and another artillery regiment [*Regiment 3 frontier guards and Regiment 8 artillery*] –, which were retreating in this direction, towards the country. And there was a coincidence, the fact that a Jewish soldier who had fallen at Herta was being buried that day; he was killed by the Russians, and this is how he was shot: the Russians wanted to shoot the company's leading officer, and this Jewish sergeant stepped in front of him in order to protect his captain, and the Russians shot them both with their automatic weapons.

The funeral of that Jewish soldier was under way in the Jewish cemetery that day, and the Romanian cemetery is located next to it, and the captain was being buried there. And as they were retreating on their way towards Suceava, and as the cemetery was by the side of the road towards Suceava, they saw the funeral, entered the Jewish cemetery, opened fire with their machine guns

and killed all the people there, women, men... A group of 7 Jewish soldiers who had come from here, from Regiment 29 infantry, attended the funeral – who were stationed there, they weren't sent to the front lines –, for captain Stino – I remember to this day – chose 7 Jewish soldiers who were to come to the cemetery to salute the soldier who had passed away. For that is the custom: when an officer, a soldier dies, a group of soldiers comes and salutes the soldier when he is buried. And? Do you think they bothered to see who was who? They took out their machine guns and shot these soldiers as well.

For that's what they figured – that's how the theory went: that in Herta, the Jews from Herta had allegedly fired at the Romanian army. That was a reason for what they did, let's settle accounts and kill all the Jews attending the funeral. That was a pretext, which the commanding officer used in order to order the soldiers to enter the cemetery and shoot everybody on the spot.

But such was the weather that day, that it was raining heavily... And that's what saved the city, for had it not been for this heavy downpour, the army wouldn't have fled, wouldn't have moved on, it would have stayed here and... For as they passed through Dorohoi with their automatic weapons loaded, they opened fire wherever they saw company signs bearing Jewish names... For instance, I worked as a dyer for Horowitz, and the company sign read Horowitz David. T

The army was passing right through there, the place where I worked back then, in 1940. But I was also lucky, for my employer had rented a room to an army officer – for he owned a larger building and had a room in the back, and he had rented the room to an officer. And this officer, on the day when the army retreated, placed a soldier in front of the house to guard it.

My lady employer, the old man and I placed pillows in the windows opening onto the street, for they said that bullets didn't function against feathers or that feathers stopped them, what did I know... But the soldiers on guard duty, who was also armed, said: "No, no, no! Don't shoot at this place, captain X is living here..." And the army kept moving forward and nobody fired at the workshop where I myself was at that particular moment.

But the 1941 pogrom from Iasi was a disaster, with the death train 7. If 50 people were shot here during the pogrom, in Iasi there were a few thousands – 10,000 or 12,000 Jews were on that train. Many years ago, my wife and I went and visited the cemeteries from Targu Ocna, Podul Iloaiei, and Targu Frumos, where - you should see it - there are rows of tombstones, rows of them. For this train travelled on a route from Iasi, Targu Ocna, Targu Frumos – back and forth, asphyxiating them.

They kept the people inside cattle cars, without air, without anything, and kept moving them forward. And, for instance, if they opened the cars' doors in Targu Ocna, they got off the train in Targu Ocna those who were asphyxiated, who were lying on the floor, and the Community there had to take care of funeral arrangements. Others who were asphyxiated by the time the train reached Targu Frumos were taken off the train in Targu Frumos. Then the train started the journey back. That's how they kept moving that train until they asphyxiated everybody.

When the legionaries came to power, in 1940 [*Ed. note: Mr. Simon Meer is referring here to the period during the Antonescu regime*], we were all forced to wear the yellow star 8. And if you were caught not wearing the star on your chest, they took you to the police station and beat you up, tortured you, kept you at the police station for several days and nights and beat you. Everyone manufactured their yellow star as best they could – the villains didn't specify any particular

dimensions for the yellow star. For there were so many tailors in Dorohoi, they manufactured them.

Everyone cut a piece of cloth to measure, placed it on a piece of cardboard – so that it had the 6 points –; if the material was darker in color, they sewed an additional yellow rim, so that it was clear it was a star. For if you used only a darker shade of cloth, on a dark item of clothing, you couldn't notice the star, so you had to use a lighter shade of yellow, so that it caught the villains', the legionaries' eyes, so they could see it was a six-pointed star. We wore the yellow star for over a year, until we were deported.

And we were allowed to go out only for one hour a day, to go to the market or do some shopping. For instance, I went to the workshop. I sneaked through certain places lest a guard should find me. And I kept the star in my pocket, I wasn't wearing it – well, I was more of a punk, as children are. But older people, those who traded, the women who went to the market – they had to wear the star, otherwise they couldn't enter the market if they didn't wear the yellow star, or if they wanted to go to a store to do some shopping, anything. If the police caught you – an order had been issued: you were to be brought to the police station and administered a beating.

When the legionaries came to power, they drove away the Jews from the countryside 9, so in 1940 my parents came to Dorohoi as well. We, the children, weren't at home when the Jews were evacuated from every village. But I will not forget, our father told us the story, that the peasants from where they lived, the village of Salageni in the locality of Dumbraveni, came to him, and that's what they said: "Mr. Frochi, you don't move from here. Should someone lay a finger on you, we'll cut their throat." Hundreds of people living in the village gathered around my parents' house. But in the end my parents were scared, and they finally came to Dorohoi.

The villagers loved my father very much. I'll give you an example. "I'm going to Bucecea, I want to buy two calves. Mr. Frochi, lend me some money." "Yes, my good man, come over and I'll give it to you." Without asking for any security in return. That's how much my father trusted them, he lent them money, and people returned the money they borrowed from him. That's how good life was, until the legionaries came to power.

My parents rented a room in Dorohoi, and from here they left with us to Transnistria 10 on November 11, 1941 [*Ed. note: On June 21, 1941, the Circular order no. 4147 was issued, by means of which the Interior Ministry communicated the disposition of the Head of state regarding the evacuation of Jews from the villages located between the rivers Siret and Prut to the concentration camp in Targu Jiu and neighboring villages. All Jewish families from the rest of the country were to be evacuated with the necessary livelihood means, to urban localities across the county.*

The families that were evacuated weren't allowed to return to the localities they left from anymore. The evacuation of Jews living in Dorohoi took place on November 11 and 12, 1941]. Dorohoi belonged to the Romanian Old Kingdom, the Old Kingdom of Moldavia, it wasn't a part of Bukovina 5. But I don't know what happened and they mixed us with those from Bukovina, they had included us to the lot from Bukovina, and they deported us to Transnistria together with those from Chernivtsi, Suceava, the whole Bukovina. And we got the short straw on that. We didn't even have to be deported. I don't know where this world of good originated. It was an order from high up, from Antonescu 11.

And when the deportation began, we, my parents, my aunt, us, packed everything, we packed everything into fresh bales, took a cart and went to the train station. There was a commission at the train station – representatives from the Prefecture, the Bank, the Police – they checked us to see if we had any jewelry, this, that, gold on us, what we had in our luggage – we had to declare what we had in our luggage –, and they boarded us on train cars. Our luggage and my aunt's luggage alone filled almost half a train car. And all the bales were left behind in the train cars.

When we reached Otaci [*Atachi*], on the bank of the river Dniester, at 12 in the night, the army made us get off the train cars and told us: "Don't take anything, you will come in the morning to pick up your luggage!" Were you there? As if we ever saw our luggage again! I remember that when they deported us, my mother wrapped the sewing head of the sewing machine in an eiderdown together with a pillow and baled it. But what was the use, since all our luggage was left behind on the train that night and we never saw it again. God forbid! I don't even want to remember.

And we stayed in Otaci [*Atachi*] for one night in a derelict building, with no roof, with no windows – and it was cold by then –, we stayed there crammed, shivering. They crammed thousands of people in there, we spent the entire night standing on our feet, and in the morning, under escort – army troops, gendarmes –, they took us on the bank of the river Dniester – Otaci [*Atachi*] was located right on the bank of the river Dniester. The bridge, needed for crossing the Dniester, was destroyed by now, for the front had moved forward. We crossed the Dniester on ferries. Many of the older people, poor souls, even fell in the Dniester, that's how crowded we were.

When we crossed the Dniester, we came upon the town of Moghilev 12 on the other bank of the river – a large town. In Moghilev, they lodged us in a former army building, where we stayed for several days and nights. There, as long as we stayed in Moghilev in the army building, we were guarded by the Romanian army, and peasants came and brought us some bread, this, that, and we, children, would sneak out to get things – I was 15, I considered myself to be still a child.

They received orders to take from there to Bug. Farther still. They made us fall into a column and we walked on, day and night. The elderly who couldn't walk anymore sat down by the side of the road, near the ditch by the side of the road; they shot them with their machine guns right there on the spot. What difference did it make? You think they cared about a human being back then? They didn't! When we reached a village after nightfall, if we happened to reach a village by nightfall, they dumped us in a kolkhoz 13, so we spent the night there, in the stables, together with the cattle.

When we arrived in November, we found there the Jews from Bukovina, Bessarabia – the deportations of those from Bukovina, Bessarabia had already taken place. And they were taken even across the river Bug. They took very many people from Bukovina, entire trains of people, on the other side, across the river Bug. The conditions for those who were taken across the river Bug were terrible. For instance, they were working on a bridge across the river Bug, and there is a very large lake there, and the Germans threw many Jews inside the lake, leaving them to drown in the water. We had nothing to do with the German army, but that territory was controlled by the Germans.

They left us somewhere before reaching the river Bug. They left some of us behind, through various localities we passed through. For instance, out of that file of so many thousands of people,

500 Jews remained in Sargorod [*Shargorod*], among whom was my family as well. Many remained in Moghilev, too. In Sargorod [*Shargorod*] they put us in abandoned houses, with no roofs, destroyed by the battles on the front – for the front had been there once –, and that's how we passed the winter, with no windows or roof.

We were around 4-5 families living together in a large room; we stayed on the floor, with straws scattered around in the dirt. Typhus broke out, along with lice – and these killed people by the thousands. You just saw it in the morning the following day… There were carts provided by the Town Hall of Sargorod [*Shargorod*] which carried the dead, the corpses. Just as they did in Dorohoi in the old days with the dogs they collected from the streets, which were thrown somewhere in a dried up well, that's how they collected the corpses from the houses in Shargorod, and took them to the cemetery, and dumped them in a mass grave. My parents themselves are lying there, together with approximately over 200 dead bodies, dumped there. We arrived there in November, and they died during the first winter because of the filth and hunger, in January-February 1942. My mother was the first to die, followed shortly afterwards by my father.

The first winter [*the winter of 1941-1942*] was terrible. People died then by the thousands. Because of the typhus, the filth, the hunger… Where could one get food? I, who was a punk of 15, went begging during the first winter. The army was there, guarding us to make sure we didn't leave the city, but we, children, used to sneak out, slip by without being seen by the sentinels, and went into the villages now and then. You think I didn't get caught? There were around 5 of us, 5 boys walking across a field, we were about to enter the village.

The field was supervised by the army there – they were called agricultural soldiers. And wouldn't you know it, a soldier who was carrying a weapon stops us: "Hey, what are you doing here?" "Well, we were going here, to beg for alms – a loaf of bread, some polenta…" "Where are you from?" "From this place, from that place,…" In Sargorod [*Shargorod*], there were people from Chernivtsi, and from Suceava, from all cities in Bukovina. We grouped together and went begging for alms together. I said: "I'm from Dorohoi." When that soldier heard the name of Dorohoi being mentioned… "Hey, I'm from Dorohoi too. I'm from Havarda – did you hear of…" [*Ed. note: Mr. Meer is probably referring to Havarna. Havarna is located 22 km north-east of Dorohoi.*] Did I know then where it was, where Havarda was? I didn't know the villages to know which one Havarda was. And he was a good lad, he had a loaf of bread in his kitbag, he took the bread and gave it to me: "Here, you have a loaf of bread, you eat it!" Well, meeting such a person was a rare thing, it was a rare thing.

Afterwards, we – 500 Jews from Dorohoi – were taken from Sargorod [*Shargorod*] and sent to Caposterna – it was a village close to Shargorod. [*Today, Kopystirin, Ukraine, it is located approximately 15 km north of Shargorod*]. There, they put us in some stables for livestock again, for pigs; it was part of a kolkhoz located at the outskirts of a forest. And what do you think, this Jew, a certain Zaharia Pitaru, a small shoemaker who had more guts – I remember it to this day –, said: "If they shoot me, they shoot me." For what do you reckon, were you allowed to leave the camp – the ghetto, as they say –, and go as you pleased? And he went to Moghilev, where the gendarmes legion was, the headquarters for the entire Moghilev region.

He went there, poor soul, and he made it, he managed to find the commanding officer's aide-de-camp, major Orasanu. On hearing they put us in stables during the summer [*it was the summer of*

1942] – which meant we would have all melted away and died there, major Orasanu took this Zaharia Pitaru and said: “Get in the car and come with me!” The major came to Caposterna, called the gendarmes station – for there was a gendarmes station there –, and ordered them: “You will take everyone out of here and put them inside the peasants’ houses at once!” And we were very fortunate that the Ukrainian peasants took us in and we spent the winter in their homes.

The local Jews weren’t there. Many of them had been taken away, too, and shot. The front had already passed through there, the Germans had been there. The things the Germans did there as well – they destroyed the kolkhozes, confiscated the livestock belonging to the people, to the peasants. It was a disaster! Had we been there when the German occupation was present, all of us would have been shot. But as things were, still under Romanian occupation – we were saved.

And each of us went begging for alms in the village now and then, or we found some work here and there. There were handicraftsmen there as well – tailors, shoemakers… They went to people’s houses and sewed this and that, patched a pair of shoes or boots. Those of us – my oldest brother and I –, who hadn’t learned a trade, started gluing galoshes. For the Ukrainian peasants from those parts wore boots made from felt and galoshes. And the galoshes used to tear. I remember, we took a piece of sheet iron, drilled a hole in it, and turned it into some sort of rasp for scraping rubber, and we went to people’s homes and said: “Slusaite!” – Listen! – “Davai la taim vad (vab, vag?) galosii!” – “Give us your galoshes to glue them!” And they brought the torn galoshes and we repaired them, either with rubber bands, or with rubber, or with a piece of sole. We rasped the rubber, applied a solution to it – we had a solution made from gasoline and crepe rubber – and it glued them together, it adhered – rubber on rubber. And they gave us food. And that’s what got us through the winter.

But as soon as the winter was over, they grabbed those of us who were sturdier, and took us to do forced labor. During the first year we worked on a construction site on the Murafa – Erosinka road. These 2 cities, Murafa and Erosinka, were around 20 km apart, that’s where we worked in the beginning, laying stone. We were over 1000 Jews doing forced labor at this road. I was taken from this construction site to another one, at the peat extraction in Tulcin [*Ed. note: Today, Tul’cin, Ukraine, east of Shargorod*]. Those were the 2 places where I worked. I spent the whole summer of 1943 in Tulcin, until September, working on the peat extraction site, extracting peat. There was a site there from where the peat was extracted, and we were 2000 Jews on that site.

We dug, always found water in the ground, there were water pumps that extracted the water from the ground, and we carried on digging using special spades and extracted peat out of the ground. And we slept in a sovkhoz 15, in stables for livestock, there were bunks with straws on them. Filthy, believe you me… There was a canteen at that peat bog, that’s where we ate. This canteen was run by Ukrainian employees, men and women. And we came there to eat, they gave us rations. Horse meat was a delicacy we ate at the construction site. Horse meat – that’s what they gave us as food. They made all sorts of dishes from horse meat. They only slaughtered horses there. Sometimes, on the odd Sunday, they would bring us a loaf of bread, so that we could make it from one day to the next.

And I worked in Tulcin until September 1943, when the front lines were broken at Stalingrad 16. Had the front not been broken at Stalingrad, none of us would have returned home. They had received an order from Bucharest to prepare us – all the Jews up to the river Bug, meaning the

territory that belonged to the Romanians – to get us ready to be repatriated. They released us from the construction site, and we returned to Caposterna from Tulcin, from where they took us. My eldest brother returned there, too. He had been sent elsewhere – I don't remember anymore where he was taken. My aunt and the 2 younger brothers stayed in Caposterna, and we found them still there when we returned.

And carts, and automobiles were made available for us, and they took us to Shargorod, where they put us in train cars. Still cattle cars, not passenger cars. We were content. But we didn't believe we would return home anymore. I kept saying to myself: "This is our doom! This is the end!" Especially there, at that peat bog, I remember there was an engineer, his name was Salveciu – he frightened everyone on the extraction site. All those who happened to fall ill, or not be able to carry on working anymore, he saw to it that they drowned in those bogs where the peat was extracted. What, you think they cared about human lives there?

And we came to Moghilev. We arrived in Moghilev in December 1943. The Federation in Bucharest had by then already sent aid for us in Moghilev: food, clothing. They gave us clothes to wear. We were all naked. I remember I wore a pair of pants made from burlap. They loaded us on special trains, and we came by train from Moghilev to Dorohoi. There was an entire train of people from Dorohoi alone. They had formed trains in Moghilev, when they put us on the trains, based on routes, destinations. We left there on December 22 or 23, for on December 24-25 – on the first day of Christmas – we were in the Dorohoi train station.

- **After the War**

When we arrived in the train station in Dorohoi, delousing was under way – they had brought there some oven-like booths so they could put all your clothes inside the ovens, so that you didn't carry any lice. They didn't give you another set of clothes, you had to delouse the clothes you were wearing, put them back on, and you were on your way.

There was also a bath in the Dorohoi train station where we all washed, and returned to my aunt's house. My aunt's house didn't have any windows; it didn't have anything left, as if it were a devastated house. Furniture?! We lay on the floor. With time, we started building, gathering things. The Federation also sent us some blankets, and bed linen, which were given to us. They helped us around here when we returned, for what we found were empty houses: neither anything to put on your bed, nor anything to cover yourself with.

A few years later, my brothers left to Israel [17]. Iancu and Moise left in 1947, and Hanina and the aunt who brought us up left in 1951. Hanina and Iancu lived in Rehovot, and Moise lives in Rishon LeZion. All three of them got married in Israel, all of them have children. I don't remember too well the names of their wives and children anymore. That's all I remember, that Hanina got married in 1959, his wife's name is Rachel, and they have 4 children. Iancu has 3 daughters – the name of the youngest is Sarola – and 2 sons –

Slomo is the eldest of them. I believe Moise has 2 daughters and a son – 3 children. The name of Moise's wife is Hermina – she is a nurse. Two of my three brothers living in Israel died. Iancu and Hanina – dead. My eldest brother had become an assistant manager of Michoroth Ierushalaim, a drinking water supply station, which supplied water to the entire Jerusalem region.

When I was in Israel in 1969, he also had a fowl farm. He sold the eggs, he didn't sell the fowl. He died around 8-9 years ago [*in 1996-1997*] in a car accident. A car ran over him and he hurt his head against the street curb. Hanina was an administrative manager at a faculty of agronomy. The younger one died 2 years ago, in 2004. I still have Moise. Look, I forgot what he did for a living. But nonetheless, he is ill now, retired.

I didn't leave. I didn't want to go to Israel. My three brothers left, I stayed here. I was recruited in the army in 1949 and had to serve my military service. But they had issued an order: for those who had been deported, the forced labor they had performed during the deportation was to be counted as years of military service. And they counted my two years of deportation as my military service. And I managed to escape going to the army – the deportation saved me.

After the war, I was present at every single ball, every single party. Back in the days when I was a young man – prior to 1950 –, we had a reunion on every Saturday here in Dorohoi at the Jewish School, and on Sundays we had parties in the City Park. I had two friends, Lupu, he passed away, and Nathan Pitaru – Nahman in Yiddish and Nathan in Romanian –, he is still alive, living in Israel. We went together. Without fail… There was a large hall at the Jewish School, and that's where they organized the reunions – dancing – every Saturday evening. There was an orchestra here, with Jewish musicians, they played every instrument. But there were many orchestras in Dorohoi!

I don't remember any Communists living in Dorohoi before World War II. There weren't any. Here, we became communists after the Romanian Communist Party was founded. Everyone was enlisting – some were enlisting in order to get jobs, in order to get better jobs. For instance, from 1946 until 1948 I was the president of the workers' union, of the apprentices in the clothing-footwear sector. We had a youth syndicate – mostly young people, 400-500 young people –, all the apprentices working as shoemakers, barbers, tailors, you name it… all other trades were represented in the syndicate, and I was its president. But what do you think? Was I a communist? I was the president of the syndicate. And I held that position from 1946 until 1948, I was its president, I founded the syndicate – for the syndicate was formerly run by the handicraftsmen, and it wasn't allowed.

How now, you, the handicraftsman, who exploit the apprentice and the worker, you are a syndicate member? And they split, and the separate syndicate of workers in the clothing sector was founded, and they grabbed me – I was more energetic, more combative, both in my trade, and as a youth –, they slapped me with the position of president. And I held that position until 1948, when I merged the clothing syndicate with the foods syndicate, and it became the Foods Mixed Syndicate, whose president was honorary, being kept in the production line, but they dismissed me from my job and appointed me the syndicate's secretary, paid by the syndicate. And I worked as a secretary of the syndicate until 1951, when they sent me to Iasi to a party training school.

They saw I was more loquacious, more energetic, and they said: "Come, now, for this is an employee with a future, let's lift him, send him to a party training school, make use of him." That training lasted 6 months. There were 3-moths, 6-months, 1-year training sessions, and then there was the Stefan Gheorghiu University, which lasted 4 years – the Party University. And when I finished my training period, I thought I would return to the syndicate in Dorohoi. No [*, that's not what happened*]. I probably received a good recommendation from the party school, and they took me, they sent me to the Botosani Party Region. It was organized – agrarian department, economics department, educational department. The Party structure had people running departments,

sectors, and they put me in the economics department, and made me head of the Planning-Finances-Commerce-Cooperation sector – meaning I had to control the administrative instruments in that sector.

I lived in Botosani for 1 year. They forced me to move, but my wife didn't want to move, for her parents were living here, in Dorohoi, and I finally succeeded – those from Botosani didn't want to let me go –, and I returned to Dorohoi, at the Party District Organization, and they appointed me instructor in charge of educational-cultural matters. I supervised the educational and cultural sectors: schools, city and village mayors, I dealt with school principals, with party secretaries from schools, I had to be present myself, see how the party strategy was being enforced in the educational system; in addition, in the field of culture, there were the houses of culture, cultural homes in the villages, where I had to offer guidance and control. I filled this position until 1962.

In 1962, it first secretary from here, who wanted to be a wise guy, and he excluded me from dawned on some taking part in any party activities on the grounds that I have brothers living in Israel. As if I had concealed that! I wrote in my autobiography from the very beginning, that two of my brothers left in 1947 and the third left with my aunt in 1951. I didn't conceal anything. As if they didn't know until then that I had brothers living in the state of Israel! They thought I might disseminate some of the ideas of bourgeois theory here, in the educational and cultural systems, and they dismissed me from the Party structure and appointed me president of the Town's Co-operative, which was a commercial facility.

Back then, city commerce was based on a co-operative system, the co-operative for consumption, and I was the president of the Town's Co-operative. But I remained a member of the communist party, even until the Revolution, that's when my Party membership card became history. And I worked there for 6 years in the commercial sector, as the co-operative's president. Afterwards, the Handicrafts Co-operative Viitorul [*the Future*] was founded – all handicraftsmen in the town were members of this co-operative – and I was appointed there as vice-president; I worked there for 19 years, until my retirement.

I retired in 1987, as soon as I turned 60. I didn't want to stay there, at the co-operative, an hour more than I had to. In January 1987 I turned 60, in January I filed my request to be dismissed from duty. The president was a woman – she was a very considerate woman, her name was Marcela Carp –, she wept asking me not to leave, to stay on: "Comrade Meer, why? Is someone dismissing you from your job? Why shouldn't you stay here for longer, look, we work together, you are helping me..." And I said: "No, I've had enough!" I had been employed in the workforce for 46 years by then. I didn't want any of it anymore. I had worked long enough to be eligible for retirement, I had my work registration certificate, I had everything, and I retired in 1987, "Goodbye!" No sooner did I turn 60, I retired.

I got married in 1950. My wife, Ietti Meer – her maiden name was Ciubotaru – was born in 1931 in Dorohoi. My wife's parents were Avram and Liba Ciubotaru. My father-in-law was born in the village of Radauti-Prut, past Darabani. [*Ed. Note: Radauti-Prut is located 56 km north-east of Dorohoi.*] That's where he grew up, that's where he comes from, from the bank of the river Prut. She is from Dorohoi, a daughter of the city of Dorohoi. They lived here, in Dorohoi. He was a shoemaker, and she was a seamstress. During her youth, she and my mother were friends, for, after all, my mother is from these parts, she hails from Dorohoi. They were deported too, and they returned from

Transnistria. After the war, my father-in-law continued to work as a shoemaker, and his wife didn't work, she was a housewife. My parents-in-law lived on Spiru Haret St. as well, a bit farther up the street, near the street corner. Both of them died murdered. Gypsies broke into their house late at night; the old woman died beaten in 1988, and 4 years later, in 1992, the gypsies killed the old man in his home. For they received aid from the Jewish Community in Dorohoi, they were assisted by the Community, and the Gypsies thought the Community was giving them money. What money? They gave them food and medicine on a monthly basis.

They had three children: a daughter, who died recently, a son, who is dead, too, and my wife. My wife's sister was the eldest – Betty. She died recently, these days [*in August 2006*]. She was 82 when she died – she and my wife were born 7 years apart. They lived in Suceava; her husband, Saul – Soil – Pietraru, was the president of the Jewish Community in Suceava. Ficu Pietraru is their son, he lives in Iasi, he is an engineer and I believe he might have retired recently [*August 2006*]. My wife's brother, Sumer Ciubotaru – Sumar –, was 2 years older than my wife [*he was born in Dorohoi in 1929*]. He lived in Suceava, but he died many years ago. He retired in 1962 and died a month or two later. His wife, Tony, left to Israel and she too passed away; she has an only daughter who is living in Israel.

My wife and her parents were deported, too – they were taken to Tivriv, on the river Bug –, but they all returned together. She graduated 4 grades of primary school. She didn't graduate 4th grade in 1941 because of the deportation. In 1943, when she returned home, she graduated 4th grade, then she went and learned a tailor's trade. She was apprenticed, she worked here for an employer – her employer was a cousin of hers, Dora Pietraru. My wife doesn't receive a pension, for she worked for few years, she didn't work anymore after we got married.

I didn't organize my religious wedding at the synagogue, on account of the fact that I was an activist; instead, I organized the ceremony at my parents-in-law's, surreptitiously, so no one would find out about it. The parnusa [*parnose*], as they say in Yiddish, meaning the job, making a living, the position, the work made you do all these things secretly. I invited my close relatives, the rabbi, we placed the chuppah inside the room, we circled around it. We performed the entire ritual, by the book. The bride and the groom stand under the chuppah, the rabbi starts to read the religious text, which is in Hebrew, and then, together with the close relatives, you turn 7 times under the chuppah, and while you do that, the rabbi recites the prayers. At the end, the rabbi takes a glass wrapped in a napkin, places it on the floor for me to break it. The rabbi said: "Step hard on it!" And I did, I broke it, and the broken glass remained inside that napkin. And you have to keep that broken glass all your life. I wonder why myself, but you have to keep it. And I kept it for a while, but I no longer have it. It's because after I got married I kept moving here, there, and you lose things.

After the religious ceremony was performed, we went to a saloon for the party – back then, parties were organized in a hall inside the house of culture, that's where we organized the wedding, the party –, where we had… oh my, countless guests, and no joke about it! For the chuppah ceremony, when we took the chuppah to my parents-in-law's place, only close relatives attended, but we had guests from all over the city at the saloon party. There were around 150 people. And do you know what people gave as wedding presents back then? Enameled dishes. I got married in 1950, and I still have, to this day, pots and pans from my wedding. Since we had so many guests… My wife was actually telling me the other day: "Look, Simon. I still have this pan, and we received it on our engagement." For we also had an engagement prior to this, and my parents-in-law's neighbors

brought gifts. And they would bring a pan, or a pot, too. We organized the engagement ceremony in the family, too, and we had the rabbi come over. For the engagement ceremony, he only holds a speech, in Yiddish, not in Hebrew, so that all present may understand. At the wedding, we received as a present from a group of people a metal stove complete with oven, kitchen range, as they made them in the old days, with wood as fuel.

After I got married, I went to the synagogue every now and then – still at the same synagogue where I used to go with my uncle, Rendarilor Synagogue. I went to the synagogue until 1950-1951. As long as I was a member of the U.T.C. [*Uniunea Tinerilor Comunisti, the Union of Communist Youth*], I kept going to the synagogue, I used to sneak in, but then, when I became a party activist, that was it, I no longer went to the synagogue. I was afraid.

But instead, I observed tradition in my home. I observed tradition, but my wife is really fanatic, born into a family that was also fanatic. We observed all holidays at home. We didn't work on holidays; we prepared special food, which is prepared on holidays. Saturdays were Saturdays. On Friday evening, my wife lit the candles. I worked for the party, and on Friday evening she lit the candles at home. One Friday evening, the wives of two activists decided to catch her in the act. They went to my wife without my knowledge in order to catch her lighting the candles. But when she lit the candles, she latched the door, drew the curtains, and no matter who might have knocked on the door, she wouldn't open. And then, when they met, those two women told her: "Look, we came to see you on Friday evening." But she said: "Well, I was visiting a neighbor." They didn't tell her they had come bent on catching her lighting the candles.

She still lights the candles on Friday evening to this day, the Sabbath is the Sabbath, and holidays are holidays, with no exceptions... She says: "Look, Yom Kippur is coming, we will fast!" In my home, we don't cook on Saturday to this day. My wife observes the ritual. Oh my... God is always on her lips. She says: "I have faith." She says" "I went to undergo surgery armed with my faith in God, believing that God will help me. And look, God helped me with my first surgery in 2002, and with my second surgery in 2003. That's the only reason why God saved me in the face of such surgery, the fact that I observed and observe tradition." Could I tell her otherwise?

She separates meat from milk; to this day my wife still has separate dishes for meat and milk. She has separate dishes for Passover. I keep them in the closet, somewhere high up on a shelf, all wrapped up, you know: cutlery, pots, pans, plates, forks, knives, everything. A day or two before Passover, we take them down from that shelf high up – I climb to get them, naturally, she can't do it. I take them down, she scalds them, washes them for the Passover holidays. When Passover is over she scalds them, washes them, boils them, wraps them up and then we store them.

I didn't organize the Seder at home, but my wife and I attended the Seder organized at the Jewish Community in Dorohoi on many occasions. They organized it at the Community headquarters where the Community canteen was, too. The Community prepared special food for Passover and the rabbi came there, recited the appropriate prayer, he performed the service right inside the canteen – the Community canteen had a large hall. And anyone who wanted could attend. We went there because we didn't have our parents here, so we went to the Community. This was some time ago, decades ago. They didn't organize it for quite some time, now. When Rolick was at the Community, the Seder was organized at the canteen every year. Elias Rolick was the secretary of the Jewish Community in Dorohoi, but he was a very good organizer, very active. The president was

Lozneanu, a lawyer, but the president had more of an honorary role, Rolick was the one doing the work. After he left to Israel, no Seder took place at the Community anymore, nothing organized. I can't remember what year it was when he left, in any case, it was before the Revolution 18. Rolick was no longer here in 1989, he had left. Poor man, he died in Israel.

In the old days, when I was a child, there were 3 rabbis and around 4 or 5 hakhamim in Dorohoi. And in the end, eventually, after 1950, let us say, there was just one rabbi left – rabbi Frenkel – in the entire town of Dorohoi. But there weren't too many Jews left, either – if around 10,000 of us left Dorohoi, only around 4,500 of us returned from Transnistria. And the aliyah to Israel had started, from 1947 until 1950 – and people left, believe you me. To the effect that there were at the most 100 people, persons still living in Dorohoi by then, so that there was only one rabbi left until 15 years ago. Lately, after Frenkel, there was Wasserman here, in Dorohoi, for almost 25 years. And for the past 15 years there was no rabbi here in Dorohoi anymore. Nowadays, even the Federation receives rabbis who are detached from Israel, for there aren't any left here, in Romania. There was another rabbi in Timisoara, he passed away. There is no other rabbi in our country. A hakham used to come to Dorohoi from Bucharest in recent years, as long as I was president. Bruckmeyer came here before holidays to slaughter fowls for those who wanted. Only on high holidays, that was all. He could barely manage it, for he had so many cities to go to – there were 2-3 hakhamim in the entire country.

During the period when I worked for the party – 11 years –, I couldn't go to the synagogue. Despite the fact that holidays were observed in my home. I returned to prayer when I left party work, in 1962. That's when I started going to the synagogue again.

There is one functioning synagogue – the Great Synagogue of the city, which is named after the last rabbi of Dorohoi, rabbi Wasserman. There is a small square near the Great Synagogue, it was called Piata Unirii [*Union Square*], and the City Hall changed the square's name into Rabbi Wasserman Square. And they even built an obelisk at the square's entrance, representing rabbi Wasserman. There used to be synagogues all around that small square – there were 6 synagogues there. Nowadays, only two of them still exist, on one of the square's sides: one that is functioning and one that is to be demolished. There is a derelict synagogue near the Great Synagogue, only the wall is still standing, that is all. Rendarilor Synagogue was located there, too; that's where I went, but it stopped working long ago. It was demolished, and the city's heating station is located there now – furnaces, engines used for providing heat to the city.

And nowadays we go to the Great Synagoue. And considering how many men are still left today… [*a synagogue is sufficient*]. 9-10 men attend the synagogue, out of the 36 parishioners still living in Dorohoi. The rest are ill and most of them are women, widows, unmarried women. Nowadays, we don't go to the synagogue during the week, for no one can. We are content to gather there on Friday evening, on Saturday, 7-8 men; we have someone who performs the religious service, reads by the altar, and everyone has a book before them, at the table and repeats after the man who performs the service. There are books, siddurim – the book is called siddur –, which list everything that is performed at the synagogue: what to read in the morning, in the evening, when to sit, when to stand. On Rosh Hashanah, we come to the synagogue during the first 2 days, we come to the synagogue in the morning on that occasion, and the service lasts until 12-13 o'clock. And then there's Yom Kippur – the Great Day, a day of fasting. On that occasion, we come to the synagogue in the evening. And starting from that evening until the following day in the evening, when the

stars appear in the sky – we fast. Everyone fasts, even children above the age of 13 – for after the initial celebration of their coming of age, both boys and girls had to observe the ritual of all holidays.

Even if you don't go to the synagogue, holidays are observed at home. For instance, autumn is coming, and Rosh Hashanah with it, and Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Hamisha Asar, then Purim, Pesach, Shavuot – Great Sunday –, all these holidays are observed here, in Dorohoi. Let me tell you that the ritual has been preserved here. I don't know about other cities, I couldn't say, but in Dorohoi, at least, I noticed that people observe religion.

I only have two sons. The eldest, **Fabian**, was born in 1951, and the youngest, **Sorin**, 6 years later, in 1957. Both of them attended the talmud torah. Could it have been otherwise? It couldn't have. Especially since my wife is very fanatic. The youngest attended for 2 years, the eldest, if I'm not mistaken, for 3 years. But normally you attended for 2 years, before going to primary school. For once they started going to school when they turned 7, that was the end of the talmud torah. However, the Jewish school didn't exist anymore, they attended the Romanian school. But nevertheless, there were a few Jews here who tried their hand at teaching and went to schools, taught Hebrew classes – there were classes for teaching the Hebrew language. For instance, my sons had special Hebrew classes at the Romanian school. They allowed it. I also organized their bar mitzvah at the synagogue. You had to prepare a meal there, an Onech Sabat was organized. You prepared gelatinized fish at home, and on Saturday you took food at the synagogue: fish, bread, drinks, wine, some brandy, and sweets. My eldest son graduated the Faculty of Constructions, the youngest graduated the Faculty of Mechanics. After they graduated the university, they served a military service of 6 months. Fabian served in Constanta, and Sorin as far away as Targu-Mures, in a tank division.

My eldest son is living in Iasi. His wife, Reli, is Jewish. Her parents are living in Iasi. Her father, David Rotenstein, works as an accountant at the canteen of the Jewish Community in Iasi. And her mother, Adela, is a housewife. They met during college. But in fact, my son was in a relationship with another girl, from Galati, also during college. And someone came to him – someone from her family –, they got him: "Look, Fabian, I have a good girl for you." And they met, and he left that girl from Galati, and began seeing this one. They got married in Iasi in 1979, the religious wedding was performed at the synagogue, and the wedding party took place in a restaurant. When my son got married, there was no rabbi in Iasi anymore, and the rabbi from the Federation came to perform the religious ceremony.

My son is a construction engineer, and he works for the Water Supply Industrial Unit in Iasi. Ever since he came to Iasi, he has had the same job. For he initially worked in Calarasi – he built the Iron and Steel Plant in Calarasi. And I went there and brought him here, to Iasi, for his damsel was living in Iasi and she didn't want to live in Calarasi. In any case, it took some convincing to get him to come to Iasi. His wife studied chemistry, she worked as a chemist laboratory-assistant in a meat-products factory; the work scheme was revised and she became unemployed, and she didn't look for something else. She worked for about 8 years, and that was it. And now she is a housewife, she stays at home.

My eldest son has a daughter and a son. My granddaughter, Simona, lives in Iasi, too. She graduated the I.E.S. [*the Institute of Economic Sciences*] and works in a bank. She is married – she

got married two years ago [*in 2004*]. Her husband is Jewish, he is from Iasi, but I forget his name. My grandson's name is Liviu Meer – they named him Liviu after my mother-in-law. The name of my wife's mother was Liba, and after she died [*in 1988*], this baby was born, and they named him using the same initial, "l," Leiba, Liba – Liviu.

My youngest son left to Israel in 1985, he lives in Holon. He isn't married. He is a mechanical engineer, and his life is rather hard. He worked for several years in a factory producing electrical engines. The factory was sold and it was bought by a Russian owner. Romanian Jews were fired, and Russian Jews were hired instead. After he became unemployed, he attended a 6-months computing course, saying: "Perhaps I will secure a position at a bank." He didn't manage to be accepted, and believe me, he doesn't even want to disclose what he does for a living anymore.

I didn't leave, I didn't want to go to Israel. My three brothers left, I stayed here. I was enlisted with the U.T.C. [*U.C.Y., the Union of Communist Youth*], I joined the Communist Party in 1947, and so where should we, party members, go? To a capitalist country? That was the politics in those days. And I didn't leave in the end. But I corresponded constantly with my brothers and with my aunt. As proof of that, I visited Israel in 1969, I went there to see all my three brothers, all three of them married, my aunt still single. As soon as she saw me there, my aunt didn't let me eat or sleep at my brothers' place – I should stay with her for a few days.

Israel produced a lasting impression on me. Especially when I arrived there, the airplane circled a few times above Israel, I was lost for words... I was impressed by the settlements, constructions, systematization – the way the cities are systematized –, I didn't believe this state could be so beautiful – it was a young state. Over there, you can't tell a village from a city. Over there, the people who live in villages – they call it moshav –, and raise livestock there, in the village, don't milk the cows as we do over here. Everyone has cow milking machines. I was impressed, especially by the kibbutzim they have there. Kibbutzim are organized in the same manner kolkhozes, state-owned sovkhozes were organized here time ago. But what kibbutzim... And inside the kibbutz – that's where families live, that's where they eat, that's where they have the canteen, and the school, that's where the young learn their trade, inside the kibbutz. It is very different from how we live, over here.

You won't see any wells or fountains there. It doesn't rain there, they have no water. Yet they have desalted water from the Dead Sea, and I believe from the Mediterranean Sea as well, in part. They draw water from there to supply these villages and cities. Crops over there... they use only irrigation on crops. The water is running in the field day and night. They use irrigation sprinklers, which spray water day and night. I remained, as the saying goes – as they say – open-mouthed! I liked it, I liked it.

I stayed for a month, throughout November. The heat is so high there in November – 35-40 degrees Celsius –, that, pardon me, I was wearing nothing but my undershirt. I roamed across the entire country. My brothers took me, this younger brother of mine, Hanina and Iancu. Moishe didn't have a car. Iancu and Hanina had their personal cars, and they took me places. For instance, they took me to the Arab part of Jerusalem. They had there an Arab market underground, and they said: "Look, we're not going in there, for it is dangerous." And they didn't take me there, Oh, you should see how well things are run there; when you entered a market – you could go to the meat section, to the fish section – the fish they have there – water pools and live fish. That's the only way you

find it for sale. Not as we buy it, some dead fish, brought from who knows where. Live fish. Everything inside a pool. Civilization, I'm telling you! Advanced civilization, very advanced. I didn't believe it to be so.

In 1990, my wife and I had already received visas in our passports to go and live there, in Rehovot, where my brothers were living. I fell ill, we abandoned the trip. We had already bought furniture, and had it packed in special boxes, the way it was done when you left there, for you are going to Israel by boat. And after I fell ill, I underwent surgery, we sold everything we bought for our departure. But, as I have a heart condition, I wouldn't have lasted for long there, on account of the heat over there. Those who left here suffering from a heart condition, died within a year or two. And so, I regretted it in a way, but I am glad, on the other hand, as I wouldn't have been alive anymore, had I gone there. For many colleagues of mine from Romania suffering from a heart condition left there, and in a year or two they perished. You can't resist there. Such is the climate – a dry climate –, and there is that sun which simply brings you down! There is no apartment without air conditioning units installed, without fans. You can't resist without them there, you can't resist.

I was the president of the Jewish Community in Dorohoi for 7 years, from 1998 until December 2005.

Now, as I am no longer employed, I spend my days as follows: I wake up in the morning, wash, I drink something, take my medicine – for I take pills three times a day, oh my! – I eat a snack, go to the market, and then come home. I am already tired when I return from the market – I am allowed to carry no more than 2 kg because of my cardiopathy –, I rest, then I sit down to eat lunch; after lunch I over, I help my wife with this and that, I sometimes wash the dishes – "blide," as we call them – in the afternoon. I learned how to wash them, to separate those for meat and those for milk, to let them dry, then wipe them dry, place them in the cupboard. And then, I must exercise a bit after lunch, I go for a half-hour stroll around the city. All by myself, for my wife can't do it. In the evening, after I return from my walk – television. We watch television until 10, 11 o'clock in the evening. That's my daily routine.

- **Glossary**

1 Legionary
Member of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known as the Legionary Movement, founded in 1927 by C. Z. Codreanu. This extremist, nationalist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic movement aimed at excluding those whose views on political and racial matters were different from theirs. The Legion was organized in so-called nests, and it practiced mystical rituals, which were regarded as the way to a national spiritual regeneration by the members of the movement. These rituals were based on Romanian folklore and historical traditions. The Legionaries founded the Iron Guard as a terror organization, which carried out terrorist activities and political murders. The political twin of the Legionary Movement was the Totul pentru Tara (Everything for the Fatherland) that represented the movement in parliamentary elections. The followers of the Legionary Movement were recruited from young intellectuals, students, Orthodox clericals, peasants. The movement was banned by King Carol II in 1938.

2 Sima, Horia (1907-1993)
Leader of the Legionary Movement from 1938. In September 1940 he became vice-president in the National Legionary government led by Ion Antonescu. In January 1941, following a coup d'état, with the help of Hitler, Antonescu assumed total control and unleashed persecution on the Legionary Movement. In 1944, when Romania turned to the Allies, Horia Sima became a political refugee. He continued to be the leader of the movement from exile and set up a Romanian government with headquarters in Vienna in the fall of 1944. After World War II, he fled to Spain. He was sentenced to death in absentio in 1946 by the Romanian people's tribunal.

3 Legionary Movement (also known as the Legion of the Archangel Michael)
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4 Siguranta Generala a Statului (The State General Security)
Created as a result of the Law for the organization of the Internal Affairs Ministry of 20th June 1913, it was subordinated to the Department of Police and General Security. It was the main secret agency whose duty was to collect and use intelligence that was relevant for the protection of State security. It was composed of two departments: the Data Department (central body which gathered and synthesized intelligence) and the Special Security Brigades (territorial bodies in charge of field operations and counter-espionage). In 1929, the Security Police Department was restructured into two services: the Intelligence Service and the Foreigners Control Service.

5 Bukovina
Historical region, located East of the Carpathian Mountain range, bordering with Transylvania, Galicia and Moldova. In 1775 it became a Habsburg territory as a consequence of the Kuchuk-Kainarji Treaty (1774) between the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empire. After the fall of Austria-Hungary Bukovina was annexed to Romania (1920). In 1939 a non-aggression pact was signed between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), which also meant dividing Eastern Europe into German and Soviet spheres of interest. Taking advantage of the pact, the Soviet Union claimed in an ultimatum from 1940 some of the Romanian territories. Romania was forced to renounce Bessarabia and Northern-Bukovina, including Czernowitz (Cernauti, Chernovtsy). Bukovina was characterized by ethnic and religious pluralism; the ethnic communities included Germans, Poles, Jews, Hungarians, Ukrainians and Romanians, the most dominant religious persuasions were Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. In 1930 some 93,000 Jews

lived in Bukovina, which was 10,9% of the entire population.

6 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.

7 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.

8 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.

9 Anti-Jewish laws in Romania

The first anti-Jewish laws were introduced in 1938 by the Goga-Cuza government. Further anti-Jewish laws followed in 1940 and 1941, and the situation was getting gradually worse between 1941-1944 under the Antonescu regime. According to these laws all Jews aged 18-60 living in villages were to be evacuated and concentrated in the capital town of each county. Jews from the region between the Siret and Prut Rivers were transported by wagons to the camps of Targu Jiu, Slobozia, Craiova etc. where they lived and died in misery. More than 40,000 Jews were moved. All rural Jewish property, as well as houses owned by Jews in the city, were confiscated by the state, as part of the ‘Romanisation campaign’. Marriages between Jews and Romanians were forbidden from August 1940, Jews were not allowed to have Romanian names, own rural properties, be public employees, lawyers, editors or janitors in public institutions, have a career in the army, own liquor stores, etc. Jewish employees of commercial and industrial enterprises were fired, Jewish doctors could no longer practice and Jews were not allowed to own chemist shops. Jewish students were forbidden to study in Romanian schools.

10 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.

11 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.

12 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.

13 Kolkhoz

In the Soviet Union the policy of gradual and voluntary collectivization of agriculture was adopted in 1927 to encourage food production while freeing labor and capital for industrial development. In 1929, with only 4% of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools, and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm.

14 Shargorod

A town in Ukraine, also known as Sharigrad. During World War II Jews from Romania were deported to various towns in Transnistria, which was then under German occupation. Large-scale

deportations began in August 1941, after Romania and Germany occupied the previously Soviet territories of Bessarabia (today the Moldovan Republic) and Bukovina. Jews from the newly occupied Romanian lands (Bessarabia and Bukovina), as well as from Romania were sent over the Dniester river to Transnistria. The severe living conditions, the harsh winter and a typhus epidemic contributed to the large number of deaths in the camps established in many towns of Transnistria.

15 Sovkhoz

state-run agricultural enterprise. The first sovkhoz yards were created in the USSR in 1918. According to the law the sovkhoz property was owned by the state, but it was assigned to the sovkhoz which handled it based on the right of business maintenance.

16 Stalingrad Battle

17th July 1942 – 2nd February 1943. The South-Western and Don Fronts stopped the advance of German armies in the vicinity of Stalingrad. On 19th and 20th November 1942 the Soviet troops undertook an offensive and encircled 22 German divisions (330,000 people) and eliminated them. On 31st January 1943 the remains of the 6th German army headed by General Field Marshal Paulus surrendered (91,000 people). The victory in the Stalingrad battle was of huge political, strategic and international significance.

17 Mass emigration from Romania after World War II

After World War II the number of Jewish people emigrating from Romania to Israel was much higher than in earlier periods. This was urged not only by the establishment in 1948 of Israel, and thus by the embodiment of an own state, but also by the general disillusionment caused by the attitude of the receiving country and nation during World War II. Between 1919 and 1948 a number of 41,000 Jews from Romania left for Israel, while between May 1948 (the establishment of Israel) and 1995 this number increased to 272,300. The emigration flow was significantly influenced after 1948 by the current attitude of the communist regime towards the aliyah issue, and by its diplomatic relations with Israel. The main emigration flows were between 1948-1951 (116,500 persons), 1958-1966 (106,200 persons) and 1969-1974 (17,800 persons).

18 Romanian Revolution of 1989

In December 1989, a revolt in Romania deposed the communist dictator Ceausescu. Anti-government violence started in Timisoara and spread to other cities. When army units joined the uprising, Ceausescu fled, but he was captured and executed on 25th December along with his wife. A provisional government was established, with Ion Iliescu, a former Communist Party official, as president. In the elections of May 1990 Iliescu won the presidency and his party, the Democratic National Salvation Front, obtained an overwhelming majority in the legislature.