Carol Margulies

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Romania
Interviewers: Julia Negrea and Ildiko Molnar
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Mr. Margulies is a thin, short man aged 84. He works in accounting at the office of the Jewish Community in Targu Mures. One can often spot him on the street, always in a hurry to get to the bank or public institutions in order to solve the problems of his community. He's very interested in politics and everything that's related to the issues dealt with by Jews all over the world. He reads the 'Realitatea evreiasca' [Jewish Reality] newspaper and various German-speaking magazines which he gets by mail. Because his wife was ill, this interview was conducted at the Targu Mures synagogue, before the Friday prayer.

My family history

My paternal grandfather was born in Sadagura [today Ukraine]. [Editor's note: The small, insignificant market town of Sadagura, in the vicinity of Czernowitz, where the Ruzyner Tzaddik Israel Friedmann (1796-1850) settled in 1842 and established his 'court', became the center of Chasidism. From there, the tremendous influence of the Tzaddik spread to the depths of Russia, Ukraine, Bessarabia, Moldova and Eastern Galicia. Today it's a quarter of the city of Czernowitz.] My grandfather's name was Karl Margulies; his Jewish name was Chaim Nute. He died in the 1900s. As he had passed away before I was born, I was given his name. When I came to Romania, I got an identity card that read Carol instead of Karl. The police told me, 'So what's the big deal? This king's name was Carol, too!' [Editor's note: reference to King Carol I 1 and King Carol II 2 of Romania]. I can't remember the maiden name of my paternal grandmother or the year of her birth. I know she was born in Sadagura too, but I know nothing about her family. All my father told me about her was that she died at a very young age, around 1885-1890, and that she was a tall and very beautiful woman.

She and my grandfather had two children: a daughter, Regina Margulies, who was older, born in the 1880s, and my father, Arthur Margulies, born in 1885. They were both born in Sadagura. All I know about Regina is that she got married to a man whose name I can't remember; after World War I, in 1919, and they left for America. They had a boy there. I don't know his name. He was married and had children of his own, but we didn't keep in touch. Right after we came back from the camp, Regina wrote to us, asking whether we needed anything. She used to send us nylon stockings: one piece in one letter and its pair in another. She died in 1948; her son died shortly

after.

My paternal grandfather's second wife, whose maiden name I don't know, was also born in Sadagura. She was rather quiet and soft, like Jewish women used to be at the time. They didn't have children together. This grandmother was almost a stranger to us. I remember that she only came to our place a few times, when passing through Czernowitz [today Ukraine].

My grandfather was in the cattle business: he bought cattle for export or consumption. They spoke Yiddish at home and observed the kashrut. My grandfather was very religious. After all, he lived in Sadagura, in a very strong Jewish environment, where everyone was very religious. He used to smoke a lot. Tobacco affected his bronchi and lungs and his end was slow and painful. He died around 1900. He was already very ill when he summoned my father, who was still in high school at the time: 'See, this is what tobacco did to me. If you ever put a cigarette in your mouth, I'll kill you!' So my father never smoked.

Before the war, they used to say: 'Czernowitz, near Sadagura.' Sadagura was a larger town and belonged to Austria-Hungary. When my grandparents were alive, there were still many Jews there, but they left during World War I, so Sadagura disappeared as a town. It has never been reborn. Even today, only a few ordinary people live there. There's a book on Sadagura, written by a Romanian author, I don't know his name, entitled 'A name from Sadagura.' [Editor's note: Mr. Margulies refers to a play written by Vasile Alecsandri (1818-1890), 'Iorgu de la Sadagura' (Iorgu from Sadagura), premiered on 18th January 1844 at the National Theater in Iasi. Alecsandri was a Romanian poet, author, playwright, folklorist, politician, minister, and academician; he was the founder of the Romanian theater and dramatic literature, a remarkable personality of Moldova and then of Romania during the entire 19th century.] I went there more than once; it wasn't far, you only had to cross the River Prut. My uncle, who had a candy and chocolate factory, used to take us riding on Sunday. We made trips to Sadagura, to remember how things used to be there.

At that time, all the children had to go to cheder from the age of four. So did my father and he could read Hebrew. He went to high school in Czernowitz and got a graduation certificate. When World War I began, my father wasn't called up to the front. He remained at the post office. He wore the imperial outfit [the uniform]; he was an officer and was in charge of the Czernowitz post office. In 1915, when the Russians entered Romania, my father gathered all the papers, telegraph machines, and telephones, purchased horses and two large carts in which he loaded everything and carried the items deeper into the country, to Seletin [town in Bukovina, 228km south-west of Czernowitz], which the Russians hadn't occupied yet [Editor's note: This is highly likely to have happened in 1918, shortly before the annexation of Bessarabia to Romania 3]. For his deed, he was decreed by the Emperor of Austria-Hungary, King 'Apostolosin Koning von Ungarum'. The order read, 'Awarding, on 23rd March 1915, to Abraham Margulies from Czernowitz, post office and telegraph specialist, the Golden Cross for valor.' He also received a nice ribbon that read 'Franz Josef'.

Before World War II, my father was a high-ranking clerk in Czernowitz, Bukovina, which belonged to Romania at the time. He was responsible for the security of the news that entered the country. He used to check the newspapers like an agent of the Siguranta 4, like it was called back then. As he spoke several languages, he read various newspapers; when he came across an article that attacked the royal family, he simply blocked that newspaper from reaching the population. At that

time, the country was under a royal dictatorship, and they [the authorities] didn't want the people to find out that King Carol II had a girlfriend, Lupeasca, while Prince Michael 5 was still a child. [Editor's note: The woman was Elena Magda Lupescu, daughter of a Christianized Jew. Carol met her in 1922. She was known under various names, including Lupeasca or Duduia – the latter was the one by which Carol used to address her.].

By the time the war began [World War I], my mother, whose maiden name was Antonia Engler, had finished school in a catholic monastery in Vienna [today Austria]. The Austrians didn't trust the Czechs and Poles, as they wanted to have the country just for themselves [be independent], so they treated them as enemies, not as friends, especially after the war began. So they took those girls who had studied at the monastery and sent them to Czechoslovakia. This is how my mother got to Dulmen [Editor's note: At that time, Czechoslovakia didn't exist as a state, so the city mentioned was under Austrian-Hungarian authority.], where she worked with my father for a police station. My father was an officer and clerk in Czernowitz, but he got sent to several cities across the country; this is how he got to Dulmen, where he met my mother. After a while, my father was sent to another place, Seletin, but he kept in touch with my mother by mail.

When the war ended, my father returned to Czernowitz; and so did my mother. She didn't go back to Vienna, because, once the Austrian-Hungarian Empire collapsed, the Czechs, Poles, and Baltic people founded their own independent states. The Romanians received a part of the territories, too. In those days, the Russians had their Revolution 6. My parents got married in 1920. I don't know if they had a religious ceremony. They settled in Czernowitz, which belonged to Romania at the time.

My maternal grandfather's name was Berl Engler. He was born in Sadagura. I don't know the year of his birth, but I know he died in 1910. His first wife, whose maiden name was Schrager, died in 1893, was very young, and I know almost nothing about her. They had two daughters: Tiny Engler, born in 1889, and my mother, Antonia Engler, born in 1892. My maternal grandfather's second wife was Polish. Her name was Malca; I don't know her maiden name. They had two sons: Leo [Zuzu] Engler, who was born around 1894, graduated in Vienna and became a doctor, and Sigmund Engler, born six years after his brother, around 1900; I don't know what school he went to. Our grandparents couldn't get along any better. Malca was a very kind woman; we didn't know that she was our step-grandmother and loved her very much.

My mother's sister, Aunt Tiny, got deported with us and died in Transnistria, in Tivriv [today Tyvrov, Ukraine], in 1943. She was married to a man named Mendel Sandman, born in Sadagura, too. He owned a candy and chocolate factory that was called Sandia. He employed around 20 workers. Only some of them were Jewish. They had a boss who my father had brought from Austria. The goods they produced were sent across the entire country. My uncle had agents who traveled and sold his merchandise in all the cities. My uncle also owned about six carts and each had a pair of horses; those were very beautiful and well groomed animals. They shone like dolls. There were Jews who traveled through the villages and sold the merchandise. My uncle's house was where his factory was. It was a large place, with spacious and beautiful rooms. It had a bathroom. It only had one floor, but had a courtyard, where the stables were located. They had a very good social position; he was the first [in Czernowitz] to have a car and chauffeur. Uncle Sandman and Aunt Tiny weren't very religious, but they observed the major holidays. No one ate pork. They spoke Yiddish and German at home. My uncle died in 1940, before the Russians came [Editor's note: Mr.

Margulies refers to the annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union 7]. He was 50-52 years old. In fact, he was lucky he died; otherwise, he would have surely been deported to some place in Siberia.

Sandman was a people's man. His house was large, so he accommodated several relatives; each family occupied two rooms. The women weren't employed; they stayed at home and looked after the children, if they had any. Among the occupants were the Zimblers, the family of one of my uncle's cousins, Tony Zimbler. He worked for a newspaper in Czernowitz, 'Allgemeine Morgenblatt' [General Morning Paper]. He sold copies in the street every morning at 6 or 7. There were a lot of newspapers in Czernowitz, Romanian, French, and German. They dealt with local events more than with politics. Everyone spoke German there. Well, there were the hutulii [People belonging to a Slavic population which inhabits the area of the Northern Carpathians] and the Ukrainians who didn't speak it too well, but they would learn it, too. They had a daughter, Silvia. She's still alive and lives in Israel. When they returned from Transnistria, Silvia and her parents left for Israel from Iasi. They stayed in Cyprus for a year or two, as they weren't allowed to go to Israel right away.

The Hausemans lived at my uncle's, too. The father was a distant relative from my mother's side of the family. Hauseman means 'man's house.' They had two daughters, but I don't know their names. One of them got married. In the 1930s, some people from America came to Czernowitz looking for Jewish girls to marry. She married, had a girl named Ester and stayed home. Her husband later came back and took them to America before the war began. The other daughter worked as a lawyer for the sugar trust in Czernowitz. She had an affair with the manager or something like that. Only a few days before the war began, they left for Bucharest. The man was some big shot there and she continued to work, having a German name, Hauseman. When the Romanians returned to Czernowitz, at the beginning of the war, she came home a couple of times and brought us money, as we were in need.

She never got married. Her lover had a wife and child and his wife denounced her for being a Jew. They [the authorities in Bucharest] hadn't known about that, because she had a German name. When they came to seize her from the hotel where she stayed, she committed suicide. When we left for the camp, we gave all our gold and jewelry to Mrs. Hauseman, who left for Bucharest. Our family also had some silverware, spoons and the like, which I took to Uncle Sandman's factory and hid in a large attic. When we returned, we found them where I had hid them. But all that we had given to Mrs. Hauseman was lost. She had committed suicide in Bucharest, and the gentleman she was with claimed he hadn't received anything from her and didn't know anything. So the jewels were gone.

A cousin of theirs lived in my uncle's house, too. Her name was Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger. Eisinger was her father's name and Meerbaum was the name of her mother's second husband. She was my cousin too; we were related through my great-grandfather, Abraham Schrager. Selma and her parents weren't deported with us. They stayed home for an extra year. But they were eventually taken with the second wave, in 1942. They got to the Mihailovca camp, across the River Bug [today Mikhaylovka, in Transnistria 8]. Selma caught typhus and died on 16th December 1942, at the age of 18. After her death they discovered she had kept a diary, like Anne Frank. My cousin, Silvia, who lives in Israel, sent me an article published in an Israeli newspaper [Editor's note: Mr. Margulies doesn't know the name of the newspaper; the author of the article is Gideon Kraft.], pointing out that the publishing of the diary was 'due to Teacher Hersch Segal, who discovered her.' [Editor's

note: The works published by Hersch Segal (1905, Strzeliska-Nowe, Galicia - 1982, Rehovot, Israel) include the diary of Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, Blütenlese, Gedichte, Rehovot, 1976.].

It's an article in German which claims that Selma was related to Paul Celan [Editor's note: Paul Celan, born Antschel, in 1920, in Czernowitz. He committed suicide in 1970, throwing himself in the River Seine. An internationally renowned poet, he was considered for the Nobel Prize in 1966. He was supposed to share the prize with Nelly Sachs, but the vote was against him.] The article renders a fragment of Selma's diary, written in German, 'Spring. The trees are only now naked, and every bush is a sweet whisper, like the first announcement of the new joy, and swallows will return tomorrow, too.' [Frühling. Die Bäume sind erst jetzt ganz kahl, und jeder Strauch ist wie ein weicher Schall, als erste Nachricht von dem neuen Glück, Und morgen kehren Schwalben auch zurück.]

Zuzu [Leo] Engler, my mother's step-brother, was a doctor. He studied in Vienna. He left for Israel during the war [World War II]. Zuzu initially bought tickets aboard the Struma 9. When the time of the departure came, they told him the seats were already taken. But he didn't wait for too long until he finally left on another ship. He took his wife, Saly, their son, and mother-in-law. He left his mother, Malca, behind. She was 60-65, had diabetes, and was in hospital, in Czernowitz, where she found her death. At first, Zuzu had a hard time in Israel. Then his brother, Sigmund, who lived in America, sent him money and he was thus able to buy an x-ray machine. He was specialized in stomach diseases and got to the point where patients had to schedule an appointment several weeks in advance.

Zuzu's son got married against his parents' will. He lived in Tel Aviv. Zuzu once went to the seaside with his wife. She was on the threshold of getting drowned, so Zuzu's son jumped to her rescue. He was the one who drowned instead, while his mother was saved. This was God's way of punishing Zuzu for everything he had done and for his pride. It was the worst punishment. Zuzu died a long time ago. His wife, Saly, died in 2001. I wasn't on good terms with her. She didn't behave appropriately. Before the war they wanted to take a trip to Paris and didn't have enough money. So they went to Malca to get the rest. She gave them the money without asking the other children. When I went to Israel, in 1987, actually, that was the only time I went there, I was invited to eat at Saly's. I found her upset. She had a beautiful, large house in Tel Aviv. She had kept all my uncle's clothes for me, they were all like new.

The other brother, Sigmund Engler, was 18 when he left for America, in 1918, after World War I. He knew many people there. At first, he worked for a car wash owned by a friend of his. Then he obtained a loan and, after his friend died, took over the business. He developed it and made a living out of it. His girlfriend, a Jewish woman who had stayed behind, eventually joined him in America and they got married. After a while, my uncle's wife, I don't know her name, had an affair with an American man. When her husband found out, he told her to move in with her lover. She refused. She locked herself in a hotel room and killed herself. Sigmund remarried. He picked a beautiful American girl. They came to his native country together in 1926 or so, when I was about five. They had two sons. One of them took over the business; I don't know anything about the other one. My uncle died a long time ago. His wife survived after him for quite a while, but she is dead now.

My mother, Antonia Engler [Jewish name: Taube], was born near Czernowitz, in 1892. Jewish girls didn't have to go to cheder. She went to school at a catholic monastery in Vienna. She got her high

school graduation certificate there. She was particularly good at French and could also speak and read German and Yiddish. After she got married, she stopped working. My father was a high-ranking clerk and was paid well enough. We could afford a maid. I was born in Czernowitz, in 1921. My brother, Hary, was born in 1924. At home, we spoke German with my father and French with my mother.

Growing up

My father was the first descendant of his family who lived in Czernowitz; he bought a house there in 1923. It wasn't downtown, but wasn't far from it either. We lived in that house until we were taken to the ghetto. It had three rooms and a fairly large garden with fruit trees. We bred chickens and, for Passover, we bred a lamb which we used to play with. The house didn't have tap water. There was a man, a Jew, who used to bring us water. He was short and poor; he would carry a water vessel on his shoulder and deliver to each house. He would only take our money at the end of the month, to have it all at once.

We had a very big piano. It occupied more than half of the room. It was a 'Kaps' concert piano that my mother used to play. She had a cousin whose last name was Goldhaufen who had a girl, Heidi. Heidi was about two years younger than me, had been to piano school in Vienna, and gave me piano lessons. My brother didn't like the piano, so he never took those lessons.

My parents were religious, observed the holidays and kept the kashrut. On Fridays we would go to the town's Turkish bath; the place was mostly frequented by Jews. They lit a fire and the stones warmed up and became red. They poured water on them and the steam was so dense, that you couldn't see anything when you entered. We would go there in the morning, to have enough time to hang around. My father used to go to the synagogue every Friday evening, while my mother pronounced a benshen, i.e. she said a prayer before the candles. On Saturdays, my mother occasionally did some work; we weren't that devout after all. On Friday evenings we would eat various traditional dishes. I remember one of them. It was called pitze: it was made with eggs and was very spicy. But the dish that we ate most frequently was fish. In Czernowitz, the church's estate had a large fish market; in addition, there were 15-20 places where one could buy fish. Every other house had its own pool with live carp inside. You just went there and said, 'Give me a half' and you got it. Everyone ate fish on Friday evenings and Saturdays. At Passover, the town didn't have any bread. Most of the bakers were Jewish, and they wouldn't bake bread on Pesach. So everyone ate matzah. They wrapped them in a piece of cloth and carried them from house to house, so that everyone could buy.

My father spoke Romanian, too. This was the language spoken at the post office. It went like this: from time to time, he had to sit for an exam; if he succeeded, he got promoted to a job that was higher and better paid. One day, just before such an exam, my father was wandering around the post office when he saw a rabbi enter. He went straight to him and asked, 'Rebe, what are you here for? Can I help you?' The rabbi told him what he wanted. My father assisted him, and then said, 'Rebe, I would like to ask you something. Could you please wish me that I do well in my exam?' The rabbi asked him, 'Do you pray every day?' He replied, 'No.' And so the rabbi said, 'If you promise you will pray every day, you'll succeed in your exam.' At that time, every other or every third house in Czernowitz had a rabbi. So my father started to go to the rabbi's house before getting to work to say his prayer. This way, although he didn't speak Romanian perfectly, he was among

those who scored the highest in the exam. From that point forward, he kept his promise and prayed every day.

There were many Jews in Czernowitz. Most of them were lawyers, physicians and tradesmen. 90 percent of the stores were owned by Jews. Those were nice stores and they sold all sorts of things: food, clothes, and shoes. They never had problems with the Christians.

There was a large Orthodox synagogue. It had a rabbi whose name was Mark. He was like a king. He had a large house where he accommodated his bocherim: this is how his disciples were called. He was well paid for that. On New Year, major holidays and Saturdays, people went there to pray. When there was no room in the synagogue for all the people, the town's cinema would be rented. There was a chazzan who sang beautifully. They hired him for the holidays and all those who wanted to listen to him had to pay for their seat. In the 1940s, when the Germans came [in 1941], they murdered the rabbi and set the temple on fire; it burnt down with everything that was inside.

I started to go to school in Czernowitz. It was an ordinary, public school, with classes taught in Romanian. On the street where Grandmother Engler lived, 'the Jewish street,' there was a school where classes were taught in Hebrew. Most of the pupils were from Bessarabia 10 who already wanted to leave for Palestine and join the aliyah. My father paid a girl from that school to come to our place and give me lessons. She sometimes ate at our place; it was as if she was part of the family. I didn't go to cheder or anything of the sort. There were many Jewish pupils at the 'Mihai Eminescu' School, where I studied. I didn't have any problems and had many Christian friends. We got along extremely well; it was as if we were brothers. They used to come to the synagogue on Yom Kippur. They fasted like we did and stayed there like us. There were two separate benches for them in the synagogue. They spent the entire day there.

My father prepared me for the bar mitzvah. I had to say a short speech, a few words. I read it, and then sang the Hatikvah 11 and other similar songs [traditional]. A lot of people were present: relatives and acquaintances. My parents had to find extra help with the kitchen. There was eating and drinking and I got presents.

As a child, before I went to school, I spent most of my time in my uncle's house. They didn't have children and enjoyed having me around. Uncle Sandman would take us for a ride in his car and sometimes to the restaurant. There were many Jewish restaurants in Czernowitz to choose from. In the evening, we would go with our aunt [and Sandman] to eat; they were kosher. Friedman's was particularly famous. They even had music. They didn't serve meat, only vegetables and milk. They had red beet soup. They don't eat red beet here [in Transylvania]. We used to, and I taught my wife how to cook it. There was another restaurant called La dracu [Hell's] [Editor's note: pun based on the Romanian expression 'as far away as hell']. It was really far away, but people still went there. They had various bands playing and you could hear their music from a distance. For a few lei, a carriage would take you there. In the evening, you could go to the cinema or theater. At midnight or 1am, you could still buy hot sausages from people who sold them in the street. They kept them in special carts.

Every week we used to go to the Jewish theater, which featured Sidy Thal. The first performance of a Jewish theater took place in Iasi, thanks to a Jew named Goldfaden. Czernowitz was the second town with a Jewish theater. We didn't miss any play.

The town had streetcars that ran in all directions. When my father was on vacation and school was over, we would take a streetcar from downtown and go to the swimming pool. It was located on the River Prut. There was a loudspeaker that played music all day long. People bought passes for longer periods. There were booths where you could undress. We usually got there in the morning and left in the evening. We took food with us. This is where we used to spend our time in summer for a month, a month and a half, as long as the fine weather lasted. We also went on vacation to Vatra Dornei every year. We had relatives there and used to stay at a boarding house called 'The German House'. We would also go to Vijenca [Wizenka in German, in the Wiznitz district], a small resort not far away from Czernowitz, in Bukovina. My mother took me and my brother there and we rented a room from a relative of our grandmother's for a month. My father stayed home because he had to work, but he came to visit us sometimes. There was a champagne [mineral water] bath there; it sprung from underneath the rocks and was as white and foamy as champagne.

When the Russians came, in 1940, I had one more year to go until graduating from high school. So I had to finish the tenth grade under Russian occupation. In fact, the Russians didn't give us a hard time. Things only got difficult when the Germans arrived. I was 18 at the time. Our system consisted of eight grades, while the Russian one had ten. In order to finish the final grade, I signed up for a school where they spoke Yiddish. We used the alphabet letters, not Russian ones. When the Russians came, my brother, Hary, who was three years younger than me, was in the ninth grade at the same high school where I studied. The town had many high schools, but there was only one where classes were taught in Romanian. Others used Ukrainian or Russian or other languages: any minority had its own school. Russians paid particular attention to education; everyone had to go to school. When I got to the final grade, I could also speak Ukrainian blended with Russian, but I spoke neither of them well. I managed quite well though, because I had had contacts with the ruteni [Ukrainian-speaking minority in Bukovina]: the girls whom my parents hired to help around the house belonged to this population. They would learn Yiddish from us. There was no graduation exam: simply finishing the final grade was all it took. The Russians were interested in having people working, not spending years in school.

Everyone had to learn to speak Russian. In the large, beautiful parks of Czernowitz, you could come across elderly people who sat on a bench with the 'Izvestia' newspaper in their hands, learning how to read and write in Russian. [Editor's note: Izvestia (the name in Russian means 'news' and is short for 'Izvestiya Sovetov Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR') functioned as a long-running high-circulation daily newspaper in the Soviet Union. While Pravda served as the official mouthpiece of the Communist Party, Izvestia expressed the official views of the Soviet government as published by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.] The Russians had very few communist Jews. In fact, people were anything but Communists in Russia. During Stalin's regime, people were sent to prison for no reason at all. We didn't know that from official sources, but we knew. Along with the Russian army came a number of civilians who occupied the vacant houses in Czernowitz and settled there. One day, my mother met a Jewish woman at the marketplace. She knew she was Jewish because of her outfit. She didn't speak Russian, only Yiddish. My mother asked her, 'How are things in your country?' She replied, 'Things will be just fine; if not for us, then for our children; if not for our children, then for our children's children. Things will be fine.' This was all she said. She was afraid to add anything else. The following joke was born at that time: Some people who were visiting Russia noticed that most Russians had bruises on their face. 'What happened to you?' 'I went to the dentist.' 'So? Teeth are inside the mouth, not on the outside.' 'It's true, but, down here,

we aren't allowed to open our mouths.'

In 1938-1939 our problems began. In universities, the numerus clausus 12 had already been applied. [Editor's note: restrictions established by the law passed in 1934] Some said, 'Look, if these guys [the fascists] are coming, you won't get a retirement pension or a salary anymore, because they'll sack you.' My father went to a hospital and bribed his way into getting a medical certificate that gave him the right to an early retirement. He wanted to make sure he would at least get his pension.

During the War

In 1940, when he found out the Russians were coming, my father took a carriage to the border and told the guards, 'I want to go back to Romania'. But they didn't let him pass, because a Circular General Order had been issued stating that Jews weren't welcome in the country. Back in Czernowitz, my father was worried he would have problems because he was unemployed. So he asked my uncle for help; he hired him as a worker in his candy factory. He worked there until 1941, when they deported us. Before the Germans and Romanians arrived, I was doing my pre-military service. Then the trouble began. [Editor's note: The following territories passed under the Romanian administration: the five counties of Bukovina (Campulung, Suceava, Radauti, Storojinet, and Czernowitz), Hotin County in Northern Bessarabia and, starting from October 1941, Dorohoi County (the entire territory of today's Czernowitz region, plus the South of Hotin County. The ethnic minorities were reluctant towards this new situation, the Jews being affected the most.]

In July and August 1941, the Jews from the rural areas and towns were gathered in temporary camps. In September, they began to be deported to Transnistria. The Tighina Treaty of August 1941, which recognized the Romanian civilian administration of Tighina, stated that the Jews who would be sent there would be detained in concentration camps and used for labor. Between 1941 and 1943, almost 100,000 Jews were deported to Transnistria. [M. Barbulescu, D. Deletant, K. Hitchins, S. Papacostea, P. Teodor: 'Istoria Romaniei' – 'The History of Romania' – p.46.]

In 1941, we were in the Czernowitz ghetto and were forced to wear the yellow star 13. We weren't allowed to go to the marketplace before 10 or 11am. I can't remember exactly. Many Jews got beaten up in the middle of the street. They would seize us and make us sweep the streets. There was a period when we had to report for duty in the morning and were taken to clean houses.

One day, my father went out to buy food at a forbidden time. He put on his golden cross, assuming that the Germans would treat him better if they saw the German [Austrian-Hungarian] decoration. A German officer who passed by ripped it off and put it in his pocket. He yelled that a Jew wasn't allowed to wear that cross. This lasted for two or three months. We spent less time than others, because we had a neighbor, a German woman, who wanted our house and had us kicked out. I don't know if she got it.

One Friday morning, we woke up to find the town full of gendarmes. They announced that any Jew who would be found at home after two o'clock would be shot. We took some things, left our house and ended up at my uncle's factory, crowding alongside many others. They started to gather up people to send them to Transnistria.

While we were in the ghetto, Uncle Zuzu, God forgive him, made a terrible mistake [towards us]. He found out which streets were to be evacuated and knew he could escape by moving to another street, so he went to stay with the Hausemans. He came to us and all he said was ‘We’re leaving.’ He didn’t say, ‘Why don’t you come with us?’ My mother was his sister, yet he didn’t tell us anything. My father told him, ‘I heard about people running away. But where can we go? Besides, it’s only a matter of time. Maybe we’ll find a way to manage when we get there.’ No one from the street where Zuzu had moved was deported. If we had stayed for one more day in the ghetto, we wouldn’t have had to leave, because public clerks were exempted from deportation.

Our mayor was a decent man. His name was Traian Popovici and he was Romanian. His best friends were Jewish and he did business with Jews. I even heard he was buried at the expense of the Jewish Community. He arranged for the public clerks not to be deported. But nothing could be done for those who had already left. That was our life’s misfortune. God knows what would have happened to us if we had stayed. We probably wouldn’t have starved for four years. [‘Traian Popovici passed away in Bucharest on 4th June 1946. Dr. Filderman (one of the people who knew best what Traian Popovici had done for the Jews during World War II), on paying him a ‘last tribute’, said, ‘Many were those who made secret efforts in order to help a single person; but few were those who had the courage to publicly rise to the defense of an entire community. A good Romanian, he’s also considered to be a ‘good Jew’ by the Jews, although the suffering was all he had in common with them. What was mortal within him has gone. What has remained is the immortal essence.’ He was declared immortal posthumously, on 2nd January 1969, when he was awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal and a tree was planted on his behalf on the Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations, on the Mount of Remembrance, in Jerusalem. It’s the highest reward that the State of Israel offers to those who saved Jews (fragment from ‘Oameni de omenie in vremuri de neomenie’ – ‘Decent People in Vicious Times’ – by Marius Mircu, Bucharest, Hasefer Publishing House, 1996, pp.78-79)

They came to our place and told us, ‘You have 40 minutes to leave the house. Nobody is allowed to take more luggage than they can carry!’ They confiscated everything we took with us anyway. I’m not talking about wedding rings and other pieces of jewelry: this goes without saying. But they took our papers, too, ‘You won’t need papers where you’re going!’ They took the school certificates, identification cards and didn’t give us any identification papers. They took us to the station. A day later, our entire family left for Bessarabia by train. We traveled in a cattle car, next to four other families. The soldiers made sure no one escaped.

The journey lasted for two days or so. We got off in Atache, where the border was. It may have been a commune, but all we could see was an endless open field. We waited in the field for four or five days. This happened in October 1941 and it was already cold outside. Every day a raft took Jews across the river [Prut], from Atache to Mohilev-Podolsk 14, in Transnistria, Ukraine. The officers made a horrible joke. They took a family [father, mother and a couple of children] and told them, ‘God saved you Jews from the Egyptians and helped you cross the sea. Well, maybe that miracle will happen again.’ They put those people in a sack and threw them into the water. The entire family drowned. The officer who ordered this was Romanian. But he didn’t show up the following day. They transferred him. While we waited, we heard a rumor saying that the public clerks didn’t have to go. People gathered money and sent a delegate to Bucharest, but to no avail. After four or five days spent in the open air in October 1941, they took us across the border to

Mohilev.

The situation was desperate there. The houses were in ruins and the thousands of people who arrived had nowhere to stay. We ended up in an abandoned house. It had two floors. Downstairs was a barber's shop where a hairdresser lived and worked. The Russians called him 'Parikmacher' [Yiddish-Russian word meaning 'wig maker']. The house had been hit by a bomb and the staircase that led to the upper floor was broken. We had to climb an improvised staircase. We slept on the floor.

Mohilev was overcrowded; we couldn't stay there anymore. They didn't give us any food. We had finished our supplies on the way. They had confiscated our money and given us in return German marks specially issued for Transnistria. It was the only currency that was permitted there. I don't know how my parents did it, but, for a while, we bought food. There were a few peasants who had remained in the area; they sold things like potatoes and eggs. [Editor's note: The German authorities pursued the introduction of a special currency, only to be used in the occupied territories; in Transnistria, this German mark was called 'Reichskreditkassenschein' (RKKS). The exchange rate of the 'Transnistrian mark' was 60 lei or 10 rubles for one unit. Dora Litani, 'Transnistria', pp.42-44.] The Jews in Mohilev had been killed; maybe two or three had survived. We stayed there for two months. As there were too many people, they started to take them to other places. We ended up in a village called Tropova [today Ukraine].

My mother had a large handmade tablecloth with flowers, beautifully sewed. She gave it to a peasant woman from the village to let us sleep at her place, as the winter was there already. We were lucky to find shelter, so to speak. The peasants there had absolutely nothing at all; they were as poor as church mice. All they got for working in a kolkhoz 15 was some wheat. This is all they ate. In order to get a shirt, they traded potatoes or any other food they had. The peasant in whose house we stayed didn't have relatives. Her son-in-law had probably run away or had been seized, as the Ukrainians were very nasty. When the war began, they didn't fire one single bullet at the Germans, because Hitler had promised that Ukraine would be an independent country. So they waited for the Germans.

When they finally arrived and started to send them to forced labor in Germany, their enthusiasm was over. They changed their mind, became partisans and started to fight against the Germans. [The Ukrainian population saw in the arrival of the German army the liberation from the domination of the Soviet Union. They welcomed it for several reasons. On the one hand, the Soviet collectivization of the 1930s had dissolved all privately-owned farms, depriving the peasants of their means of existence. On the other hand, in the 1930s, the Soviet authorities eliminated the intellectuals' class and suppressed the activity of the Ukrainian catholic and orthodox churches. As a result of the Soviet terror, during the decisive battle of Kiev, in 1941, the German troops encountered minor resistance from the Ukrainian army. But the locals were soon to be disappointed by the occupants, who began molesting the Ukrainians.]

We spent the entire winter at that woman's place. She shared a cow with three other families; she got to keep it every fourth month. The hazaika [woman] occupied half of the house and the cow the other half; this is how the houses were built. Poverty was extreme: they had to steal in order to stay alive. They didn't have fire wood; they had nothing. That situation didn't make them feel revolted; they had been born like that and thought that was how things should be. Our host even

had a book by Lenin and she was persuaded things were going well. We all slept in the same bed, together with Aunt Tiny, my mother's sister. When the winter was over, we went back to Mohilev. We didn't ask for any permission. We looked for a place to stay, but I can't remember where we found it. The Jewish community gave us a paper saying: 'The Margulies family was deported, and is here, and are composed of the following members…' It contained our last names, first names, and our ages; when I came back to the country, this paper allowed me to prove I had been a deportee.

We spent very little time in Mohilev, because there were too many people. We went to Skazinec [today Skazintsy, Ukraine]. The locals called it 'Barracks' because there were 10-15 large barracks; they put us in one of them. It was summer already. There was a stream two or three meters away; I had some water and caught typhus. Every day, the Community, which was based in Mohilev, sent a large pail of pea soup to Skazinec, where there lived one or two thousand people. It was made of peas for cattle. There were many small children whose parents were gone; nobody looked after them and they were as skinny as a rail. There were no toilets, only an open field full of dirt. Those poor children used to walk the field and pick peas from the dirt; it was a terrible sight.

While I was sick, I stayed with my mother. They took her to another room, lest she should get sick, too. There were about 50 rooms on one side and the other; they had no doors or windows. The sick stayed on one side, and the others on the opposite side. There were many people there. The doctors were the first to get sick and die. We had no medicines, but God had mercy on me. We stayed in Skazinec until fall, when we were moved to Tivriv. I was recovering from my illness, so I was able to cover the 100-kilometer distance on foot.

We walked during the day and slept in the open air at night. We were escorted by Ukrainians, who were worse than the Germans. Those who couldn't walk were shot. At a certain point, we got to a commune where they [the Ukrainians] knew there were Germans. They left us waiting and went to the Germans to tell them they were delegates escorting Jews. Two Germans came to see us and we started talking to them. It was 1942 [Editor's note: This may have happened later, in 1943.]. The Germans already knew the course of the war was beginning to change, but we had no idea. Anyway, they didn't hurt us. They asked us where we were going and we told them about Tivriv. 'Good, they're waiting for you with a hot meal there. Walk in peace!' We found a kolkhoz there. We spent the nights all crammed up in there. The Jews who had been there before had been killed by the Germans. We were taken to Tivriv in 1942. The end of 1943 caught us there. In fact, we stayed there until we heard the end of the war was near.

There were rumors. One day, two Russian tanks arrived. We were so glad! They went to every commune where they knew there were gendarmes, seized them and hung them by their feet. A group of Jews went to the Russians and pleaded for the release of the gendarmes, who hadn't done us harm: we used to work for them, chopping wood and things like that. The Russians took them down and let them go. The following day, the Russian tanks disappeared and the Romanians were back. Do you know what they did? The [Romanian] gendarmes gathered everyone [the Jews], had them standing behind a house and fired the machine gun at them. Some died, some were injured, and some escaped. They didn't go after the ones who had escaped. As we lived in a more isolated place, we had no idea of what was going on. We simply heard gun shots all of a sudden.

We had very little food: they gave us some corn flour and one or two potatoes. The gendarmes told us, 'We'll leave you alone as long as you don't leave the premises. If you do, we'll shoot you!' One

morning, my father announced, ‘I’m going to trade some clothes for food. It may get me killed, but, if I don’t, we’ll starve to death.’ He took the clothes and left. He never returned; he was shot dead. The Jewish Community helped me bury him in the former Jewish cemetery in Tivriv. There used to be Jews there, but they all died. They issued a death certificate. When we returned to Czernowitz, my mother hired lawyers and submitted this certificate to the post office; she got a pension.

We stayed in Tivriv until we found out the Germans were far away. We started to walk back home and got there in fall 1944. It took us several weeks. From time to time, a truck with Russian soldiers would stop and give us a ride for one or two kilometers. We spent the nights in cemeteries lest the Russian policemen should catch us and send us to God knows where in Siberia.

After the War

My mother, brother and I got home after four or five weeks. We found an empty house. The windows were broken and everything was gone. Our beautiful furniture, paintings, books, stamp collection, were all gone. We found some photos lying on the floor and the neighbors told us they were of the man who had lived there. I don’t know who he was. They told us that one day after our departure, our piano was loaded into a truck and sent to Bucharest. I know this for sure, because I asked them.

So we had nothing when we returned. My mother went to this cousin of hers, Goldhaufen, and she gave us some trifles. Some Christian neighbors came by and told her, ‘Madam, come to our place; we want to give you some things!’ Her cousin didn’t let her, ‘Don’t go anywhere! I’ll give you everything you need!’ But she didn’t; she only claimed she would. Others did give us this or that though. We placed a rudimentary wooden bed in the house, but we were used to sleeping on planks. A neighbor recognized us and gave us something to sleep on. From time to time, she bought us things from the marketplace. Everything was expensive. We paid in rubles, but, because of the war, money had devaluated. I went to my aunt [Goldhaufen], who was rather well-off, and she gave me some things to sell at the flea market. There wasn’t anything that couldn’t be sold. The Russians had money and they bought anything, whether they needed it or not. My aunt told me how much she expected to get for each item. I sold them for twice as much and made several hundreds of rubles every day.

The Goldhaufens hadn’t been deported because my aunt’s son-in-law, whose name was Balan, had German origins and worked for the National Bank. They weren’t known to be Jewish; they didn’t even go to the synagogue. Eventually, Balan was seized by the Russians [because he was German], and so he suddenly wanted to be a Jew. He could play several instruments. The Russians, who are fond of music, took him to weddings and other events. He had a harmonica, so he led a good life there. [Editor’s note: Mr. Margulies doesn’t know where he stayed in Russia.]

We didn’t give up the Romanian citizenship. We knew that, if we came back to Romania, where my father had worked as a state clerk, my mother would get a better pension than in Russia, where she received 30 rubles a month; and a kilo of meat cost 32. That pension was a good thing though, because it kept the police away. ‘What do you do for a living?’ the policeman would ask. ‘I have a pension.’ ‘You do? All right then!’ We had to report to the police to be registered. My brother was registered as a pupil and my mother a pensioner. As for me, I didn’t register and got caught one day. They asked me all sorts of questions, but in the evening they let me go home and I never saw them again.

In Cousin Heidi's house lived a man who was from Czernowitz. I believe he was in the business of getting people out of Russia. He had connections and could make arrangements. With his help, we were able to leave Czernowitz. We reported to the border and said we were Romanians. The three of us were assigned to Targu Mures. I still have the paper proving we were assigned in April 1946, after we crossed the border. They sent my cousin Heidi and her mother to Cluj. Her aunt, Berliner, who was traveling with them, was sent to Sibiu. Heidi found a job at the Opera as a pianist right away. She came to Targu Mures a couple of times in concert. She came to see us, but she was upset all the time, because they had lost everything. Her husband, Balan, came home to Cluj, got a position at the cinema, but died three months later, at a very young age. My cousin was left alone and there was little she could do. She could hardly survive with what she earned from the Opera. Her mother was still alive and cooked for various people. At times, she stayed with us, too. Heidi never remarried. She worked for the Opera until her retirement.

Heidi had a cousin whose name was Goldhaufen too; we barely knew him. His family didn't observe the kashrut. One day, he came home and said, 'Mother, as of today, I will no longer eat in your house. I'm leaving for Israel, no matter what. You don't cook kosher!' He left for Israel in 1943 or so, joined the army right away, became an officer and was among the first to enter Berlin [today Germany] with the Jewish and Russian troops. The Germans were screaming, 'Oh, no, the Jews are coming, the Jews are coming!' They were running away because they were afraid. I heard this story from Heidi. [Editor's note: Mr. Margulies can't remember the immigration of Heidi's cousin in full detail. That cousin couldn't have possibly joined the Israeli army because Israel didn't exist in 1943 as a state. So the Israeli army couldn't have taken part in the liberation of Berlin.]

So we arrived in Targu Mures in 1946. They gave us a place to stay in the large house near the synagogue, which shelters the Health Insurance Company today [The County Department for Public Health, 19 Aurel Filimon Street]. We must have been 20-25 families: all Jewish, all from the area of Czernowitz. Each family got a room. We had a communal kitchen where we could cook. We lived there until they found me a job. My mother received a pension, but it wasn't much. My mother's brother, Zuzu Engler, who had been living in Israel for a long time, would help us by sending us all sorts of things. Then we got a little room in Bernady house, opposite from where we lived in the beginning. [Editor's note: That house is actually called Teleki and is located in Bernady Square] We didn't have anything, but the place was good. We had a room and closet. All three of us lived there at first. Then, it was just my mother and I.

When we got to Targu Mures, my brother Hary signed up for the 'Papiu Ilarian' High School. He finished his final grade: he completed two grades in one year [thanks to the Voitec Law 16] and wanted to pass his graduation exam, but my mother wouldn't let him, because it was very difficult. He spent his nights studying in the light of a small gas lantern and it paid off: he was one of the best in his class. His natural sciences teacher, Mrs. Croitoru, a very strict woman whose husband was a lawyer and who knew us from Czernowitz, told my brother that he was the best pupil she had.

My brother finished high school, waited for a year and passed his graduation exam. Then he went to Bucharest, was admitted at the Polytechnic and became an electrical engineer. He graduated in 1954 or 1955. They wanted to send him to specialization courses in Russia, but he said, 'That's where I come from and never want to return to again!' Those courses could have helped him get important positions, but he didn't want to go. After he finished college, he was assigned to a power

station in Doicesti, in Oltenia. It was at the end of the world. Misu Kraft Davidovici, a former fellow-student said he wanted to work there, too; they made him the manager of the power plant in Craiova. During Khrushchev's 17 visit to Romania [in 1958], there was a power failure in Bucharest one evening. My brother was in charge and the Securitate 18 wanted to arrest him. But my brother couldn't say what had gone wrong. Electricians went out into the field and discovered a stork that had built its nest on the power lines, which had caused a short circuit. My brother got away, but he made a decision, 'I'm not staying here anymore; I've had enough. I'm going to Israel.' Nevertheless, he stayed. He met a girl who finished college in Bucharest, too. Her name was Elena Zavate; she wasn't Jewish. He married her. Meanwhile, Kraft got him out of Doicesti and moved him to Craiova, to his power plant, where he appointed him deputy technical manager.

He married Elena in Craiova. They received an apartment there. They had a son whom they named Arthur Margulies, after his grandfather. They lived in Craiova for a number of years. One time, when the plant's technical manager went on vacation, my brother had to replace him. When the manager returned, the workers addressed the management, 'Please don't remove Mr. Margulies from this office; if you do, we'll leave, too!' There was nothing they could do; they couldn't change him, so he remained there until he retired. Arthur became an electrical engineer, too. After he finished college, he married a girl from Craiova who had graduated from Medical School. Eventually, they moved to Bucharest. She worked in the research field as a physician and my nephew received a special position [Editor's note: Mr. Margulies doesn't know where]. He had to stay alone in a locked room where no one could enter. When he wanted out, he kicked the door; the guard opened it, and then locked it again.

One time, when my mother went to visit them, she noticed their little girl, Alisa, couldn't see right. They took her to a doctor, but they were told, 'You'll have to wait some more and see what happens; but you should know that this case is very difficult to treat in our country.' At a certain point, my brother's wife had some differences with her superiors, so Arthur decided that she should go to London for a week or two, on the grounds of her daughter's eye condition; she went there on her own, while my nephew stayed home with Alisa and their second child, a little boy who had been born one month ago. She went to the Leeds hospital and spoke with the doctors about her daughter's condition. They told her they could solve it. So my nephew took the girl to England. The operation was successful, but none of them returned to Romania. My nephew went to the Jewish Community over there and told them he was in trouble. They listened to him, filled up his refrigerator and treated him well. The little boy they left in Romania grew up here. Every time they tried to get him to England, the British Embassy refused to grant him the visa he needed to join his parents.

While he stayed in England, my nephew was granted the right to work. There was a company for which he would have liked to work, but, before he got there, a man came to him and made him an offer, 'Look, I have a factory that makes very large burners for factories and we're the only ones making them. I can't pay you as much as my competitor is ready to give you, but, still, I would like you to come work for me. I can only give you this much now, but, in time, things will improve.' Arthur had my brother sell everything they owned here: about three houses in Bucharest, and sent the money to England. Since they didn't let him bring his son, who was already four, they decided to leave England. They applied for Canadian visas and got them. My nephew's English employer told him, 'You may be leaving England, but you're not leaving my company! You're going to

Canada and you'll start up a factory just like mine. I'll give you a monthly salary and a share of the profit. I'll also give you shares and so on and so forth.'

They settled in Toronto, where they bought a nine-room house; they were finally reunited with their son, who was already five or six years old. There was a law there that didn't allow children under 14 to walk the streets unaccompanied, so my brother and his wife, who were already retirees, joined them in the 1990s. I think my brother recently got an apartment from the State, but only a one-room apartment. Their daughter, Alisa, signed up for college in England. They're not religious, but they keep in touch with the Toronto community and attend their meetings. The community erected a monument in memory of the Holocaust, there in Toronto. I got a picture of it.

In the beginning, after we settled in Targu Mures, I got a temporary job picking berries. We had to go to Stanceni [88km from Targu Mures], where we lived in huts. We gathered the fruit in barrels together with some German women from Sibiu – they were very stout women. I spent three or four months there.

In school, at handicraft, I had learnt how to compact books. In Targu Mures, I met a man who was from Czernowitz. I hadn't met him back home. We went to his place from time to time. He had a radio set and we listened to the news. I loved to listen to the news in the evening. He worked in a bookbinding shop and got me hired there. The place was located in Gyorgy Bernady Square. I spent little time there, because the workshop was taken over by the printing shop. As an employee of the printing shop, I still did bookbinding until I got transferred to billing. I had to centralize sales, receipts, everything. My work was done in an hour as I had a calculator. I didn't spend too much time there either, as they transferred me to accounting. But, right after that, they made personnel cuts. I wasn't fired, but they lowered my salary. I told the manager that I couldn't go on with that kind of salary. I went to see Borshivetzki, the manager of 'Cartea Rusa' ['The Russian Book', the bookstores' organization, today Sedcom Librarii Company], and asked him if he could hire me. This is how I got to their accounting department. The head of the department was a married lady named Luca. Her husband had remained in Sibiu. They had a daughter. I don't know how she had ended up in Targu Mures. We became friends. She came by our place almost every evening: she became a friend of the family. We listened to the radio: we had an 'Orion.' She spoke German, so she could converse with my mother.

One day we received an order; an employee had to go to Sibiu to collect a typewriter that we had been assigned. My boss told me, 'Go and bring the typewriter home!' It was the first time I set foot in Sibiu. I went to see the Black Church [Editor's note: Mr. Margulies mistakes Brasov for Sibiu. There isn't a Black Church in Sibiu.], I had a walk and, in the evening, I picked up the typewriter and headed for the station. But the train was so crowded, that I couldn't get on. So I spent the night standing with the typewriter in my arms. I took the first train in the morning. I got home and went to bed. My boss sent someone to call me to work: 'I'm not coming to work today! I haven't slept all night!' The following day she sent me a piece of paper informing me that I had been fired.

So I went to see an acquaintance who worked in finance and asked him whether he had a job for me. 'Mister, there's nothing for you here, but there's this gentleman who has just arrived and is asking me if I could find him someone.' His name was Zicherman and he worked in planning at Vinalcool [the enterprise for wine and alcohol processing]. He told me, 'If you want to, you can come work for us. This guy is going to work for the Securitate, so the position is vacant.' Vinalcool

had several divisions; the spirits division was located near ‘Cocosul de aur’ [‘Golden Rooster’, famous restaurant in town, at 106 Kossuth Lajos Street]. The wines section was elsewhere. Shortly after I was hired, the company had a new manager. He was Jewish. His name was Rodan, but I suppose it had been Rosenstoch and he had changed it. After he consulted with the central management in Bucharest he called me to his office and informed me, ‘As of tomorrow, you’re the new head of work planning. What do you say? Do you want to?’ So they made me head of planning at Vinalcool. I spent almost 29 years there before I retired. It was a good employment. When I got hired by Vinalcool, we received a room in an apartment building on Gheorghe Doja Street.

I wasn’t a party member. There was another boy who came to work for the planning section and he wasn’t a party member either. We were the only employees in the section for a while. Then the secretary of the enterprise’s political organization was transferred to our section; they didn’t like him, I don’t know why. The manager asked me, ‘What should we do with him?’ I told him, ‘Mister Manager, there is a girl sitting at a desk; move her to another office and send the party secretary to ours.’ So he came. We got along very well. He didn’t try to persuade us to join the Party. I was among those who had come from Russia. People in my situation who had joined the Party were sacked. [Editor’s note: Mr. Margulies refers to a policy conducted at the beginning of Ceausescu’s regime, which considered those who had come from Russia Russian spies.] I never got involved in politics. I was never in trouble at work because I wasn’t a party member. I didn’t attend the party meetings, but I had to go to rallies. Everybody had to be there – party members or not.

In my opinion, there was no communism in the past. You call that communism? What we had here wasn’t communism at all. There was widespread stealing and everyone knew it. Here’s a story I heard. A Russian man who had four children wrote to Stalin, ‘Comrade Stalin, I beg of you, give me a better job, so that we can get by; my wife isn’t employed, because we have four children and she has to look after them.’ Three months later or so an order came. The man was transferred to a guard’s position; the salary was even smaller than before. What could he do? Well, this is what he did: at night, when trucks would stop at the gate that he guarded, he would grab two or three pairs of shoes or anything else they carried. And his life took a turn for the better. This is how things went.

After we settled in Targu Mures, I sent letters to all the Jewish communities, looking for a Jewish wife. Two or three answered. There was this girl from Timisoara, an agronomic engineer, with whom I exchanged some letters. It didn’t last, because I would have had to move to Timisoara to be with her. Ceausescu 19 didn’t let agronomic engineers stay in their home town as they had to relocate wherever they were assigned. [Editor’s note: Mr. Margulies refers to Ceausescu’s regime, when college graduates were assigned to a specific location right after graduation and couldn’t change it if they wanted to.] She once sent me a letter, ‘Please, stop writing to me. I got the approval for leaving to Israel.’

Another girl was from Ploiesti. I went to her town. She was divorced. She was a nice girl who lived with her mother in a single room. They were poor. One week after I had got there, she got the approval for leaving for Israel, too. And there was another girl from Oradea, I think. She was a math teacher, a beautiful girl. I went there too. Her mother wasn’t Jewish, only her father, but I agreed to marry her anyway. I invited her to spend one month at our place. We went to Sangiorgiu. My mother wasn’t feeling well and couldn’t cook for us. We ate at the restaurant. In the end, she left; I met her again only once. Nothing happened. There was a girl who came from Suceava. I didn’t like

her, but my mother did. That persuaded me that marriage isn't according to one's wish, but according to one's fate.

My wife's name is Raveca Besinei. I met her when I was working for the 'Cartea Rusa' bookstores' organization, between 1948 and 1950. We were both in accounting, so we sat opposite each other at the same desk. She was born in 1922, in Targu Mures. She was a Christian and had graduated from high school. When the personnel cut stroke, she was sacked because she had owned a bookstore before the Russians [the communist regime] came. I used to go to her place from time to time and ask if she needed anything. After a while, she got another job at a company in charge of restaurants. It was located downtown, where the police station is. We got married much later. My mother got ill and bound to bed for two years. I had to cook, clean and go to work. It wasn't far, a ten minute walk, so I could go home at least twice a day. There was no one who could help me; my mother didn't put up with anyone. This is why I didn't want to get married. Given my mother's condition, I couldn't just get married and tell my wife, 'Take care of my mother now.' But Raveca and I were friends during all this time. While my mother had nothing against my marrying a non-Jewish woman, I had. My mother died in 1979, at the age of 87 or so. She was buried in the Jewish cemetery of Targu Mures.

After my mother died, I went to Israel. Cousin Silvia sent me the money I needed to do that. I didn't stay long and didn't consider moving there permanently. The manager had pledged for me; he had trusted me and I didn't want to get him in trouble by not coming back. I liked Israel. I spent eleven days there. Every day my cousin took me places. I saw the Negev Desert, where the most recent houses in Israel are located. We spent one night in Jerusalem and, in the morning, we went to the Dead Sea. I took a bath in it.

I got married in 1981. My mother wasn't alive anymore. I was alone and everyone urged me: 'Don't be silly, take this girl, she's nice and pretty.' My brother insisted, too. So I married her eventually. I couldn't live like that. My wife had a house that had belonged to her parents; on 12 Painii Street. It only had one room, kitchen, and pantry. We added the bathroom that we made large enough for a washing machine to fit in. We didn't have children. I was lucky with my wife, I can't complain about that. She was loyal to me and minded her own business. She worked hard. Now she's no longer able to do much. I'm having a difficult time with her. She's not lying in bed because she's ill, but because she can't walk. Before November came, she went to the cemetery. When she came back, our dog assaulted her and made her fall. She had to be operated. But her leg is shorter now; she can only walk using a walking frame. And she started to forget things.

I began working for the Community right after I retired, in 1992. My position doesn't have a specific name – I'm in accounting, go to the bank and provide help where it's needed. While I was employed, I observed all the major holidays. When Passover or Rosh Hashanah came, I just went to the manager and told him, 'Sir, I have a holiday, so I'll be going!' I never had problems because of that. I went to the synagogue for holidays; when my mother was well, we cooked better dishes, to feel it was a holiday. After I got married, I also observed Christian holidays with my wife: Christmas and Easter. I didn't forbid her to do that. One's belief is one's belief and it can do neither harm, nor good.

I couldn't tell if the community life was more active after the revolution 20. We received some aid, but no compensation for the deportation, like Jews in other countries received. I remember that the

government had us file a compensation claim 20-25 years ago. Things stopped there and we didn't get any money. But the community is giving us aid, no complaints about that. The pension provides enough to survive. Of course, it's easier for a couple who earns two pensions. We're not picky. How can anyone be picky after experiencing the camp?

Glossary:

1 King Carol I

1839-1914, Ruler of Romania (1866-1881) and King of Romania (1881-1914). He signed with Austro-Hungary a political-military treaty (1883), to which adhered Germany and Italy, linking this way Romania to The Central Powers. Under his kingship the Independence War of Romania (1877) took place. He insisted on Romania joining World War I on Germany and Austro-Hungary's side.

2 King Carol II (1893-1953)

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

3 Annexation of Bessarabia to Romania

During the chaotic days of the Soviet Revolution the National Assembly of Moldavians convoked to Kishinev decided on 4th December 1917 the proclamation of an independent Moldavian state. In order to impede autonomous aspirations, Russia occupied the Moldavian capital in January 1918. Upon Moldavia's desperate request, the army of neighboring Romania entered Kishinev in the same month recapturing the city from the Bolsheviks. This was the decisive step toward the union with Romania (April 9, 1918).

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 King Michael (b

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

6 Russian Revolution of 1917

Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

7 Annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union

At the end of June 1940 the Soviet Union demanded Romania to withdraw its troops from Bessarabia and to abandon the territory. Romania withdrew its troops and administration in the same month and between 28th June and 3rd July, the Soviets occupied the region. At the same time Romania was obliged to give up Northern Transylvania to Hungary and Southern Dobrudja to Bulgaria. These territorial losses influenced Romanian politics during World War II to a great extent.

8 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.

9 Struma ship

In December 1941 the ship took on board some 750 Jews – which was more than seven times its normal passengers' capacity – to take them to Haifa, then Palestine. As none of the passengers had British permits to enter the country, the ship stopped in Istanbul, Turkey, in order for them to get immigration certificates to Palestine but the Turkish authorities did not allow the passengers to disembark. They were given food and medicine by the Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish community of Istanbul. As the vessel was not seaworthy, it could not leave either. However, in February 1942 the Turks towed the Struma to the Black Sea without water, food or fuel on board. The ship sank the same night and there was only one survivor. In 1978, a Soviet naval history disclosed that a Soviet submarine had sunk the Struma.

10 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.

11 Hatikvah

Anthem of the Zionist movement, and national anthem of the State of Israel. The word ‘ha-tikvah’ means ‘the hope’. The anthem was written by Naftali Herz Imber (1856-1909), who moved to Palestine from Galicia in 1882. The melody was arranged by Samuel Cohen, an immigrant from Moldavia, from a musical theme of Smetana’s Moldau (Vltava), which is based on an Eastern European folk song.

12 Numerus clausus in Romania

In 1934 a law was passed, according to which 80 % of the employees in any firm had to be Romanians by ethnic origin. This established a numerus clausus in private firms, although it did not only concerned Jews but also Hungarians and other Romanian citizens of non-Romanian ethnic origin. In 1935 the Christian Lawyers' Association was founded with the aim of revoking the licenses of Jewish lawyers who were already members of the bar and did not accept new registrations. The creation of this association gave an impetus to anti-Semitic professional associations all over Romania. At universities the academic authorities supported the numerus clausus program, introducing entrance examinations, and by 1935/36 this led to a considerable decrease in the number of Jewish students. The leading Romanian banks began to reject requests for credits from Jewish banks and industrial and commercial firms, and Jewish enterprises were burdened with heavy taxes. Many Jewish merchants and industrialists had to sell their firms at a loss when they became unprofitable under these oppressive measures.

13 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.

14 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.

15 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.

16 Voitec law

named after communist minister of education Stefan Voitec, and adopted in 1946. According to this law all those (regardless of their nationality) who had to interrupt their studies during World War II could take exams and apply for high-school or university following an accelerated procedure.

17 Khrushchev, Nikita (1894-1971)

Soviet communist leader. After Stalin’s death in 1953, he became first secretary of the Central Committee, in effect the head of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1956, during the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev took an unprecedented step and denounced Stalin and his methods. He was deposed as premier and party head in October 1964. In 1966 he was dropped from the Party's Central Committee.

18 Securitate (in Romanian

DGSP - Directia generala a Securitatii Poporului): General Board of the People’s Security. Its structure was established in 1948 with direct participation of Soviet advisors named by the NKVD. The primary purpose was to ‘defend all democratic accomplishments and to ensure the security of the Romanian Popular Republic against plots of both domestic and foreign enemies’. Its leader was Pantelimon Bondarenko, later known as Gheorghe Pintilie, a former NKVD agent. It carried out the

arrests, physical torture and brutal imprisonment of people who became undesirable for the leaders of the Romanian Communist Party, and also kept the life of ordinary civilians under strict observation.

19 Ceausescu, Nicolae (1918-1989)

Communist head of Romania between 1965 and 1989. He followed a policy of nationalism and non-intervention into the internal affairs of other countries. The internal political, economic and social situation was marked by the cult of his personality, as well as by terror, institutionalized by the Securitate, the Romanian political police. The Ceausescu regime was marked by disastrous economic schemes and became increasingly repressive and corrupt. There were frequent food shortages, lack of electricity and heating, which made everyday life unbearable. In December 1989 a popular uprising, joined by the army, led to the arrest and execution of both Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, who had been deputy Prime Minister since 1980.

20 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.