

Iancu Laib In Front Of The Great Synagogue In Iasi



This photo pictures Iancu Laib (first from left) who was the father-in-law of my sister Betty Laib [nee Tucarmen] in front of the Great Synagogue in Iasi. Being a rich real estate owner he was an upholder of the synagogue and warden thereof.

There is a street in Iasi in the area where we lived that was called just like that: the Synagogues Street. A lot of synagogues were there, separate synagogues according to trade: the Tailors' Synagogue, the Publicans' Synagogues, and the Grand Synagogue that remains today the only synagogue in the area to still be used for prayer and Jewish cultural events. In my childhood and even later, when I was 15 or 16, my father would take me with him to Friday and Saturday evening prayers. When others would go outside to play football, I had to go to the synagogue. But this is how I learned everything that is to know about Judaic tradition. I liked it because I learned all kinds of useful stuff.

More often than not the holidays were about the relationship with God, about going to the synagogue. That was the atmosphere, especially in Iasi. There were a lot of shopkeepers and during the Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur holidays, Iasi would be a commercially dead city. All shops were closed, all synagogues were full. Everybody spent the New Year's Eve with the family.

My father used to go to the synagogue even during communism. That regime looked askance at the employees' relationship with religion and tradition. As for myself, because I loved my father, I loved Judaic tradition that I have never denied or went astray from. I would go to the synagogue on those days even in Ceausescu's time. My father used to go on Fridays and Saturdays but in the evening, especially in winter, I would go and take him home.