

# Rosa Kaiserman

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Botoșani

Romania

Interviewer: Major Eموke

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*I met Ms. Rosa for the first time at the Club of the Jewish Community in Iassy.*

*Twice a week about 10 mostly elderly women gather there before dinner time, they take tea and cookies, play Rummy and chat.*

*She invited me over for the next meetings at her place - a two-rooms apartment in one of the flats of the long line of eight-storey apartment houses strung together on a noisy boulevard, crowded with cars.*

*The house characterizes the person - this proved to be true in this situation as well: Ms. Rosa's apartment is characterized by the same modesty as Ms. Rosa herself.*



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## • My family background

My grandparents came from Iassy. I can't remember my paternal grandfather Kaiserman. I think he died, when my father was still young. He was a simple tailor, but he was a very skillful craftsman, for he earned a lot of money. At that time you couldn't buy ready-made clothes.

You had to go to the best tailor. I remember my grandmother vaguely. She lived with us, and my mother took care of her with the utmost respect and kindness until she died. As I was very little I saw her very tall.

She was scrawny, humpbacked, walking with a stick. I remember her being sick and infirm all the time, laying in her bed. She had her own cupboard and bed. She also had a grey overcoat, very dark, almost black.

At that time, when someone had an overcoat of cloth done, they had it for the rest of their lives. After grandmother died, my mother took that overcoat and had it done for my sister. There were very good dressmakers back then: they cut out the shabby parts and made a new little overcoat for my sister.

I think my mother was the only daughter-in-law, whom I know, saying that she sorted it out with her mother-in-law. Her mother left for America, and she remained here alone. Her only family was the family of her husband. My [paternal] grandmother died in 1930 at the beginning of spring – I hadn't turn five by then.

My father had only a brother, Izidor Kaiserman, who died in Iassy. We loved him a great deal. He was much older than my father, approximately 14 years older [he was born around 1874]. He was a good-humored man, but also a spendthrift.

He lost everything he gained in his youth and had a hard time at his old age. They had at that time [before WWI] a small shop, and after they went bankrupt – around 1932-34 – they worked as wage workers in another shop. That was their job.

I think my father's brother died before 1940. Uncle Izidor's wife was Maly – auntie Maly, that was how we called her. She was a beautiful woman. They had two daughters: Fany and Liza – we called her Lizica. Fany never married, she died here in Iassy and was buried at the Jewish Cemetery. Lizica had a boy, Grinberg Dorel (the Grinberg family is not related to my mother's family), who got married in Iassy.

Lizica left with Dorel and his family (he had a daughter named Ami) for Israel, for Nathania and died there. Unfortunately Dorel died too. He was very sick and passed away two or three years ago [in 2003-2004]. I keep in touch with his wife, we call each other and write letters...

My father's name was Avram Kaiserman. He was born in Iassy on the 19th of December 1888, by the time his parents were already old. I think it was an accident. It was a great age-difference between my father and his brothers, so that he married at the same time his niece Lizica got married.

When I was young I was calling my cousin "auntie", because she was older than me and had to pay her respect. I couldn't call her by her name. One day she got nervous: "Don't call me that way any more! Call me by my name, we are in the end cousins!"

My father was to become a merchant, so his parents sent him to work as an apprentice at a shop: he had to clean the floor, clean the windows, he had to unroll the wedges of toile and show them to the clients, and after that to roll and put them back. It was a hard job for a child. I think he took some commerce classes as well in a high school of commerce.

I don't know how school was back then, if it was three or four years, but he took his degree in commerce. And then, after finishing school, he used to do such things as an apprentice. And he became a merchant. Before marrying he went to the army and was allocated to the cavalry, but he didn't know to ride a horse. He was a tall and handsome, an upright and healthy man.

My maternal grandfather was called Iancu Grinberg – in German it would mean something like "the green mountain". I don't know a thing about him. When I was born, he had already died. All I know is that he was buried here in the Jewish Cemetery of Iassy. My grandmother's name was Esther. She left for America. I don't know when she died. It was probably before I had been born in 1925.

My mother had a brother and two sisters: Adolf Grinberg, Olga and Saly. All of them emigrated with their mother to America. My mother being already engaged by then, i.e. almost married, remained

here. The first one to leave was Adolf, my mother's brother, and he invited his sisters over to America.

He had already settled down there. He was living in Brooklyn, where he owned a little bookstore. His wife's maiden name was Fany Rosen, and she was from Iassy too, but they met only there.

My aunt's family lived here in Iassy, they were a large family. One of her brothers was physician – he was killed in the Iassy pogrom [1](#). The youngest of her daughters – her maiden name was Minca Rosen, I don't know her married name – was a good friend of my sister. They were classmates in school throughout the years, they have learned together in primary school, at high school and in college.

She lives now in America and she still keeps in touch with my sister. She was already married and they decided to leave Romania. They didn't want to emigrate to Israel. Back then, between 1950-60, there was a society called Hias, which lured Jews to leave for America and not for Israel.

So they lived for six months in Italy, waiting for their approval for America or for a ticket for the ship...I don't know details. But still in Italy he had an infarct, fell on the street and died. They had a little daughter, she was seven years old when they left, and this niece of my aunt emigrated alone with her little daughter to America, and they carried it off well. She had a hard time, she raised her, and this girl made the best of it.

My mother's brother used to write letters frequently, so we knew about them. After WWII they sent us packages. We had a hard time back then, we didn't have any clothes, but we were very proud of the things we got from America.

I remember a trench coat I got, it was navy blue, coated with tartan, had a cowl, and when I went out in the rain everybody would stop and ask me where did I get it from. My uncle died some years after WWII, and my aunt died later. She was old and sick. She was warded in a hospital and she died there. Her sister wrote us about it afterwards. She didn't have any children.

These two sisters were younger than my mother. She missed them a lot. I remember her talking all the time about her family, about her sisters. She would say that my sisters look like her sister, like Olga. That I had the character of the other sister. She would find something out.

For instance: I didn't like to wear new clothes. I had to get used to it and then I would wear it. She said that her sister was the same: when she bought her a new dress – and the ladies were very stylish back then – Saly permitted her sisters to wear her new dress until she got used to it, and then she would wear it. My mother cried after these sisters of hers, whom she never saw again. They wrote to each other, they sent photos of different events from their lives.

They lived in New York. They got married, had children. Saly had three children – two boys and a girl: Jack, Seymour and Estelle. Jack died during WWII, I think on the front in Italy. From Estelle I've got many photos, even from her wedding.

Olga was the youngest – she had one child. I've heard that he became professor of mathematics at the same university in America. But I've never seen him. I think his name is Joe.

There was a time when we used to correspond often. I did it too, but especially the parents. After my mom died, father continued the correspondence with the family of my mother. But after the parents died, my cousins being born in America didn't know Romanian, so we wrote in English. I also learned a little English and I managed to write a letter – of course, with the dictionary. We never met each other. One day, before 1989, I've got a letter from Estelle.

She wrote about her wish to come to Romania and meet us, but she wasn't sure if she would find anybody. Because in the meantime a lot of people immigrated to Israel. The letter got by chance to us, and we answered. It took a month to get to America.

She told us that she would be in a hotel in Bucharest. I left to meet her, but I didn't meet her. I've looked for her in different hotels for foreigners in Bucharest, but I couldn't find her. After a month she wrote about her not being able to come because her mother-in-law was sick. Since then we wrote to each other less and less.

My mother's official name was Rifca Kaiserman (born Grinberg), but people called her Bety. She was born in Iassy around 1897. She spoke and read German. I didn't want to learn German, because I couldn't put up with the Germans. We suffered too much because of them.

My mother had naturally brown curly hair. She was short and plump, but she was proportionate and very coquettish. While being a lady she used to make hats. That was her school training, to make hats. Modiste – that's how it was called once.

Hats used to be worn with flowers, with nets and so on. Because the ladies wouldn't go out without hats. My father was taller and he was a handsome man, at least that's what I believe. They have been very beautiful people. No one of the children resemble them.

My parents never spoke about how they first met. They were visiting Nathan Weissman, whose wife, Roza, was a distant relative of my mother, and a distant relative of my father. In spite of that they were very close, they were all the time together. Aunt Weissman used to prepare each Thursday food for the poor people – she was from a well-off family.

A cook helped her, and the poor people who knew her, came there to take a food portion. My aunt used to prepare a lot of griddles with maize flour – I can remember these particularly. In Moldova we prepare this meal even today. You steep the flour, you put cheese, sour cream, sugar, eggs. It is a delicious cake. And my aunt had some large griddles for 30 portions.

She used to put the griddles in the oven. Barely had she finished a griddle, she had to put the next one, for people kept coming for food. Each person got one portion for each member of the family.

I know that many people were coming, because she was saying: "I prepared another griddle, another one..." All that day long, all Thursday, she used just to prepare food. There were a lot of poor people in this region. During the war, for instance, they were straying from house to house.

At our place, before entering the apartment there was a hallway under the balcony of the first floor, and at the end of that hallway we used to have a small locker where we kept the food – there wasn't any fridge in those days. And they knew about it and came and stole the food. We were left without any.

This aunt was a very fine woman, she died unfortunately at fifty years, before WWII. She had five girls and a boy. They were much older than us. I remember going at the Weissmans while we were still very little. When the Russians came, rich families flew away because of the Communists.

The old Weissmans were dead by now – Reiza died before WWII, and Nathan Weissman died presumably during the war and they were buried here in Iassy at the Jewish Cemetery.

But their children took refuge in Bucharest, wherefrom they immigrated one by one to Israel. They left Iassy for Bucharest shortly after WWII, but they didn't stay there long. Just one of the girls remained there for a while and we used to visit her.

Eventually she left for Israel too, and by the time I visited her in Israel in 1968 she was old and sick. One day my brother called me from the Club [at the Jewish Community in Iassy there is also a Club], to go there immediately to see someone. It was an older woman and two young ladies. I looked at that lady curiously. She was the only daughter of the only boy of the Weissmans. "Yes, I can remember the moment of your birth, because I have seen you."

I was in Bucharest and her mother came with the three months old baby in her arms to show it to me. I wanted to speak to the young ladies too, because they were shy, so presuming that they must be from Israel and me not knowing Hebrew, I asked them: "Do you speak English?", in order to have a short conversation.

And they answered in Romanian: "We speak Romanian." "And where are you living in Israel?" "We are not living in Israel. We are living in New York." "But how come?" "When grandpa left Romania, he lived for a while in Israel, but then immigrated to America." They spoke Romanian so well, that we got along perfectly. Because the girls lived with their grandparents they have been able to learn Romanian.

I can't remember exactly when my parents got married, I think around 1918. I never thought of remembering it. There was a religious ceremony – by then it was impossible not to have one. My father was regarded at a moment as a rich man.

He, his brother and a brother-in-law of his – the brother of aunt Maly Kaiserman – owned a shop with cloth and materials for overcoats and gowns. And there were good quality textiles back then! Wool 100%. There were some little wool factories in Iassy too.

And at Buhusi there was a renown textile factory. But there came hard times, and father's shop went bankrupt around 1933. What was left of it was divided among the three owners. In whole Europe there was a harsh economic situation, Hitler had already begun to prepare for war. After he went bankrupt, my father worked as a bookkeeper for a felt factory.

### • Growing up

My mother didn't have children very early. My brother, Pincu Kaiserman, was born in 1924, I, Rosa Kaiserman, in 1925 and my sister, Clarisa Kaiserman, in 1927, but the age difference between us is just a year and a half.

At that time women didn't usually had a career. They usually kept the house and raised three or four children. My mom was a dab hand at everything. I often say about her: whatever she would

do, she did it well. Even the cleaning – she did it perfectly.

She would plant a flower and the flower would grow. She raised three children and it wasn't an easy job. The fire in the kitchen oven used to burn the whole day long while she was cooking. When we were little and still well-off we had also a maid, who helped in the house.

By then there were in every kitchen a wood-fire oven. So you should have taken care of the wood – in the summer as well as in the winter –, to rip it, to cut it, to light the fire in the oven, to heat the tea and the milk every morning, to prepare the children for school.

And my poor mother stayed for years at the oven, in the summer and in the winter: to broil paprika, to prepare food – looking back I have pity on the life she had then. And that we couldn't afford to have some other abode.

Our family was a modest one. In a yard with ten families there were four toilets at the ground floor and two at the first floor. I lived in my childhood on the Stephen the Great Street in a courtyard with many apartments: there were apartments from the front to the back of the yard on two floors.

The yard was broad enough and as children we used to run a cross-country race. There was a fence between our yard and the neighboring yard, which was similar to ours, with as many apartments to the back of it. Sometimes we looked through the fence to see who was on the other side. Sometimes we played with other children through the fence. We had many neighbors, with whom we remained friends.

The rooms were very large, with very thick walls with deep windows. We had two rooms and a kitchen. In the kitchen there was also a sheet-metal bathtub. We had all the time warm water. The bathtub was near the oven, so we could pour the warm water directly in it. The water would be then dipped and thrown outside.

We used to have a bath at the Communal Bath house, where there was also a vapor bath – they call it today sauna.

There were two bath houses in Iassy, both of them administrated by the city hall, I think. They function even today. One of them, the Communal Bath, is located behind the Cathedral, while the other one was the Popular Bath, located a little bit further.

The Communal Bath was only for the elite, it was more expensive, it had a sauna and masseuses, who would wash you so well, that they could take a layer of skin off you. It was actually a Turkish bath. There was a large room with showers around, and only after having taken a shower were you allowed to enter the sauna.

There was another bath here, in Targul Cucului, kept by the Jewish community. It was very close to the Large Synagogue. There were many narrow, winding streets in the area. One of them was the Synagogues Street, where were located many Synagogues which have later been destroyed.

This bath I am talking about, the Moisa Beider, named after its owner, had many tubs and a sauna. Some big stones would be heated up, probably with the help of a big, strong fire. A man would then come and throw a bucket of water over these stones, that would start to steam. The people then would just sit and enjoy the steam.

There was also a Mikveh at the Jewish Bath. This was a sort of pool where women came down the stairs before entering the water. I have never been there. My mother would go to the Mikveh as well, but she would never take us, the girls, along.

She would wash both of us in a bath, she would wrap us in towels and put us in a place like a drying room, where the clothes were. There was a window through which we would watch how the women entered the water slowly, said a prayer, made reverences and exit.

Especially before the wedding the bride had to go to the Mikveh with her future mother-in-law – I think her mother too – and with the lady who was to officiate the wedding to see if she had menstruation. The mother-in-law wanted to see with whom she was dealing. This stuff annoyed me all my life, that religion interfered with these intimacies.

My father and men generally went every week at the communal bath or at the Jewish bath. At a moment there was a song about Friday evening – a friend of mine used to sing it: “Be it rain or be it summer, Friday evening, me and Saie, will go bathing.” Friday evening was the time for bath.

My mom didn’t usually go on Friday, because she would make a lot of dishes on that day. She wouldn’t go every week, we used to bath also at home. When I was little, until I was ten, I used to go with my mother at the Jewish bath. When I got older, beginning with 18-19 years, I went regularly at the communal bath, at the vapor bath.

The vapors were different from the ones at the Jewish bath, they were coming through tubes – I don’t know exactly how the installation worked but I can remember very well the rooms.

There were some benches to sit on. I was still strong-built and healthy back then and I used to climb on the highest bench, I would lie down, and put a wet napkin on my face, so that I could breathe. Right outside the sauna, there was a room with beds, where you could lay down. Bath was very tiring. I would always bring my own sheets from home, but you could get them there too.

There was another room with wardrobes where you could undress and leave your clothes. My things never got stolen there. After moving in a house with bathroom, we didn’t go to public bathrooms anymore. I mean I went now and then to sauna, but only till I discovered I have high blood pressure and I wasn’t allowed to go anymore. I don’t know, it might have been around 1950-60. I have never been there ever since.

I do not remember exactly the year when the Jewish Bath was shut down, probably in the 1970s, when all the other central neighborhoods were demolished, where the Synagogue used to be and where the new apartment buildings were built [3](#).

When the reconstruction of the center began, and when they built the Independence Boulevard, all those narrow streets have disappeared. There are only blocks of flats now. In the Jewish Community in Łódź there nevertheless was built an imitation of a Mikveh – I cannot say exactly where because I haven’t seen it, it must have been somewhere in a basement.

At the age of three, our parents made sure we had a teacher who taught us Hebrew and the alphabet.

At the age of three! For this reason we were very indignant. We wanted to play, not to sit and study those signs that were so difficult to learn, and that had to be written from right to left. I remember we cursed our teacher a lot. When he left from our place – we had a large window – we would make the sign of the cross.

I thought that making this sign was a great sin. We wanted to get rid of him. I think he visited us until we were 7 and started school. I have learnt this difficult alphabet much later in the Jewish High school and at home, with more experienced teachers.

During the Second World War, and even after it ended, we had a teacher from Roman – his name was Meir Isacsohn, who was actually a doctor, but who knew Hebrew very well. Many of us would gather around him and he would teach us. He lives now in Israel and comes once a year to Lassy. When he arrives, he calls me right away, and if he has time, he visits me, and if not, we talk on the phone.

Generally speaking, the Jews lived very, very modestly, but they attached great importance to books, studying and prayer. There were days when one had to go to prayer. But in the synagogue women had their own place, and they would not mingle with the men. Men walk ahead, and the women would follow. They never walked in line with the men. I admit, I do not remember my parents to have kept this rule.

In our tradition, one is not allowed to mix meat with milk. Everything has to be separated. In our home as well, there were two tables. When we sat at the table, we would have a table cloth for meat and another one for milk. We had a towel for drying the glasses and the cups, and another one for drying the plates from which we ate meat.

There was also a special animal and bird slaughter. These had to be slaughtered by somebody who has learnt to do this job, and who, before the sacrifice would say a forgiveness prayer before God. I do not keep this custom anymore. I buy, for example, poultry that is sold in butcher shops. My father would not eat something like that. And neither would my mother.

My mother used to say: “This is how I have been brought up and all these customs remind me of my parents. In their remembrance, I cannot do otherwise. I can do only according to my parents’ teachings.” I understood my mother.

My parents respected each other, and they respected the holidays. For Saturday, the house would be better cleaned, we would all take a bath, and you could feel it was a holiday. There was an air of cleanliness in every respect: we were dressed in clean clothes and we were combed.

We would cook better meals for Saturday. Friday afternoons, my father would always go to the Communal or the Jewish Bath. My mother would prepare the food, she would put on the table a loaf of braided bread, covered with a cloth, and there was from Friday evening a bottle of wine always ready. We would place on the table two candlesticks, we would light the candles, and the mother would bless them.

When father would come home from the Synagogue, he would bless the bread: “We thank our God, who had given us the bread that we take out of the earth.” – this is how this prayer could be translated. The wine was also blessed. Afterwards father would pour wine in a glass. We had our own little glasses, and he would give some to us as well. And the wine, one liter of wine, could last

us two weeks, that is how much we drank.

There was a time, when we could buy the braided bread. Mother would buy it Friday evening. When there wasn't any to buy, she would bake it herself. She used to bake bread anyhow, twice or three times a week. She made it with potatoes and flour.

She would go to the other end of the city when the peasant women came with products from the countryside, and she would buy from them oil and flour. I remember she used to make this sort of cake, that one doesn't make anymore, I have no idea why it was so tasty.

The flour might have been of good quality, and the yeast as well. The filling was always the same: nuts, cocoa, sugar and raisins. But during difficult times, when we still didn't own a gas cooker, mother would use the coals, that remained in the ovens when the fire was over. She would put the coals on the bottom of the ovens and the trays of cake on top. They were so tasty...

Friday evening we ate traditional food: first a dish of fish, then a poultry or beef soup with noodles, afterwards we would have meat – usually the meat boiled in the soup – a side dish and pickles, and finally a cake or compote. Well, in my opinion, this was a generous meal.

In our case, even on weekdays, when we sat down to eat, the first dish was always a vorspeiss – in summer it was a salad, a tomato salad, a potato salad, or fish. Soup came always after. We would eat soup almost everyday. After soup we had meat, a side dish and pickles.

Sometimes we prepared only foods made of cheese. This was another matter. There were the cheese dumplings. At our place we would never eat milk with meat. If after you had eaten meat you wanted to eat cheese, you had to wait for six hours.

You know how the French usually finish their meals – with a piece of special cheese. No, we had to wait for six hours. We kept all these customs. I have a relative in the city, who is very faithful, but who from own initiative has reduced the six hours to three. He cannot resist longer.

There was another custom for the holidays, and also for Friday evenings, but especially for the winter holidays. Father would go to the synagogue, and when he came back home, he would bring a guest along. This guest was a poor man or a stranger in the city, who came to the synagogue just to be invited.

For example, there were young boys who were enrolled in the Army in lassy, but who came from other cities and couldn't go home for the holidays. They would go to the Synagogue, and every Jew would invite one as guest to their home. They would sit at the head of the table and would be served first. Our greatest joy was when somebody was invited to have dinner with us.

One used to feel the holiday spirit back then – the house seemed cleaner, the people seemed happier, you had to buy yourself a new dress and new shoes. For mother it was always a problem, what hat to buy for the Autumn Holidays.

The first Holiday of the Autumn Holidays is the New Year, in Hebrew Rosh Hashanah. It lasts for two days, during which the women and the men of the community read prayers. At home, Rosh Hashanah was celebrated with festive meals, and a lot of sweets as well.

For example: we would prepare white beans, the big sort, with sugar and honey. We loved it, it was delicious! How was it made? I think the beans had to be boiled, then the water had to be changed two times. The third time we added a little bit of oil, sugar and honey and baked it in the oven.

And they would turn brown, although they were white when we first bought them from the market. And there was the chickpea – coffee surrogate is its definition in word quizzes – a sort of bean, which you could eat when fried.

During WWII, because coffee was scarce, the chickpeas were fried in special trays, grinded and drunk instead of coffee. Well, we would boil them together with rice and oil or poultry fat, sugar and honey. Sweet chickpea, that is how we called this dish.

Ten days after Rosh Hashanah, we celebrated Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Everybody was fasting. We, the children, wanted to show how great we were, so we kept the fasting till midday, but to be honest we would eat or drink something in between. Our parents went to the Synagogue for Yom Kipur, and stayed there all day.

After that came the Sukkoth. We celebrated it like all the other holidays, namely with better food and a cleaner house. On Sukkoth we would build a sort of tent in front of the house. We would build it from wood pillars, dressed in linen and white sheets, we covered it with leaves. Inside we put fruits, flowers and a table with chairs. It wasn't large.

It was big enough to fit a table and a few chairs – nothing else was there. During the 8 Days of Sukkoth we would eat there our breakfast, lunch and dinner, and we would pray there.

Where we used to live, in Steven the Great District, we had this neighbor, a Rabbi, Landman, who lived upstairs. In fact he built the Sukkoth, but he built it in front of our house, and when he came from the Synagogue, he would eat first, and we would eat afterwards in the same Sukkoth. Any of the neighbors could eat there, but because it was in front of our house, we took advantage of it first.

There were several Rabbis in lassy. Beside the Rabbis, there are the people who know our prayers, our religion and customs very well and who perform the ritual of slaughtering the poultry and the cows. They are called the Haham, and are equally esteemed as a Rabbi.

There were many Rabbis and Hahams. A Rabbi, Landman, was our neighbor in Steven the Great District. There were some other Rabbis as well, but I don't remember them. There was also a Haham who shared the courtyard with us, and whose name was Lichtenstein. He had a very beautiful open balcony – I can still see it before my eyes. He would eat his breakfast there in the morning and he would put there his samovar filled with water.

A Haham earned probably more than a Rabbi. The courtyard was very long, and at the back it led into a basement with two flights of stairs. There we sheltered from the bombing. I can still hear this Haham pray, as the war and the bombings started.

He prayed and asked God to send a bomb that would destroy us, as we expected very hard times. That is what he said when the war started. Until then there were the Iron Guard, but at least it wasn't war. I was very angry when I heard this Haham's prayer.

I said to myself: "It is easy for you to wish for that, you are already fifty, you are old, but I am young, and I still want to live my life." Now I see that he was right. If we were finished then, we could have escaped the Transnistria, the Pogrom, and everything else. The Haham escaped, nevertheless, and fled to Australia, immediately after the war.

When the Sukkoth was over, we would go on the banks of the Bahlui River, who flows through lassy, and we would take some pebbles out of the pockets and throw them into the water, so as to symbolize getting rid of your sins. Only men were entitled to go. Only father went. My brother never went.

Purim is celebrated first of all with those triangular cakes, hamentaschen. And what cakes my mother baked! Hamentaschen is a recipe with ten eggs. But they were never enough! We had to make it with twenty eggs. The recipe is written, I also have it. Seven egg yolks, three eggs – this is for the dough. It is made with oil only, and not with cream or butter.

The seven egg whites that remain are used to make a sort of white cake. That is how we called it. The egg whites are beaten into a thick foam and mixed with a cup of sugar, flour, Turkish delight, raisins and exotic fruits. The mixture is then placed in greased trays and put in the oven. When done, the white cake is cut into slices, like a normal cake.

My mother would make also a sort of Roulade with honey, and filled with nuts, cocoa and jam. It was like a Strudel, filled with nuts, not with cheese. It seems to me it was a little bit like Baklava, but without the syrup.

This is how it is made: the dough is made of water, flour and salt, without yeast this time. It should be very well battered and beaten on the table – maybe you've heard of this. Afterwards it is set aside to rest, covered with a heated pot.

After an hour or so, the dough is laid over a white table cloth, covered with flour. Then that dough is softly rolled with the rolling pin, then put in the middle of the table and rolled the size of the table. Sometimes it would get even bigger than the table, and the margins were then cut out.

This rolled dough is very thin, like a cigarette paper. Even if it was torn a little, it was patched with some dough. After that the dough is spread with walnut blended with sugar, cherry jam, perfumed Turkish delight – on that time the Turkish delight had a rose taste, vanilla taste, according to the color.

Oh, and the pieces of butter spread on the whole table. Than this dough is taken with the table cloth and rolled like a turn-over, then cut in portions and baked in the oven. It was delicious! The butter melted, the sugar melted too and mingled with the walnut... But nobody makes this cake anymore.

On Purim they used to send sweets, cakes, especially to the poor people and to the relatives. This tradition is observed even today. For example, I don't observe it, but I get sweets from others. My mother used to send cakes, too. Friends used to come to our house: my brother's friends from his school, my friends and our neighbors. We used to work a whole week to prepare that many cakes.

There were also carnivals. Musical groups, called Klezmer, used to sing in every yard and go from door to door – they performed a specific kind of music, and most of them were Gypsies. But they

played Jewish music – they had an ear for that –, and they learned Jewish songs by singing from door to door.

They had a group – a cymbal, a violin, and they sung also with their voices –, they sung and got sweets and money. When we were young, we used to disguise ourselves.

I remember when I was still young, I used to draw a face on a sheet of paper, cut out the nose, the mouth and the eyes, paint it somehow, hide it then somewhere under the drawer and awaited dad's home coming. And when he came I put the mask on, so that he shouldn't recognize me. I was so convinced, that I pulled his leg. I was certain.

Just imagine: who could have been disguised in our home? Well, childhood is beautiful. Generally I disguised myself like that. We didn't go from door to door, but other disguised people used to come by. But only when we were still young, after that they didn't do it anymore, for Jews weren't allowed to leave the house.

Then the war came and after the war everything else was over, including the customs which no longer all of them observed. I used to make only hamentaschen and bring them to school, where I was working.

I was to bring beverages too – mom used to make some very fine maraschino. The cherry stones were macerated for ten days with sugar, after that they were boiled, and blended with alcohol – it was an extraordinary liquor.

On Hanukkah candles are lit every evening, beginning with the eve of the holiday. We generally use white candles, not yellow ones – but on Hanukkah only yellow candles are lit. There is an eight arms candle holder, where the candles are put.

On the eve the first candle is lit, on the second day the second one, on the third the third one, on each evening one more. The candles are lit from another small candle, called Shamash.

My father used to light the first candle, said a prayer in Hebrew – I didn't understand what he prayed. I had the honor to light the second candle – because it was my birthday. Hanukkah used to be most of the times the day of my birthday. After that mom lit the next candle, and after her the other children.

In our home we put the candle holder on the table, in America they put it on the window – I've read about it in a story. It was put on the table, the candle were lit, and then they put it on the window.

I think we even got some Hanukkah money when we were young, but we didn't know on what to spend it, we didn't know the value of money. Later the roles changed and I began to offer my parents money.

The most important thing for Pessah was the big cleaning. Including the drapes. Radiating cleanliness. The drapes were washed with a special brush, and then ironed, in order to kill all viruses. The dishes were cleaned scrupulously. On Pessah we had special dishes and cutlery, which were deposited in the loft.

Actually they were normal dishes like the usual ones, but we used them only on Pessah. But before bringing them down, during the big cleaning the other dishes were cleaned. There was a special

dresser for the Pessah dishes.

For example, you had things in the house, like in any other household, flour, noodles, rice – chametz for the whole year. They were listed on a sheet of paper, the list was brought to the synagogue, and somebody gave an approval to be able to keep them until after Pessah.

They were put in a place, where you weren't allowed to use them. For the Pessah flour and for the matzos there was a separate place, kept untouched the whole year. But these things have been a tradition here, in Moldavia, in Poland, maybe in Bessarabia too. In Israel they don't observe this tradition anymore.

There was also a ritual, which was for me rather amusing. So, you had to clean the house in such a way that even the smallest bread crumble disappeared. You had to wash, to clean, to shake out everything. After that, a day before Pessah, my father used to go with a piece of bread, and put in different places bread crumbs.

On the window sills, in as many places as possible, in order to sanctify the place. After that, he went with a goose feather, a wooden spoon, said a prayer and gathered these bread crumbs in the wooden spoon, then enwrapped them with a piece of white cloth and tied it.

The second day he took it into the yard, dug a hole and burnt the wooden spoon with the bread crumbs – which meant that he burnt the chametz, that is, all that was fermented. For example, if the first Seder was Friday, he put and gathered the bread crumbs Thursday evening, and Friday morning at 10 o'clock he would burn them.

If there was bread in the house until 10 o'clock, you were allowed to eat it, but not after 10 o'clock. And you weren't allowed to eat matzos as well, until Seder night. That whole day long we ate only eggs and baked jacket potatoes.

Even the table cloth was different, it was not the usual one. We put a white unsized table cloth. In those times clothes were sized in order for a cloth to look smooth. You couldn't wear the collars, the blouses and the skirts without sizing them. A boiled size was prepared from corn flour or wheat flour.

It was made in a large wash basin. The flour was put in first, then the boiling water was poured and mixed with a stick. The washed and rinsed clothing was put in there to stiffen the fabrics. These garments will look completely different when ironed. On Pesah the table cloth had to be an unsized one, that is without flour.

There was a lot of work to do. But I helped my mother every time through the years, and especially in her later years, when she got old and wasn't able to do things as usual. I was so tired on Pesah evenings... because we had also guests for Seder, and there was a lot of dish washing to do afterwards...

The Seder evening is on Pesah's eve. On this special event you aren't allowed to eat bread; you eat only matzos. But the Seder dinner is an usual one: with fish, meat, soup, matzos, compote, fruits. There was also a nut pie. The cake wasn't bad at all, and you are allowed to bake it not only on Pesah.

That's how it's made: from 10 eggs the egg-white is whipped with ten spoonfuls of sugar. The yolk is added afterwards. 12 spoonfuls of walnut and  $\frac{3}{4}$  spoonfuls of matzos flour is mixed with this content.

A griddle is greased with oil and the content is poured into it. Because you weren't allowed to use any milk I whipped some more egg-whites for the top decoration. Once I added to the whipped egg-whites an orange, lemon juice and lemon peel. The orange was red, but the cream was green. I don't know how it could have happened. So without any milk, sour cream, or butter.

On Seder we recalled the exile of the Israelites out of slavery from Egypt led by Moses. The same story is told each year. My father told it in Yiddish. I understood Yiddish. The children would ask the four questions. First my brother. He was the youngest, but he was very proud because he could ask the question.

A separate glass of wine was for the angel, who would come and taste the wine. My mom was scared and used to ask me: "Rosa, please go and open the door!" I had to protect my mother; she was afraid to open the door, so I had to go and open it, keeping at the same time my eyes on the glass of wine to see if a drop would miss. Then my mother would move the table and say: "See, he came and drank". Afterwards I closed the door.

Among the special Passover dishes there were some special small glasses for us, the children. My brother had a small cup. I had a small tin – I loved it a lot and kept it a long time, but eventually it broke too ; it was made of glass and had a handle. In that tin dad poured for me the wine.

The wine had to be kosher too, that is it had to be prepared in special receptacles by special people. During the war you couldn't find wine even two weeks before Seder, so mom prepared it from raisins. Adding water and sugar the raisins would ferment. The result would be a good, strong, sweet, very good wine.

The usual matzos were put in afikoman. The afikoman was a peculiar table cloth in which a piece of bread was enwrapped. My dad did this with utmost seriousness and then hid it. Dad wrapped it, hid it, we found it and he had to ransom it with a sum of money.

We were modest and didn't ask for much money, but my father got infuriated, because he couldn't gain any money on Pesah and argued with us to give him the afikoman without paying. But it was some sort of farce. After getting it back, he said a prayer, and divided the matzo among us.

At the end of the Seder we sang a song. But the children usually fall asleep until this part of the celebration. It was a sort of story: "And the lamb drank the water, and the wolf ate the lamb, and the fire burned the wolf, and the water extinguished the fire...". It sounded very nice and it had also a melody.

There is another custom, before Yom Kippur, when a bird is sacrificed. I remember it from my childhood. For the girls there was a single chicken, for my brother there was a cockerel, for my father a rooster and for mom a hen. The bird was rotated above the head – my dad did it for us – and a prayer was said.

Afterwards the birds were brought to the Chacham to be slaughtered. One bird was offered to a poor family, which didn't have anything to eat for the holiday. I didn't like this custom. I kept asking

myself, what did that bird do wrong to be sacrificed for me? There was nobody around to rotate de birds after the death of my father. These customs slowly get lost.

My father liked to observe all these customs and all the prayers. He used to wake up at 5 o'clock in the morning, he washed his hands, his face until half past five. He didn't drink anything. Then he went to the synagogue. He arrived there at 6 or 7 o'clock. Every day.

Then he came home and had a warm tea. Be it summer or winter. He went to pray even in the evening. People used to go to work during daytime, but he managed somehow even during the Ceausescu era [6](#) to go on Saturdays to the synagogue instead of going to work.

Afterward, when he remained home alone – my mom had died by then – he used to sit on a chair on the terrace we had in our apartment on the Saint Sava street and read all day long in the prayer book. And he couldn't even see that well anymore. I think he knew the prayers by heart, but he skimmed the book anyway.

In an autumn, after my father paralyzed, Morica, a friend of mine and once my Hebrew teacher came along and I asked him: "Pay attention, what is my dad saying? Does he tell it right? Because he tells things by heart in Hebrew." After the brain congestion these things still remained in his memory.

In his youth, dad used to go to a synagogue called the Tailor's Synagogue, because of his father, who was a tailor and who went there. When the synagogue was destroyed [3](#), the number of the Jews shrunk, and all other synagogues were destroyed, he went on the Kahane synagogue on the Stefan cel Mare Street.

This was the only synagogue which remained safe for several years. It was pretty big, with a large yard. They used to organize there the weddings. Eventually this synagogue was destroyed too and they built apartment houses in its place.

My father went to the synagogue till he was 93 years old, barely seeing and almost deaf... I convinced him not to go anymore in the mornings, for it was cold and rainy, and in the evenings I used to walk him to the synagogue and then back home.

From three to seven years I attended the Jewish kindergarten. It was called Gan Ailadin. I remember just one thing about that time. We used to get crayons for our drawings. And I would sit near my brother on a little desk. He drew once something extraordinary. I asked him what it was he had drawn and he told it was a well. My other sister went to another neighborhood kindergarten, to Trei Ierarhi.

On my birthday, children were invited over, sweets and fruits were served, they ate and played. As birthday gift you could get on that time a flower, a book, nothing big. I remember my father vividly... he loved me a lot. He would buy me a present early – a toy, a game, something – and then hide it on the cupboard, so that I couldn't get there.

On my birthday he would take it from there and bring it to me. I got games like: Loto, domino. Not games like chess, they were children's games. We would play then together. Loto can be played by four. Everyone had a cardboard with random numbers written on it.

In a bag were the numbers – I think 70 or 80 numbers. Numbers would be picked in turn from the bag and the one who had it on his cardboard would take it. For example someone would take number two from the bag. The one who had it on his cardboard would say: “Give it to me, because I have the two.” And the one who completed the first his cardboard was the winner of the game. That was Loto.

My father used to buy what was needed in the house, because he worked with merchants and goods. He would buy clothes for me and I liked it. What my father bought was perfect. Even nowadays when I have to buy something to wear I am very undecided.

I had once a beautiful doll, which would open and close her eyes. My brother and a friend of his wanted to see how the bowels looked like and what was in a human body, so they cut it open. They found just straws inside. I think it was childish curiosity.

Because mom would say: “Have you hurt yourselves? The bowels would come out of your finger.” We didn’t know what the entrails were and we were scared. I think I cried because of the doll but then I resigned, I had to face it.

All children on the Stephen the Great street attended the same school and they were all friends. The boys from school would come and play with my brother. One of them told him: “You know, when I’ll grow older, I’ll marry your sister.”

This guy – his first name was Zalman, I can’t remember his family name – was killed by the Iron Guard [2](#). He and his family moved to Galati; he was by then ten years old. We didn’t keep in touch anymore – we were children, we had a lot of friends around, so we forgot.

But I found out later that he was assassinated – my brother was 17/18 years old [in 1941-42], and his friend might have been the same age. Why? He was arrested because he participated in the Zionist society in Galati. He was transferred from a prison to another and got killed on the way. We found out about it just indirectly. But there is a museum in Bucharest, in one of the synagogues in Bucharest I once visited.

[Ms. Kaiserman probably refers to the Great Synagogue of Bucharest, from 1980 a museum hosting the exhibition entitled ‘The Memorial of Jewish Martyrs of Romania’. – Editor’s note] That is why I know that he was killed; he passed for a fugitive, so he got killed. I read it in the newspaper at the Jewish Museum in Bucharest.

When we were little children we went every summer to Iacobeni, a commune near Vatra Dornei. [Iacobeni is situated at 19km north of Vatra Dornei.] We went there and wherever we could find a free place, we rented a room. Because of my brother and sister, who were tender and needed fresh mountain air, we went almost every summer.

I was stronger, but they were delicate and needed strengthening. We bought milk, butter, cheese and sour cream from the woman who rented the room for us.

I remember mom fighting them to eat at least one spoonful of sour cream. For my side I liked sour cream a lot and ate usually well. My mom loved me for that. She herself was well-built – after the war she got cardiac problems and lost strength.

Iacobeni was a very nice place: the Bistrita river, the mountains, the fresh air, the mountain flowers – it was very beautiful. Local people were stock raisers, or they rented rooms – these were their main activities. Some of them also sculpted wood cut from the forest.

They cut with a little knife different models on fir tree branches. They even taught us to make those engravings. There were woodhouses near the Bistrita river, and the train drove us high on the mountains overlooking the valley.

My dad couldn't come with us on these excursions because of his shop keeping. Mom would go with us, and dad would come visit once a week. Knowing the time of my father's arrival – usually on Sunday – we would eye the train in the distance.

We had relatives, much older than mom and well-off, who went to Dorna [Vatra Dornei]. We would take a carriage and drive from Iacobeni to Dorna, to visit our relatives – Iacobeni was a small resort and it got at times boring. It isn't a resort anymore. On that time there were some baths there too, but we went there primarily for the air. Every summer till 1933. Then hard times followed, and we had financial problems. But in my childhood we were doing well.

There were many Jewish schools in Iassy, in almost each neighborhood, some of them even near our home. Only during the war, when we were kicked out of Romanian schools [7](#), the Jewish high school for boys and the one for girls were founded.

At home we, the children, would talk Romanian and our parents Yiddish. They wouldn't let us speak Yiddish, in order to learn to speak correctly Romanian. Even though the Jewish school was located nearby, my mother signed me up for a Romanian school, saying that we were living in Romania and I should learn Romanian.

The school was called Petru Rășcanu, and it was very close to our home. In this primary school the Jewish pupils had a separate teacher, who would come and teach Jewish Religion.

At a certain point in our religion class I've heard about King Solomon, about some battle, about the Exodus, about Canaan...and I told myself: "But this isn't religion, this is history. What does religion mean?" I concluded that all was just a legend.

And I tell myself, because I see people being so religious and I don't understand why: everything is created by man, not by God. It is of no avail that Moses writes about him climbing Mount Ararat [Moses received the Ten Commandment on Mount Sinai] and talking to God, and God asking him to write the Ten Commandments on two stone tablets. Yes, they were engraved on the stone tablets by Moses, but he invented them, they weren't spoken by any God.

But otherwise you couldn't convince people about a thing being good or bad. The Ten Commandments received by Moses from God and given to the Jewish people are still useful. What I disagree with concerning any religion, is that because of these religions people kill each other. I totally disagree with that. But me disagreeing with any religion is of no use either, because I am just like a smallant.

After primary school I attended a Romanian high school called Mihail Kogălniceanu for two years. I was a very good student and in primary school I even got awarded a prize. Even though I wasn't hard-working I was clever and quick to learn. In the first high school year – in the current system it

is the fifth grade – we had an older history teacher.

I can still remember that teacher giving us an exam in history. He said: “I will ask you about such-and-such atopic. If you write about it a page, all of you will get the highest mark. If you write four pages, you will get the lowest mark.” He was old and probably he didn’t have patience to read that many pages through anymore. I’ve always got high marks: I wrote few, focused and got a high mark. But I think because of him I don’t like history.

My schoolmates were Jewish as well as Romanian. By then boys and girls attended separate schools. Our neighbors were Jews as well as Romanians, and we remained friends with all of them.

All children played together. Colleagues and friends came by to visit, Christian friends came over and ate specific cakes made for special holidays. They respected us. For the Christian Passover there was a Romanian traditional cake. Just on Pesah we weren’t allowed to eat anything fermented, so we didn’t eat it.

After Pesah mom would prepare for us the same traditional cake, because we were children and craved for it. But I ate a lot of matzos as well ... through the school years, no matter what friends I had, I kept on eating it. They would even compete to decide which matzos were better.

You could prepare matzos out of sour cream – they bought sour cream, which didn’t contain much fat. They sifted corn flour on a wooden cardboard, covered it with fine muslin, poured the sour cream on it and rolled it on, so that the water got filtered and the sour cream thickened.

They were the best matzos and the most delicious cream. Instead of sour cream or cheese, there was another cream made of cocoa. Some housewives made this filling out of rice – sweetened rice and spices. My mother too baked this Romanian traditional cake and matzos filled with cheese, raisins or lemon peel.

Still, I smelled that something was against us. I was too young to realize it, but I remember one thing: I usually got from my parents one or two lei to buy me a pretzel on my way to school. At the street corner there was a man with a basket covered with white cloth – he would sell pretzels to the children.

One day the schoolmistress came in our class and I remember what she said: “Children, don’t buy any pretzels from that kike at the corner. I organized here for you a buffet, please buy only from the buffet.” I didn’t know at that time what a “kike” meant, but I felt insulted. I ask myself: why? I was educated to be friends with everybody and to respect other religions, even if I had another religion.

And still, what the schoolmistress Teodorescu said that day in school I remember even today. I know it was something that annoyed me.

Afterwards I still bought pretzels from the same man at the street corner. She could have said it differently: “Those crackers are dusty, please buy from us, because they are...” She said the word “kike” and that’s what I remember. This was in the third or fourth grade in primary school.

Because of financial reasons my parents had to withdraw me from school in my second high school grade – in the autumn of 1938. After that, I think it was 1940, Jewish children were kicked out of

school [7](#). The Jewish high school was founded afterwards, and my brother and sister went there.

My mother wanted each of her children to be learned, but she could afford to pay only for the other two. She couldn't afford to pay for me too. I don't blame her. We lived through hard times.

During the war you couldn't find work. We felt the change for sure. Firstly we couldn't pay off the school. Back then school wasn't free. And my brother was to go to school – my mother wanted him to become a physicist.

Because girls become anyway housewives, so she withdrew me from school. I started to broom the house, to clean it, to wash the dishes. The other girl, being the little one, had the ambition and eventually learned something.

I finished my high school on long distance. I couldn't do better. I finished high school after the 23rd of August [8](#) – I always say – “after the war”, but I didn't manage to go to the university. My sister and my brother did nevertheless well.

Wartime was awful. You weren't allowed to get out of the house except at certain hours in the morning and until certain hours in the evening. You weren't able to procure food only after nine o'clock in the morning and till five o'clock in the evening.

Moreover during the war you couldn't find bread to buy, so we made it at home. Every other week bread was baked. Peasants would come with a pouch with flour and sold it. My mother battered the bread and added potatoes to multiply it.

Potatoes were boiled, peeled, grated and battered together with the dough. It was a very tasteful bread – we called it ‘intermediate’. Despite all that modest situation of ours, we didn't die from hunger. But in Transnistria [5](#) people died from hunger.

The most important Iron Guard leaders [4](#) were in Bucharest. But some of them were in Iassy too. Their headquarters were situated near the cathedral. We lived on the Stefan cel Mare street, and that ‘nest’ of legionnaires was on the same street, but on the other side.

Once, in 1938-9 [more likely in 1940 – Editor's note], King Mihai was to come to Iassy [9](#). It was announced that no Jews were allowed to get out on the street. Probably because of Mihai's and the legionnaires' visit to Iassy.

Someone told me about a picture in the newspaper of King Mihai dressed with a green shirt and a cordon tied on his chest, like the Iron Guard. We obeyed and stayed at home. In that large yard where we lived, there was an iron door, which was closed.

A friend of my brother's, Sandu, lived on Stefan cel Mare street too. He grew tired of sitting by himself and considered coming to play with Pincu and talk to us. Some legionnaires who recognized him being a Jew caught him: “Kike, what are you doing on the street?” They took him to their ‘nest’ near the cathedral and beat him so hard, that it was a miracle that he escaped alive. He was a boy of 16.

- **During the war**

There are things I remember as if they were yesterday. I remember a plane flying over the city and throwing leaflets: "The army will come and fight off the Iron Guard" – Antonescu [10](#) was then Marshal of Romania. The Iron Guard was the worst danger for us.

I remember those leaflets falling everywhere on the ground. I took one, read aloud and was so excited. My friends admired me for that. We were so happy about Antonescu coming [10](#). But after that it was a disaster. He came and organized pogroms [1](#).

Let's say there were around 100.000 of inhabitants in Iassy before WWII. Romanian and Jews lived together. In our yard there were Jews and Christians as well. On the 29th of June they attacked all the neighborhoods where Jews lived.

They took them from Cuza Voda street, from Lapusneanu street, from all parts of Iassy to Stefan cel Mare street, which was the main street. There was the Pacurari neighborhood, the Niculina neighborhood, Podul Rosu – in each of these neighborhoods lived more Jews than Christians.

I can still hear it even today. In our yard there lived many families. It was a yard with many apartments and stories. Jews and Christians lived there together.

One morning, it was Sunday, they entered in the yard – they weren't dressed like soldiers – and shouted: "All Jews, come out of your houses!" I don't remember if anybody explained anything to us, but this is what stuck to my memory: if the Germans are against the Jews and they come by here on their way to Bessarabia, they don't trust us and they will send us to a labor camp.

Although it was summer – it was the 29th of July, a very warm day – we put on something warm, we took our arctics, because we didn't know where we were heading to and how long it was going to take. You never know when the war is going to be over. We didn't take food, we didn't take anything. We just put something more on: warm jackets and caps.

And we got out together. When we came out on the Stefan cel Mare street, which was a large street, armed people lined us up and then crowded us towards the police headquarters. There is a memorial plaque on Vasile Alecsandri street, on the wall of the former police headquarters commemorating the victims of this pogrom.

On my way to the police headquarters I already saw dead people laying on the ground. Some of my acquaintances were laying in puddles of blood.

From Stephen the Great street to the police headquarters isn't a long distance, but I remember seeing a lot of dead people. Mom never allowed us to go to a funeral. There was a superstition saying that if your parents were alive you aren't allowed to go neither to a cemetery nor to funerals. So we were somehow spared such unpleasant situations. At the police headquarters they crowded us, together with tens of other Jews from different parts of the city.

All our family were staying together, when I heard someone saying that women and children are to go home. Mom took us and we got to the gate. There was a police man. He looked at my brother and said: "This is not a child anymore. Get back!" And mom told my brother: "Go and stay with dad and don't go away from him!" The three of us arrived eventually home. Mom thought that only men were to go to labor camps.

So she took some valuable things from the house – some jewels and the rest of the money we still had – to bring them to my father. She left us, the girls, at home and got back the police station to look for my dad. But people were going in and coming out, some of them were brought there, the women were set free, it was... she couldn't get at him.

Someone even told her: "Go immediately home, because it's dangerous." This someone was a German. A German officer, who spoke to her in German. Mom knew very well German so she understood him, and came home.

My sister had a friend from the primary school. Her parents hid in their basement a Jewish family. Where they were living, somewhere near the Bahlui river, Jews and Christians lived together. When they saw what was happening on the street, they broke the fence and called the Jews in their house. They weren't caught. They were lucky.

Afterwards it was announced in that yard that they were delivering "free"-tickets. The "free"-ticket was a piece of paper, which read "free" and had a stamp on it. The people, who were near this office that delivered such tickets crowded to take them. And my father took my brother, got the "free"-ticket and came home.

Some of the people were set free with this ticket. And why were they delivering this "free"-tickets? So that the ones who got the ticket to announce the others who didn't, and lure them in this way to get out of their hiding. They said: "Without this ticket you can't go out". My mother went to an older neighbor, who lived above and told him: "Look, you are aged. When you are going to need the ticket, you can borrow mine".

And he didn't go to take the ticket, and because of that, he remained alive. That was a happy accident. Many said: "Go and take the ticket." And the ones, who went remained there and were killed, or were huddled in wagons and sent away. [Ms. Kaiserman is referring to the Death Trains. – Editor's note] They never came back.

After dad and my brother came home, we locked ourselves in the house, the windows were covered with blue paper – it was called "camouflage paper" – so that the light couldn't be seen outside during bombardments, and we huddled together without moving. In the afternoon, around half past four they came again in the yard and called out in Romanian. There were a lot of them.

Mom looked through that "camouflage paper" and said: "These are Saxons. They are tall and blond". This was her opinion. They were civilians, not soldiers. Someone shouted in Romanian: "Get out all Jews. Just the men, not the women. If you don't come out, we will kill you right away".

My brother got up and ran to the door, but my mom opposed him, holding the door with her hand and said: "They will kill us all. Don't go out. I don't allow you to". That's how he was saved. If they took him, they would have killed him at the police station, or he would have been sent in the wagons and... Although almost 12.000 people died in the pogrom, nobody from our family died. This is the story in short.

What happened to the people in the wagons [1](#) is another story. They were herded in those cattle wagons, all doors and windows nailed with boards, on the floor a bed of cowpat – they were after all cattle wagons – on the top of which they threw lime.

It was in the middle of the summer, the rooftop of the train growing hot ... it was terrible. On the route Iassy – Podu Iloaiei, in one of the wagons there was my future brother-in-law, Iancu Țucărman [interviewed by Centropa].

He told me that at a certain point they were sitting on corpses. Because in that wagon, which fitted only some cattle, they herded 130 to 150 people. They weren't even able to sit. They were standing leaned against each other.

And everybody was looking for a broken board at the window in order to get some fresh air. Those who couldn't keep calm died. They died in six to seven hours. After six-seven hours, when the doors were opened, just the ones who could still walk got out.

There were some puddles there, because the train didn't stop in the railroad station, but some other place. A peasant, who present there said, that they stuck their heads in the puddle to drink the water – and some died because of that.

There were some who got out naked. They tore their clothes off in that desperate moments. Then they were brought to different families in Podu Iloaiei and hosted there. My brother-in-law was hosted with other acquaintances too – they knew each other from Iassy.

What happened to a human being in eight hours! He had black hair and he lost all of it in those eight hours. I didn't know him and when my sister was engaged to him I kept asking: "Does he have red hair?" I didn't like red-hair people. I don't mind them anymore, but then I didn't like them. And she said: "No, I think he had black hair." He only got some hairs left on his head, here and there.

We found out about Auschwitz and Transnistria [5](#) in Iassy only after the Russians came...we didn't know about any of those things. We didn't have any newspapers or radios. We knew only what happened around us, in our city. When the Russians came, the Bessarabians started to return to Romania.

Because they didn't have anything to live from, many people, especially Jews, moved before WWII to Bessarabia. And for a year, until the beginning of the war, they did well there. But not all of them. Some of them, who were considered rich, or kulaks or whatever, were sent to Siberia.

The others, which were rather modest, remained there. Then Hitler came and Romania fought on Hitler's side in order to regain Bessarabia. The Jews were then taken and sent to Transnistria. When the Russians fought Hitler off and regained Bessarabia, many people returned to Romania, because they knew what Communism was like.

Many feared the Russian communists and came on this side without being Romanians. I knew Jews, who came back and told us what happened in Transnistria. We didn't know until then. My sister had a colleague in high school, who came, who fled Cernauti after the war. I myself knew other persons, who came from Cernauti.

### • After the war and later life

I went to knitting school around 1946-48. There were primary schools, complimentary schools, vocational schools, and Jewish high schools. Just across the street of the National Theatre of Iassy

there is today a school for deafpeople. This was once the building of the Jewish Community of lassy.

There was the kindergarten we attended too, the primary school, the complementary school and the trade school – it was called “The Culture”. They trained professionals: tailors, iron men, carpenters, shoemakers, dressmakers, embroiders – what was modern at that time. Afterwards they organized some workshops and I went to learn knitting. Others learned tailoring. There were even students coming to learn a trade. I learned knitting.

I happened to know a lady, she was the forewoman there, who came from Cernauti. This lady, who worked for the big and famous knitting factory Hermes, told me, that she was thrown out of Cernauti, or out of some little town near Cernauti and sent with only her clothes to Transnistria.

She was pregnant by then. They forced them to walk, day and night. Who fell, was shot and left there. She beared a child while walking, just like that, in her trousers, and while bearing she had to keep going – she beared a dead child. Afterwards she wanted to have a baby and she had one, but it was very difficult.

When she came here, she opened a workshop with some kind of knitting machines. I learned the trade there. In 1948 the educational system was reorganized [11](#). These workshops were Jewish – all of them were disbanded, and belonged to the state.

I learned knitting at a machine, where I did hemstitches with a needle. It was a knitting machine, but it was big, so I had to stand and go back and forth with a hand crank, which moved all needles and made the loops. If you wanted you could pass one loop above the other and little holes were formed. It wasn't complicated.

Now it's no longer worth knitting. But during Ceausescu's [6](#) times all women knew how to knit. Because there weren't any clothes. I knitted clothes for my nephew. I knitted for him trousers, shorties, caps, jackets.

I remember once being able to buy some scarves, I undid them and made a new jacket for me, one I used to go to work with. I got it cleaned every Saturday evening or Sunday in order to have it clean for Monday. I didn't have any other clothes.

Everybody tried to learn something after the war, tried to make himself a social status. Beginning with 1949 I started to work as a typist. I worked at the town hall – back then it was called the “Popular Council” –, we were there Jews and Romanians, we were like a family, we helped each other. I didn't hate anybody and I wasn't hated, on the contrary, I was welcomed and appreciated.

I did the high school in the mean time. I applied for distance education, but you had to take some evening classes. It was a given number of hours and we went almost every evening to high school and had classes. There were colleagues of mine from the town hall, who didn't finish their education and we went together. We formed a group, we befriended.

I finished high school after 1949. I had a maturity exam, it wasn't called High School Baccalaureate when I finished school. I had on that time books translated from Russian that I had to learn from: Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry books.

Some of them were so badly translated, that you had to try very hard to understand, what you were reading. In my childhood [before WWII] there were more authors of schoolbooks. Every teacher had his own favorite author and the beginning of school you got a list: for Mathematics author such-and-such, for Physics author such-and-such etc. This was until 1948, when the international schoolbooks were introduced [11](#).

After finishing high school I took some librarian courses. Actually there were different courses after the war so that people would learn a trade and work. And they worked. There were bookkeeping courses, and some others. I got in the librarian class – it was a coincidence.

After ten years [beginning with 1959], I got a job as librarian and worked in different schools in lassy. I got along well with my colleagues, with the whole staff. Even today there are persons, who recognize me and great me: former pupils, former colleagues, teachers.

I was a librarian at School nr. 12, today it is called the School nr. 33. It wasn't far from the town center. Back then it was an experimental school, because there were different professors for each subject even in the primary school. They were very good professors, it was a so-called special school.

But eventually it didn't work and they changed the system to the old one with only one teacher for one class. A teacher has a different kind of training and she knows how to hold the hand of the pupil when teaching him to write.

At this school we had an extraordinary headmistress. Badrajean Elena was her name. She used to organize now and then a party. We also used to celebrate birthdays and name days, Saint John, Saint Mary – but they didn't call it Saint – New Years Eve, Christmas Tree.

Everyone would bring something delicious, and we ate together. Despite the general need. The headmistress would ask: "What can you bring?" "You are going to bring sausage" – which you could hardly get. "You bring horse radish. You make boeuf salad." Every lady wanted to show that she was a good housewife. Cake would be made. It was a wonderful time of my life. The rest of it was unfortunately spent waiting in the line trying to buy something to eat.

My colleague Olguta and I were sent by the school inspectorate to take some specialized library courses in Bucharest. After our homecoming the Ministry of Education made it possible for us to teach others library courses in the whole region of Moldavia. I retired in 1983.

My father worked after the war too. He administered a building. Thanks to my brother, who got him on a building yard, where he was some kind of keeper. When he turned 60 they weren't allowed to have him there anymore. He retired with 15 years of work.

That many years could he gather from the documents. After losing the money from the business he had, he was hired as a bookkeeper in a factory and could gather some 15 years from there. So he had a small pension, but it was good he had one at all.

His writing was beautiful and he was a very good bookkeeper. After he didn't go to work anymore, my brother and I, began to work and keep the house. He had a jotter where he noted every day what he bought or what he spent.

My parents would go together to the cinema. Until the television appeared on the market the cinema was the only amusement. They didn't have television in the house. Everybody went to the movies. The movie theaters were always overcrowded. We queued for tickets, we sat sometimes on the ground, or on the stairs, because we couldn't get a chair.

Pincu, my brother, finished the polytechnic institute in Iassy. He is an engineer. He has a son, Alfred Kaiserman. Daniela, his wife, comes from Bucharest and is Jewish too. Actually her parents lived in Bucharest, but her grandparents were from Iassy.

So we knew each other from our childhood. Alfred and his wife lived here in Iassy, but two years after finishing university – around 1986 – they emigrated to Israel. After a year and a half they moved again to Germany and then to Belgium.

They live in Bruxelles. They have a boy and a girl. The little boy – for me he is still a little boy – is called Ronen. The girl is called Astrid – reminding of Princess Astrid of Holland. The boy was born in Israel. The girl in Germany.

The nephews visit every year their grandparents, and they talk and read in Romanian. I mean, the boy slower, he searches for the right words, but the girl speaks fluently. I am very glad that, compared with the actual generation who lives here, they read a lot of literature: in German, in English and in French. Now

[in 2006] the boy is studying, he is 18 years and a half, the girl is 15 and a half. She attends a high school in Bruxelles called the International High School where they teach in English and where they accept only exceptional children.

Clarisa, my sister studied industrial chemistry. There was a very good chemistry teacher at the Oltea Doamna high school [the actual high school „Mihai Eminescu” in Iassy], the high school my sister attended, so that almost all girls, but two or three who studied mathematics, studied chemistry.

They had very good teachers and because of that all pupils went to university. After university, my sister was assigned to Bucharest. She worked in this field at a Research Institute. She met her husband, Iancu Tucurman, in Bucharest thanks to family acquaintances. They had a religious ceremony. My brother-in-law was an agronomist. He worked at that time at a farm near Suceava, but he had an ID from Bucharest. She had an ID from Iassy.

So they organized the wedding in Iassy, both the religious ceremony and the civil marriage. The religious ceremony took place in our house. We had that big house in Sfântul Sava neighbourhood, with large rooms, so we organized it there. It was hardly a year after mom died, so it was a modest wedding, but the rabbi was present.

Nowadays they still organize religious ceremonies, but back then, if two persons belonging to different religious communities were to be married, nobody accepted it, neither the synagogue nor the church. I remember once being able to attend a wedding of some friends.

Rabbi Rosen [12](#) promised to approve their marriage. The father of the girl was Jewish, but her mother wasn't. They say, you inherit your mother, not your father. You know for sure who your mother is, saying who your father is...is problematic.

All accepted to organize a religious marriage, in Hebrew, but it wasn't approved. They made only the civil marriage, afterwards they invited everybody to lunch, where she dressed like a bride and prepared everything as for a wedding.

We moved from Stephen the Great street to a house on Sfântul Sava street, which had a bathroom and a WC inside. It was much better. It wasn't our house, we got it through the Dwelling Service. I'll explain how this worked. A census of all existing apartments in the whole country was made around 1949. People were hired to do this job. They drew the plans of all apartments from scratch. Afterwards people would go to the Dwelling Service and apply for an apartment.

Because flats weren't built by then, they decided that every person has the right to eight square meters. If they were husband and wife they had to live in one room. If they had two rooms and no children, one room was taken from them, and they had to host a renter. If they had a boy and a girl, they had the right for separate rooms, one for the boy and one for the girl. That's how apartments were allocated, that's the way this Dwelling Service worked.

Some of the apartments were freed in time. When I moved for instance from Stefan cel Mare to Sfântul Sava, a family had just left from there. I had a kitchen and a bathroom there.

Afterwards my sister was assigned to Bucharest, my brother got married and moved to his wife's apartment and I remained with my parents. I had the right to a room and my parents to another one. We rented that apartment. But there was a law regarding the rent payment too.

There were stoves, but you couldn't find firewood anymore, so we bought a gas stove, which had to burn day and night, otherwise it got cold immediately and my father was old. Sometimes the stove clogged and I had to stave it in. I had to put my hand right to its end, and in the end I got all dirty. And it was just the moment I had to go school. Dreadful.

I think I lived for 20 years in that house. Meanwhile the Dwelling Service was disbanded, because a lot of people moved in apartment houses. It was then when I bought this apartment, and moved in with dad. This apartment wasn't offered to me by the state.

I bought it from start on. I had a part of the money I needed to for it, I borrowed a part from CEC and my siblings helped me too. I don't know if someone else moved in on Sfântul Sava street after I left, I don't think so. Afterwards they destroyed it.

Mom died on Sfântul Sava street in 1965. My father died 20 years later. He died here, in this apartment. He had only one concern in his later years. To go to the prayer house. And not to mix the meat with the milk. I do the same today. I cannot eat chicken with sour cream and I wouldn't cook like that.

When someone dies, you have to hire an experienced man, who will read prayers and light candle after candle all night, until the next day, when the funeral takes place. The funeral was organized according to the Jewish Tradition. If you came at the cemetery after the dead person was buried you had to eat a hard-boiled egg sprinkled with ash and a pretzel.

We didn't have any ash at my dad's funeral, but at mom's funeral there was some. My father observed all traditions. When I came hungry at mom's funeral, and ate the hard-boiled egg and the pretzel I was amazed to discover that the egg and the pretzel were no different from the usual

ones. But my brother couldn't eat them. It was like any other boiled egg, the difference is that it is boiled on ash, on embers, the egg is put in coal, and mixed with the ash.

We sat shivah especially for mom. We sat shivah for dad only the period when people came and consoled us. But when the people left I got up. It is very difficult to sit shivah. You have to sit on the ground – well you can put a pad, but you have to sit for hours, and you go stiff, your legs hurt. You don't have to sit on Friday and Saturday – more exactly from Friday evening until Saturday evening.

And there is the custom, that every evening, instead of going as usual to the synagogue, ten men go to the house of the deceased person and pray there.

Every evening and every morning. Shivah – shivah means seven in Hebrew – lasts for seven days. After these seven days the ten men come to the house again, say the prayer, take you outside the house, go around the house – which means that you lead the soul, who is leaving the house.

The mourning is very hard. You are not allowed to wash yourself for a month, for 30 days. That was the most difficult thing for me. And I think you were allowed to change your clothes only on Saturday. The mourning lasts a year – you are not allowed to listen to music, to go to a concert or to a party during this time.

The wearing of mourning clothes is not compulsory – you don't have to wear black clothes, but have to wear a black apron fastened like a belt, which you can take down Friday evening. You don't have to wear mourning clothes on Saturdays and on feasts. Kadish is to be said for 11 months.

My brother said it too, but worked and couldn't go in the morning, so we hired someone, who said it for him. And there was an annual commemoration with prayers at the synagogue and with donations to poor people.

I wasn't a party member. Sometimes you were forced by the circumstances to keep your job. But I didn't have an important position, so there was no need to fire me if I wasn't a party member. I didn't want to belong to the party, because we considered emigrating to Israel. I couldn't say I wanted to be a party member, but I also that I want to emigrate to Israel.

They kept coming with offers, but I kept refusing. Afterwards they said that only the workers can be party members and they left me alone. I was lucky. Neither my sister nor my brother-in-law were party members. Only my brother. But he was forced to become one at his work. Someone told me once: "If you are not with us, you are against us."

In fact Ceausescu [6](#) himself was an antisemite. If you wanted to have a more important job in a leading position, you had to change your name, because the Jewish name wasn't in the good books. On that time many applied for emigrating to Israel.

Someone got the approval, the other didn't. We asked ourselves: "On what basis? How do they analyse these records?" „Why does one get the approval and another one doesn't?" All depended on the height of the police man. If he was small he couldn't reach the high shelf, so the low shelf got the approval. This was a common joke. There was no logic in these approvals and denials. For instance I had a friend. She had three sisters.

The emigration of their father was approved, and the girls with their mother left only 15 or 20 years later, because they didn't get the approval. Do you think they were the only ones? I happened to know other families, who experienced the same thing. I remember a young family, they were desperate... Both of them applied for emigration, but by the time of their appliance they weren't married yet. Then they knew each other, got married, had a baby and then the approvals were offered.

He got the approval, but she didn't. He left and she remained crying here with a little child, and after the war there were hard times: famine and other insufficiencies, and it was very difficult. I remember dialogues with our relatives from Israel who visited Romania. Before leaving the house I would say: „I'll take a bag, maybe I'll find something.“ „What do you want to find? Can't go to buy something?“ „Yes, I will buy, but first I have to find something to buy.“

A lot of people left for Israel around 1959-60. Afterwards rather infrequent. Eventually we remained here. My brother and sister wanted to study, to finish university and after that they didn't want to get fired from their jobs. One was afraid that in the end one would end up homeless.

The engineer and the physicist got approvals especially hard. After applying for emigration, they could have kept you waiting for three or four years and gradually demote you. Seeing that others were fired from their jobs and hired to do the hard jobs – they could be scavengers for ten years, until their emigration was approved – my brother and sister gave up and decided to stay.

My parents got old and didn't have the courage anymore. They should have started from the beginning there. Mom didn't want to part with any child: „No one leaves. We stay together.“

I was only one time in Israel. My father died in 1985 and I left afterwards, but it was still before the Revolution [13](#). I had only one cousin (nephew) in Israel, Grinberg Dorel [his mother was actually Ms. Kaiserman's cousin. – Editor's note]. He died in the meantime too.

I have many friends in Israel. I visited and lived in 20 houses during my time in Israel. In Haifa three friends, in Ranana, in Tel Aviv, I stayed in Nathania at my cousin and then at his mother's place.

I was driven with the car all time. I couldn't have managed it alone. I liked a lot what I've seen. It was a feeling hard to explain. Especially when you arrive in Jerusalem – it seems as if something floats through the air. The past and the present...

To see on what people managed to built the cities and the roads... I travelled from north to south, I was at the Red Sea too. On the way to the Red Sea the road is built on sand dunes. I kept watching and wondering – I couldn't believe it. You could see sand dunes right and left and the road twisted and turned to the first oasis.

The Red Sea makes an extraordinary impression on you. I visited an underwater-museum, a building made of glass. You descended with a sort of ladder until you get on the seabed. On the seabed is this natural museum, and you can see around you all sorts of big and small and colored fish – I haven't seen in my whole life such fish in yellow and mauve, black and white... A splendor.

And on the seaside there are some hotels, so high that you cannot see their top. One is called King David, the other the Queen of Sheba... That place was called Eilat, but we stayed some at other place, we didn't have that much money, and my friend wasn't rich either – we stayed in some

tents. If there wasn't any air conditioning we wouldn't have resisted on that weather- there were 40 degrees Celsius.

We drove to the nearest place from Egypt. We were in that town on the border with former Egypt - it wasn't yet retrocede to Egypt. [Gaza, which was during 1967-1994 under Israel's administration. - Editor's note]. We could go near the soldier who stood at the border between the lands.

We descended with an elevator into a cave eroded by the water and took a walk in that cave. We have seen extraordinary things there. Of all things I have an interest in all flowers and living creatures. They are fascinating.

I liked Nathania most of all cities. I saw there jewelries for the first time in my life- I hadn't seen real jewelries shops until then. I don't wear jewelries, I don't have any, but I like them. And I would stop in front of a showcase and couldn't walk further. I stayed in front of the shop and admired them.

People say Haifa is a beautiful city. I didn't like Haifa that much but it is indeed beautiful. Once we drove from Tel Aviv to Haifa on the seashore. At a certain point you can see mountings - not like the Romanian mountains with pine trees, but bald mountains.

And there are some nests, like bird nests, that are suspended on these mountains - they were human dwellings. Everything is built on the top of the mountain, not in the valley, as cities are built in Romania. I visited also a Moroccan house. I can't remember which friend of mine had a Moroccan friend, and she brought me to her, to see how Moroccan people live [Jews who came from Morocco].

In Haifa we went with some friends to a flower exhibition. What beautiful flowers there were... It wasn't a permanent exhibition, it had closed the following day. What flowers, what aromas, what colors... there were flowers from all over the world.

Before going to Israel, I was in an organized excursion: Prague, Warsaw, Leningrad [Leningrad was the name applied during most of the Communist period (1924-91) to Saint Petersburg. - Editor's note], Moscow. I very much liked Prague, the golden city.

We walked through Prague until 12 o'clock in the night - we were a whole group -, I went on the street and had the impression that I knew those places. That was my feeling - except that the city is wonderful.

We left the darkness in Romania and saw there illuminated and clean streets... You couldn't see anything on the ground, not even a leaf or a cigarette butt - it was impossible to find such things in Prague. I learned there how to use a bus ticket two times. You bought a ticket made of thin paper, which the ticket collector perforated. When you came home, you moistured it, pressed it and reused it.

Leningrad is an elegant city. First of all you must walk on Neva's bank and see the bridges lifting at nighttime and letting ships pass. I visited also Petrodvorets, a place at the Baltic Sea where the Tsar Peter the Great used to live.

There is a garden with statues, all of them plated with gold. In autumn, when it gets colder, all statues are covered, enwrapped and kept safe. And there were many fountains. We were told, that

the water falls from a high place and it falls with such power, that no energy is used for the functioning of these fountains.

Our guide wanted to tell us something secretly and called us to go with her under a tree with artificial foliage and gravel on the ground. I don't know who walked on a stone and water started to spring from the ground. She wanted to make fun of us. I was so mad at her... but that tree was impressive.

In Moscow we had the opportunity to go either at the Theatre or at a Russian ballet performance, which is very famous, or at the circus. Some preferred the circus, some the theatre. Our group went to the circus. And before getting in, we walked through a big park, with a large lake with smooth water.

We liked the circus show, but it got very late, so the driver called us out to go to the hotel. And we walked again through the park. We could hear opera music and operettas, and on that lake we saw a music show and lights, and couldn't leave that spot.

There were fountains, the light coming from the ground. You got the impression that the water was dancing. And all this went simultaneous with the music they sang, which kept changing. It was enchanting.

I think it is something unique in the world. But I'm not sure, I didn't travel that much. In Warsaw they brought us to a Zoo, where animals lived free. For example, I saw bears and elephants with untied feet walking on a land, which belonged to them. But every piece of land was surrounded by a deep ditch, nails were therein, to hurt animals if they wanted to escape. I was impressed by this place, where animals weren't captive in a cage – I pity them when I see them caged.

I have seen many beautiful things. It's good that I didn't forget these experiences. When I want to think of something nice, I think of Leningrad, of Prague and of Israel.

I personally don't go to the synagogue. Unmarried women don't belong there. I observe the tradition, but not in the way my parents did it. When my father lived we lit candles on Hanukkah, but now, being alone, I don't light any. What traditions do I observe? Yesterday was for instance the Day of Atonement [Yom Kippur].

On this feast you have to repent for your sins and pray for the prolongation of your life. It is a fasting day, which lasts from seven in the morning until seven o'clock the following day. You are not even allowed to drink water, so it is a fasting day.

We observe this tradition out of habit. We don't believe in it. I too fasted yesterday, but I am very sick, I gathered a bag of diseases and I took one of my medicines with some water – otherwise my heart stops and there can be complications.

I usually go to the Club on Tuesday and on Thursday before lunch. We, some elderly women, gather in a room of the Jewish Community of Łódź, we play rummy, drink tea or coffee, and eat cookies or biscuits, we talk to each other, we get to know each other better, become friends. When I go to the Club I eat for lunch at the canteen – which is in the same building.

I attend every conference they organize at the Community, they are very interesting. The last conference was last Sunday. It was about Jewish personalities from Iasi. And a lot of Christians attended this conference, not only Jews.

I invite, for instance, every time one of my physicists– I have more female physicist and all of them are beautiful and good-hearted, I love them all – because this lady is very affectionate and she thanks me every time. “Please tell me every time.

I won’t come only if I can’t.” Last week there were more speakers. But my physicist came with a bouquet of flowers only for me. All talked, but I was the only one to leave with a bouquet. It was a very expensive bouquet, I think, the flowers were Imperial Lilies, their fragrance lasted for a week.

Do you know what women say? I don’t have enough time. I do all my housekeeping alone, rarely is there someone who helps me shake out my carpet. But now my leg is hurting and I can barely bend. It’s much harder, but I still do it alone. I wash all my clothes, go shopping, cook.

I don’t like to make visits, and I don’t go out in the afternoon or in the evening. I do everything in the morning. I usually wake up early and do a difficult job, like washing the laundry, as I did this morning. Not all of them at once, just a few.

Or another morning I cooked 3 kilos of eggplants. I had to stand a lot, and my legs are the problem. I made some eggplant salad, and I put the rest in two separate bags in the deepfreeze. Some other time I do something else – cooking, cleaning, shopping.

The day before yesterday or yesterday it rained a lot, so I didn’t get out at all. My neighbor brought me a loaf bread. It was my plan to buy bread but it rained so she brought it this morning for me.

I got out today and made some shopping, I prepared some things again for the morning chores. And since I wake up at four or five o’clock, I have plenty of time to work. Afterwards I take a shower, I get dressed and go to the Club.

- **Glossary:**

## **1 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.

## **2 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).

### **3 Systematic demolitions**

The passing of the Law for the Systematization of Towns and Villages in 1974 incited a large-scale demolition of Romanian towns and villages. The great earthquake of 4th March 1977 damaged many buildings and was seen as a justification for the demolition of many monuments. By the end of 1989, the time of the fall of the Ceausescu regime, at least 29 towns had been completely restructured, 37 were in the process of being restructured, and the rural systematization had claimed its first toll: some demolished villages north of Bucharest.

Between 1977 and 1989, Bucharest was at the mercy of the dictator, whose mere gestures were interpreted as direct orders and could lead to the immediate disappearance of certain houses or certain areas. Old houses and quarters, the so-called imperialist-capitalist architecture, had to vanish in order to make room for the great urban achievements of Socialism as it competed with the USSR and North Korea.

### **4 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.

### **5 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.

## **6 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.

## **7 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 18-40 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.

## **8 23 August 1944**

On that day the Romanian Army switched sides and changed its World War II alliances, which resulted in the state of war against the German Third Reich. The Royal head of the Romanian state, King Michael I, arrested the head of government, Marshal Ion Antonescu, who was unwilling to accept an unconditional surrender to the Allies.

## **9 King Michael (b**

1921): Son of King Carol II, King of Romania from 1927-1930 under regency and from 1940-1947. When Carol II abdicated in 1940 Michael became king again but he only had a formal role in state affairs during Antonescu's dictatorial regime, which he overthrew in 1944. Michael turned Romania against fascist Germany and concluded an armistice with the Allied Powers. King Michael opposed the "sovietization" of Romania after World War II.

When a communist regime was established in Romania in 1947, he was overthrown and exiled, and he was stripped from his Romanian citizenship a year later. Since the collapse of the communist rule in Romania in 1989, he has visited the country several times and his citizenship was restored in 1997.

## **10 Antonescu, Ion (1882-1946)**

Political and military leader of the Romanian state, president of the Ministers' Council from 1940 to 1944. In 1940 he formed a coalition with the Legionary leaders. From 1941 he introduced a dictatorial regime that continued to pursue the depreciation of the Romanian political system started by King Carol II.

His strong anti-Semitic beliefs led to the persecution, deportation and killing of many Jews in Romania. He was arrested on 23rd August 1944 and sent into prison in the USSR until he was put on trial in the election year of 1946. He was sentenced to death for his crimes as a war criminal and shot in the same year.

## **11 Educational reform in Romania in 1948**

Based on the new Romanian constitution, introduced in 1948, the 1948 'educational reform' stated that public education is organized by the state only, and that public education is secular (this way the denominational and private schools were outlawed, and were soon nationalized), and at the same time it introduced compulsory and free elementary education for everyone.

According to the law it was compulsory to learn the Romanian language from the 1st grade, and in place of the French or Italian language the Russian language was introduced from the 4th grade.

The compulsory elementary school became a 7-grade school, and was followed by a 4-grade high school.

According to the educational reform, ownership of school buildings, dormitories, canteens was transferred to the state, and the Ministry of Public Education became their administrant.

## **12 Rosen, Moses (1912-1994)**

Chief Rabbi of Romania and president of the Association of Jewish Religious Communities during communism. A controversial figure of the postwar Romanian Jewish public life.

On the one hand he was criticized because of his connections with several leaders of the Romanian communist regime, on the other hand even his critics recognized his great efforts in the interest of Romanian Jews. He was elected chief rabbi of Romania in 1948 and fulfilled this function till his death in 1994.

During this period he organized the religious and cultural education of Jewish youth and facilitated the emigration to Israel by using his influence. His efforts made possible the launch of the only Romanian Jewish newspaper, Revista Cultului Mozaic (Realitatea Evreiască after 1995) in 1956.

As the leader of Romanian Israelites he was a permanent member of the Romanian Parliament from 1957-1989. He was member of the Executive Board of the Jewish World Congress. His works on Judaist issues were published in Romanian, Hebrew and English.

## **13 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.