

Leizer Finchelstein's Census Certificate



This is a certificate I received after a census of the Jewish population in Iasi. The census was performed in June 1942 as a result of the anti-Jewish measures of that period.

Anti-Semitism permeated the air before the war broke out, but we lived in the Jewish quarter and didn't experience these manifestations very directly. If we left the neighborhood, we were verbally abused by some Christian neighbors. We were called 'jidani.' In addition to that, there were also the anti-Semitic publications: "Porunca Vremii" [The Time's Commandment], "Sfarma Piatra" [Break-Stone]. I can confess that I even sold newspapers for a while. I was unemployed at a certain point and I was hired to sell newspapers at a newspaper stand. So I was forced to deploy these newspapers for all to see. They were all filled with caricatures of Jews with hooked noses. It was also from those newspapers that I learned of Hitler and the situation of Jews in Germany, but it was only later, after the war, that I learned of the concentration camps. In any case, at that time it seemed unimaginable for me that the Germans, with such a developed civilization, could perform such horrible deeds.

The anti-Jewish laws had no direct effect on my family's life. Since we worked in various trades, we weren't affected by these measures. We kept working, for we worked for Jews like ourselves. Before the war, I worked for almost 2 years for a foreman; except for this period, I worked with my father, and father had a plethora of clients who had rooms for rent

I wore the yellow star during the war. There was no Jew in those days who didn't have to wear the yellow star. I still keep it to this day. The yellow star was made from a piece of cloth sewn on a black background so that it would be visible.

Bombing runs were frequent, so that we mostly stayed in underground cellars. In the morning, at daybreak, when we went out of those cellars and saw that we were still alive and our property intact, we were pleased that we escaped with our lives. We always heard tell that a bomb had fallen at Podul de Fier [Iron Bridge], in the Pacurari neighborhood, near the Hala [neighborhoods in Iasi], at the gas depot, and that this or that person had died. Then, after 9 o'clock [in the morning], you could go out of the house, Jews weren't allowed to go to the market whenever they wanted. We went to the bakery with the bread ration book and received our ration. You couldn't buy as much bread as you wanted or as much as you needed. Nobody knew what the following day had in store. And this didn't last for a day, it lasted for so many years. We lived with death beside us, as they say. In addition to that, there was a lot of filth.