

Lazar Copolovici And Friends



Here you can see me (first from right) next to a friend of mine, Zuli Harabagiu, who lives in Paris now (in the middle). Next to him is Lazar Copolovici, a victim of the death train in 1941. His brother, Moise Copolovici, who is not in the picture, also died in the death trains. Moise was born one year after Lazar. This picture was taken in January 1940.

Although I left Iasi after I graduated from university in 1948, even today I can feel some kind of love for my birthplace with its special wonders. It was not a crowded city. It had about 150,000 inhabitants. The atmosphere was very nice until 1938-1939. We didn't even know... there was no difference between Christians, Jews or any other ethnic groups. I cannot say that I felt any inappropriate attitude directed towards me as a Jew in elementary or secondary school. We were Romanians too. We all had Romanian citizenship. We got along very well in school as well.

We had no problems until we started to feel a drift of anti-Semitism due to the Goga-Cuza government, all the more considering that Professor Cuza came from Iasi. I remember that as early as 1939, when I was living on the Sarariei Street, one morning groups of students and of – I would call them citizens for want of a better word – broke the windows of every Jewish shop.

The war broke on 22nd June 1941. A week later the pogrom took place in Iasi which would not spare me either. One third of Iasi's population was Jewish, that is, almost 45,000 people. And we all had a very pleasant life. On 29th June 1941 we found ourselves thrown in trains or killed on the street. It was like a cold shower. It was unexpected. There were frightfully few cases when nice people warned their neighbors and took them in their houses. It was a big question mark as to how this could happen in Iasi where we had lived until the war and till that day that turned into

doomsday for many of us. Twelve members of my family died. Seven or eight of my colleagues, my friends died. They were all exterminated in the death trains.