

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

L.I. ANONYMOUS

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Josey G. Fisher

Date: November 4, 1984

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Gratz College

Melrose Park, PA 19027

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LI - Anonymous [interviewee]

JF - Josey G. Fisher [interviewer]

Date: November 4, 1984

Tape one, side one:

JF: Could you tell me where and when you were born and a little bit about your family?

LI: Yes, my parents lived in Bechstein [phonetic] in Bucharest. My mother was alone. No one from her family was there. Then she came in the little town of Husi which is near Jassy in Moldavia.

JF: Do you know how to spell the name of that little town?

LI: That little town is H-U-S-I, but S has a cedilla and then the pronunciation is Hoosh.

JF: And that is near Jassy?

LI: Yes.

JF: So, you were born in Bucharest?

LI: No.

JF: In the small town?

LI: In the small town, where my mother's family was, in their home where my grandparents were and my aunts and uncles.

JF: What year was this that you were born?

LI: In 1923, in November.

JF: And both of your parents were living there at the time?

LI: No, my parents didn't. My parents lived in Bucharest.

JF: She just went home to have you?

LI: Yes, to be with her family when she will deliver me.

JF: I see.

LI: And that was a very hard thing, because the doctor there was a very good one who was young and good but didn't have the instruments needed to deliver, to make the delivery, and she was three days to do that, and she was in a very bad situation. She had an infection, probably after that and she never again became pregnant.

JF: So, you were the only child.

LI: I remained the only child, and a daughter, in spite of the fact that my father wanted very much, and only, a son, and he didn't believe that the child is a daughter. He came with a train to see that it was a joke or not a joke. And, after that, he loved me very much, very, very much. He was very tender and very understandful and very good.

JF: Did you and your mother, then go back to Bucharest?

LI: Yes, immediately, in two weeks. I came when I was two weeks old, I came in Bucharest.

JF: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents and what their background was?

LI: Yes, my mother taught French and, what else? Drawing, because she used, after finishing the school, she quit, she learned painting, and I can show you two paintings here done by herself.

JF: She was an educated woman?

LI: Yes, and she was very skilled in sewing and painting.

JF: In sewing and painting? Did she have any difficulty getting her education in Romania at that time?

LI: She had her education only, sort of *Gymnasium*.

JF: From the *Gymnasium*?

LI: Yes, she was the best in her school, and she can have some friends, but always she was stopped. It was not visiting between her Romanian friends, it was not visiting in their homes. They were very friendly at school, but that was all.

JF: You are talking about her non-Jewish Romanian friends? She could not go back and forth between the homes?

LI: Yes, but sometimes they were very good, see, because of the grand-grandfather who was dealing very well with the most important figure in that little town. I told you about my grand-grandfather who came from Russia.

JF: He came from Russia, and can you tell me a little bit about what he did in Romania when he came from Russia?

LI: That I cannot tell you exactly. He worked for a while. He married my grand-grandmother, and he was dealing very well in commerce, I think.

JF: And, he was friendly with...?

LI: With the best figure there because he was very cute and outgoing and a good singer and a good player and joyful and he was very friendly with them. I think that he helped them in many ways.

JF: You are talking about the mayor or the political head?

LI: Yes, the political head, the army head. The mayor, like you said, yes.

JF: Was this a military head or an elected official?

LI: I don't know. The mayor. But it was a very little town. It was interesting that in that little town was the family and was born the renowned captain of the Iron Guard. In that little town was that family. My uncle, my mother's brother, who taught German, but the captain's father was a teacher of German language.

JF: Your mother's brother was taught German by the father of the head of the Iron Guard?

LI: Yes.

JF: You are referring now to the head of the Iron Guard during the war?

LI: Yes, but in that particular time was only a family, a family of teachers, who were very nationalistic, very much chauvinistic and nationalistic.

JF: Was this Sima? Horia Sima?

LI: No. it was Corneliu Codreanu¹ he was the captain. Horia Sima was after him.

JF: After him?

LI: After he died.

JF: Okay. Your great-grandfather, then, was a Jew who was accepted by the establishment?

LI: Yes, because he was very useful for them.

JF: Was this an unusual situation in Romania during that time?

LI: Yes, somehow. But they accepted, some cultivated. Some of them were sufficiently intelligent to see that that is a good relationship. They accepted in some amount. He was not a friend of their family totally.

JF: It wasn't a social relationship, then?

LI: They were in some--you know, it was a ball. He was in that ball a good figure. He played cards with them. He was reliable for some--to gave them ideas of what to do with this and that in commerce.

JF: He gave them advice?

LI: Advice.

JF: They consulted with him.

LI: Consulted, yes.

JF: And so, there was socialization, plus he had this role like an advisor.

LI: Yes.

JF: Were any other people in the town in this position, or was this a very unique kind of situation?

LI: No, he was not absolutely unique, but there were some of them who were not accepted in the family, as you have a very good friend, and you are seeing here and there when if it is a holiday or a birthday, and you are inviting him. No. That was some sort of club, to say so. They were sitting together in a club to have a good time from time to time.

JF: Did his position in the town affect what happened with your family or your mother's family in that town? Did they have a special position?

LI: No, no, not too much, no. Not at all.

JF: Was your father from the same town?

¹Codreanu 1927 founded the League of National Christian Defense, originally called the League of the Archangel Michael also Iron Guard, aimed at "cleansing" Romania of Jews and corrupt Romanian politicians.

LI: No, my father was from the south of Romania. He came from a modest family, modest family. He was a worker. My grandfather from that side who was a technician from doing roofs.

JF: A roofer?

LI: A roofer. He told me, and he died in an accident.

JF: Your grandfather?

LI: My grandfather, and my father was the youngest of this family, and he had a very rough childhood. He took his first classes in a--to a rabbi.

JF: From a rabbi?

LI: Yes, he was taught from that school.

JF: In a *cheder* [Jewish elementary school, usually in one room]?

LI: Yes, in a *cheder*. He had these four years of *cheder* and after that he was obliged to work. When he was 11, he entered to work and he taught himself his development. It was done by himself.

JF: So, he did not have a regular public school education?

LI: Yes.

JF: He went from *cheder* into a job.

LI: Yes, because that costs money, and he couldn't all by himself, and in that little town was not a special school. In Bucharest, where Jewish schools were, the Jewish children who has no possibilities from their own parents to go to the Romanian state school, then they could learn in that school. They were very good schools.

JF: Was your father from a very religious family, then?

LI: I don't think that he was very religious, but he used to go to temple and he was a religious person but not being an Orthodox.

JF: Not an Orthodox. And what about your mother? What was her background?

LI: My mother was less involved in that kind of thing. I always remember. I was in all summers in the little town. From Bucharest I was sent during summers to stay with my grandparents and my cousins and all my mother's family. That is the meaning I can tell you, I was more close to my mother's family, and because of the vineyards, we were there for two months each summer, and I remember my grandmother doing this prayer on Friday night, and for my mother losing this shawl my grandmother had, it was a very big deal.

JF: Your mother became more assimilated than her family, then, do you think?

LI: Not very assimilated, because she couldn't, but she was very cultivated. My mother had, I say, my mother read cultures, literatures, not writers. She was very interested in all kinds of things of art, in culture.

JF: In culture?

LI: She did that after finishing school. She did that by herself. I have to tell you something. That was before the First World War, the World War I. In that part of Romania came forth something I don't know for what. Some French army was there and some officers were sent to their home because my grandparents had a very big home. There were two or three French officers. Some of them were old and one of them was young, and he taught French to all these sisters. My mother had four sisters, and they were five daughters and after five daughters came finally a son, my uncle, who is a doctor and he is here in New York right now, but he has his life also.

JF: You mentioned before that there was someone who owned a vineyard in your town.

LI: Yes, I don't know exactly how he bought that vineyard.

JF: This was your grandfather or your great-grandfather, do you think?

LI: I think it was my grand-grandfather.

JF: Your great-grandfather.

LI: Yes, my grand-grandfather, and when my grandfather couldn't gain sufficiently to provide his family in that time, he was with his wife and the two first daughters. My mother is the second one, and they were in another town, and they went in that little town of my grand-grandfather to take care of the vineyard, to have this big house, and had a sort of a motel, something like that.

JF: They set up like a...

LI: And they settled there.

JF: ...a vacation spot on the vineyard, instead of using it as a vineyard.

LI: Yes, yes. I have somewhere some photos. It was good for us because we were there and it was a beautiful place.

JF: You are talking about your summers, now, when you would go to stay with them?

LI: Yes, to stay with them.

JF: So they would have a motel where they would rent out rooms in order to...

LI: Yes, that was very little, too, yes, and that vineyard was not big, but they worked very hard, and it was a good place, more a good place to stay, then.

JF: Can you tell me a little bit now about your growing up experience in Bucharest?

LI: Yes. My father was not so wealthy, and he had some up and downs, up and downs.

JF: What kind of work was he doing?

LI: An accountant.

JF: An accountant?

LI: He was an accountant and he was also, after a while he renounced that and he did a sort of commerce representation.

JF: Like a business representative?

LI: Yes, a representative of--it was a little plant of doing stockings.

JF: Stockings.

LI: Stockings. And he was a representative of Bucharest of...

JF: He was like a sales representative?

LI: Yes.

JF: For a manufacturing firm.

LI: But he also did the accounting there, at the same time and that plant was-- the two directors was one, a Jew, and other one, a German, and that was a kind of history because of that German, he was pushed out very early when the history changed, before the others were put out from all their homes and things.

JF: What year do you think that was that he was pushed out of his job?

LI: Let me think, I don't remember so well. But...

JF: Or how old were you, approximately?

LI: Probably in '38 or '37. Something like that.

JF: You were in what kind of schools in Bucharest?

LI: Let me tell you, because I think that it was very important for me. The position of our house, the area was at that time was sort of--in Bucharest was not a Jewish ghetto, like that, but it was a Jewish area where very many, if not all, were Jews. Very many.

JF: They lived there by choice, do you feel, or was it social pressure?

LI: It was a sort of social pressure, and it was also very--yes, in other areas, you have to own, to own, but that was renting houses and the poor always they rent houses, and in the downtown or in a special area was only Romanian or very, very rich Jewish people who were assimilated and were not more seen as Jews because they changed religions.

JF: They had converted?

LI: Yes.

JF: Was that fairly true for these upper class Jews who lived in this area? Did most of them convert, or were there some who retained their Jewish identity and were still able to live in the non-Jewish areas?

LI: It was not always like that because they come, it was very changeable. I have heard when I was 15 or 14--no, when I was 10--I had a very good friend of mine who had a very big and beautiful house and they were somehow rich, but they were never converted, and his father was from a big family who was very Palestine-oriented.

JF: Zionist?

LI: Mizrachi, if you ever heard about, and she was one of my best friends in that time. She was a colleague of mine in a very Romanian high school where I was able to enter, based on a contest.

JF: So, this family was not converted and yet they were wealthy and did not live in this Jewish section that you are talking about?

LI: Yes. The poor were more in a special area, was named [Romanian phrase], and let me see, [Romanian phrase]...

JF: Those were the names of the streets?

LI: The streets and the area and we were near them or close or in the middle, and when I went in the kindergarten, it was a Jewish kindergarten...

JF: Why was it a Jewish kindergarten?

LI: Goldfarb.

JF: It was a Jewish school?

LI: It was a Jewish kindergarten.

JF: Sponsored by the Jewish community?

LI: Yes, by the Jewish community.

JF: And Goldfarb...

LI: Goldfarb was the man who gave the most money to them and his name was there.

JF: I see. In other words the kindergarten was separate from the elementary school. This was a separate school, the Goldfarb kindergarten.

LI: I think so, I didn't went to the elementary school. My father was in a better situation then and he wanted for me to have a very good education, that is, to learn besides the normal school, to learn foreign languages, and then I was sent to a Catholic school. My elementary school was a Catholic school with nuns.

JF: What was that like for you, as a Jew?

LI: It was a fight, because in one day, my colleague, you know, we had banks², and my colleague of mine here stated not to me, I had very good scores, and I was a good learner. I was pleased to learn. That came from my mother. My mother?

JF: She gave you the attitude?

LI: Yes, and my father wanted from me to learn to some amount because he couldn't say, "A woman going to a medical school is okay," but he was not thought to that kind of thing in that time. All he wanted was what he couldn't have, to learn foreign languages, and he was always, only he knew German, because he knew some Yiddish, and then he knew German.

JF: You started to say that you sat in a bank? When you were talking about your friends?

LI: When I was talking about my friend. My friend was a Catholic, and because you put me how I resented this position, I didn't realize anything until that colleague of mine told to another colleague of ours, "You, kike," and then she came to me, the Jewish one, came to me and she stated: "You know what your colleague, your colleague, you are advising her for many lessons and you are helping her..."

JF: You were helping her with her studies?

LI: With her studies, and she told me that I am a "kike".

²Probably means a wooden bench - usually shared by two pupils.

JF: So she--this young Catholic girl called another young Jewish girl a "kike".

LI: A "kike" and she came to me and she say to me, "Why are you helping her? What are you doing because she is an antisemite."

JF: Had she ever shown you this antisemitism?

LI: No, because she needed me, that was, but she was not so friendly and I began not to be too much friendly, but I couldn't stop to help her; when someone is asking you something, you have to give some. Why not?

JF: Were you friendly with her outside of school?

LI: No. Never.

JF: Did you try to be, or was it just not something that could be done?

LI: I have had a Romanian, not a Catholic, a Romanian-Orthodox friend with whom I came on the same bus and I was very friendly to her.

JF: You are talking about a Romanian of the Eastern rite?

LI: You know, that most Romanians are Orthodox. That was a special school, and I think, and all my people told me that Catholic schools with nuns were to make people to come to Catholicism.

JF: But you're distinguishing between the Catholics from the Eastern rite versus Catholics from the Roman rite.

LI: The Romanian are Christian Orthodox.

JF: Christian Orthodox?

LI: As Russian is, as Bulgarian are, as Greeks are. Most people that are Romanian are Orthodox, even here.

JF: When you went to the Catholic school that you are describing, was this of the Orthodox?

LI: No.

JF: This was not?

LI: No. It was a Catholic school, but I was Jewish. Very many Jewish children were sent to that school because it was a very good school, a good learning school, but also some of Romanian Orthodox sent their children to that school.

JF: I see, so it was a mixture.

LI: Yes, and they made such a program to go many times in the church that was in the same courtyard, but I liked the service because it was much singing there and music.

JF: You had to go to the chapel?

LI: Yes, but I never become a good Catholic and I was...

JF: Did they try to influence your religious belief in the school?

LI: Yes, but very slightly. Very slightly. That was they put us coming there and we was put to learn the Bible, the New Testament, and we have a teacher for that and we have score for that, and we learned and you gave answers but the believing was not there.

JF: Were you also taught about the service and the belief system?

LI: Yes, we were there some and it was very prized, the people who was Catholic, but was not so much. And the best in the class were Jewish. I was between them. It was not a state school, it was private from the nuns, and we had to take an exam, that is, we were obliged. A sort of commission came from the Minister of Education to take us the exam, and we have to--and I had to take an exam, the first elementary and the second elementary, and the third it was not any more needed. I don't know why.

JF: How was the nuns' attitude towards you?

LI: It was not resented more as a Jew as the others.

JF: The children had more resentment towards you?

LI: The children was more than the nuns. The nuns was, how you say, very elegant and very correct because they wanted to take us in their belief.

JF: They wanted you to become Christian?

LI: To become Catholic, not Christian, Catholic.

JF: So, you felt more a negative feeling from the children, from the Catholic children?

LI: From the Catholic children, yes, but not so much, because they needed us. That was--I want to tell you that at the time, Romania needed us for some advice or for some help, or for, to do her lessons, you know. That was all right and she knew that, because of that, she has not to be too hard to me in any way, because if she will hurt me, I shall not help her anymore. That was the situation.

JF: She needed you?

LI: Yes, and I was the best at French which was normal, because my mother learned French both from school a little bit and from these French officers who lived in their home, and I began to read or she read for me...

Tape one, side two:

LI: I was constantly Jewish because I lived in that area.

JF: Because you lived in this community in Bucharest, this Jewish area, you feel this affected your sense of Jewish identity?

LI: Yes.

JF: How?

LI: I have seen the poor, I had one of my best friends, I shall never forget. Her father was poor and had tuberculosis and he died because he didn't have any possibility to...

JF: Of medical help?

LI: Of medical help. There were very little Jewish hospitals, and he couldn't pay, I don't know, or I don't remember, or I couldn't know, but she was very poor, and she was so kind and nice and she was my best friend. But, also, in that time, and in that area, because you asked me, I had another friend, a colleague of mine, whose father was very cultivated in Jewish literature and area. His name, I remember him, was Neibashan [phonetic]. Her name, my friend, was Naomi Neibashan, and her brother, who was something, her brother probably had another mother, the first. There was a very big distance in age, but he was very also very Talmudic as his father, Asher Neibashan, you know, because of their name, they were very Jewish oriented, and that also gave me that idea of Jewish culture.

JF: So, this was a culture that you felt in the area and from a friend. What about your home?

LI: My father learned me some and took me sometimes in the temple he used to go.

JF: Your father took you to the synagogue.

LI: Yes.

JF: Did you have any Jewish education? Was that available to you?

LI: That was, I--what I learned, I learned the Bible and I learned the Old Testament.

JF: The Old Testament.

LI: I knew that I am a Jew, I was close to that people and that came from the family. But I have had no special school with the rabbi.

JF: Was there training for girls? Was there an education available for girls in your community?

LI: No.

JF: There wasn't?

LI: No.

JF: Your learning of the Old Testament came from where? Was this your own study, or with your father?

LI: I--it was some, I spoke some, it was some discussion with my father, but I learned at school when they learned us the New Testament, they had to learn us also. I had had the Bible, and I preferred to read the Old Testament.

JF: So, you did this on your own.

LI: I did this on my own, I did because Naomi did, with her father and, Naomi Neibashan.

JF: Your friend?

LI: My friend. I went to that temple and I wanted to understand that. The first time I was there, it was something very marvelous. All the service, it was marvelous for me because it was so touching, and when my father came with a Torah to me and he told me, you can't kiss it and it's something very saint. [Probably means sacred] That was--and to see him doing that...

JF: You were not allowed to kiss the Torah?

LI: Yes.

JF: Because you were a girl?

LI: Yes.

JF: The feeling of being in a Catholic school with being set apart, because you were Jewish, did you feel that this also enhanced your feeling of your Jewish identity?

LI: You know what was in that time? I wanted to let them know because of this one, my colleague. I wanted to let them know that we are capable, and eventually we are more capable than them. That was my feeling.

JF: You had to prove something to the other girls?

LI: Exactly. I had to prove not only to the girls, to the teachers, and the first time, it was one moment, I don't know if it's interesting for you, it was at that time you had to change every hour, and my parents forget to change the hour and my father went with me to the school and it was an hour later.

JF: This is like daylight savings time when you change the clocks.

LI: Yes, and when I came, he told the nun, "You know, it's not her fault, my daughter's fault, that she came so late. It is our fault," and the nun came in the class and told the teacher, who is the French teacher, that I came late because of that. Despite of that, she was, she punished me.

JF: Your French teacher punished you.

LI: My French teacher and it was an awful punishment. I shall never forget. They told me that I am lousy or so, they wrote on a paper that I am lousy and...

JF: A sign.

LI: ...they put this on my skirt.

JF: On your back? They put a sign on your back?

LI: Yes, "lousy," and I had to go around the class.

JF: They shamed you?

LI: Yes. And I told her, you know, "The nun told you what my father told her, that it is not my fault. Why are you doing to me that?" I don't know what was in her head.

JF: But, she didn't answer you?

LI: She didn't answer me and they put me out also and for that time...

JF: They put you out. You mean, they took you out of the classroom?

LI: Out of the classroom and to stand in the corner and to be seen by all of the other colleagues that I was lousy and... [soft crying and distress] I had...

JF: You said because of this experience you became so stubborn?

LI: I was very angry towards them. They were not correct towards me.

JF: How old were you?

LI: I think I was still in the first class.

JF: This was still in the first class, so you were quite young. So you were six?

LI: Six, six and a half. It was not correct for them because my father told them that it was not my fault. Why did they do that to me, and I was so angry that I wanted to let them know that I can do it, and I am not lousy as they said, and I learned very well, and the problem was that that specific teacher, the French teacher, I don't know in what moment, but I became for her her best...

JF: Her best student?

LI: Her best student, yes. I knew some French at that particular moment, and I had a good accent for French and then she used me after, she used me after because in the schools, when the final day of the school year is finished, it is a sort of festival or something, and she put me to be the most important artist in that because the accent was good. Then I learned, I think, from that time, I learned, if you are needed, they have to admit you. But that is all. But to admit you and there does exist a door. You have to stop, you cannot enter more. You cannot have, to be too close to them.

JF: You learned that you had to prove yourself so worthy that they needed you, and then you would be accepted, but there was still a point at which that stopped and you could not go beyond that?

LI: Yes, because, at the time, that school changed and it was not a state school, it became a state school, I was not more able to be the first in my class.

JF: At what age did you enter the state school then?

LI: That school changed in a state school.

JF: It became a state school?

LI: When I was in the third elementary year class.

JF: You mean when you were about 9 or so?

LI: Yes, about nine.

JF: Why did it become a state school?

LI: I don't know. They took over. Probably they had no more money, I don't know exactly. When I finished the four years of elementary school, my parents wanted

from me to have a very good education. They sent me to the best, not high school, how you say, graduate school...

JF: To the *Gymnasium*.

LI: *Gymnasium*, yes. It was named for Queen Mary.

JF: You were in the state school, then, for a year after it switched over?

LI: Elementary school is four years.

JF: But three of those years were during the Catholic...?

LI: All of them were the Catholic school. It was the same school and the same building with the same nuns, the same all.

JF: I see, and you never were in it when it was a state school.

LI: These four years I did in that school.

JF: In the Catholic school?

LI: Yes, but it was not more worth it to have the final exams.

JF: It wasn't worth it to have the final exams?

LI: Exams in the third year, because that was taken in some way by the state. In the third class was not more needed to have the commission coming then and to take the special exam, because the school was not more only the special school. It was taken in some amount from the state, I think so, and at that time I was not any more the first in my class. I suffered very much because I knew that I was the good one, but it doesn't matter.

JF: You were no longer the first in your class because of what?

LI: Because I was Jewish.

JF: Because you were Jewish?

LI: Sure.

JF: So, once it was under the state control, there was a difference in the attitude towards you as a student?

LI: Towards all Jews.

JF: Because of your Judaism?

LI: Yes.

JF: When did your parents then take you out of that system?

LI: When I finished the four grades. And then, they sent me to the best school, Romanian one. There was a contest to enter.

JF: This was a private school?

LI: Yes.

JF: A private Romanian school?

LI: Yes, but in that school, *Gymnasium* was named *Lyceum* and that *Lyceum* was for eight years until the baccalaureate.

JF: Until the baccalaureate.

LI: And there was a contest and that contest was some 1200 people coming for 60 positions and they have to do two classes, two classes about 40 and 40 that way,

not 60--80. I don't remember very well, but in my class were entered only three Jewish children.

JF: Was there a maximum number of Jews who could be admitted or were those the only children who scored high?

LI: I will tell you something. At that contest was a writing contest and an oral contest. When I did the writing contest, it was Romanian and mathematics, and at the oral contest, they knew who is who. The commission was from three teachers from that school, and when I gave a good response to who was put to another girl before me, they asked her something she couldn't answer and then they passed the question to me, and I answered. Then they asked me, "What's your name?" "My name is Lucesa," which is a kind of Italian name, Eunice was not so clear for them, and then they say, "What's your father's name? N or M," and I said very clearly, "M". "We cannot understand," and then I said very loudly, "Mendel." "Oh, thank you," and they were aware that I was Jewish. That was...

JF: They wanted to know.

LI: They wanted to know who I am and in spite of that...

JF: Was there a quota?

LI: It was not a known quota. The quota was for medical school.

JF: It wasn't know--there was a quota, but it wasn't explained.

LI: Because for all of that we entered only three in forty.

JF: Out of 40 students? What was your experiences in the *Lyceum* like? This was already the 30's that you were entering. Things in Europe were changing. What was your experiences like?

LI: Very hard. I'll tell you only one situation, and you shall see. We had a very bright teacher, a Romanian, and she gave to us in a writing work once to tell our most interesting day in a church. Why she did that, I do not know. What was that title, and she said, to the best I shall give ten. Ten was the highest score. I have never had a very good autograph. I did some mistakes, in writing from time to time. That I know. But I wanted to tell something was interesting and then and I told the day when my father, one of the days that my father took me to the temple, and I described that and the other, I don't know what. She told us, "I have three which are the best." There was one name and the other name and the third was my name. I was the only Jew in that three and when I saw the score was 8 instead of 10. "Yes, because you have had some fault in your writing."

JF: In the grammar?

LI: Look, I have eight, I know that. It doesn't matter. But she wanted to read for all the class, to know that. I don't know why she did that, and she read my work, what I wrote, ahead of all my class.

JF: It sounds like she felt that it was important that they hear it. Did you have...?

LI: Or to make all the class aware that I am Jewish.

JF: You felt that she was trying to make it known that you were Jewish? In a mocking kind of way?

LI: No, she didn't mock on me. No. I don't think she mock on me. I don't think so. I don't think that they mocked in that particular time, because it was the second class or something like that, but I was on the age to have a premium. You know, the final part, there are the best that have the first prize, the second prize, the third prize, and they didn't take care on the scores they gave to me, and when at the final part of the year, they knew that I am on the age to become a *primeant* [phonetic] and to become the first of my class, they, all of a sudden gave me very bad scores and the media was that I was the third, the third, and then they put another one, how to say it? It is a very big festivity, all the parents are coming, and is a crown to give to the first prize and something of writing paper, very prizing you with the second prize, and the third prize and so, and they put two of us to have the third prize, a Romanian one and me. And then it was a festivity, when they gave her name, there was such an applause, and immediately they gave my name and no one heard that. My father didn't know that I was there. To make some sort of...

JF: He didn't know that you had won?

LI: They wanted to hid me.

JF: To hide you?

LI: To hide a Jewish name to be prized. But in spite of that, it was in another class, a Jewish one who was the best of all the school.

JF: And she did win?

LI: And she did win, and that they couldn't do twice in the same time, and they put her the second prize. They did something not to put her the first prize, but all people knew that she was the best in all the school. It was things like that you know...

JF: When you were talking about the essay that you wrote and you got an eight and not a ten, did you feel that your teacher had given you two points off to keep your grade a little bit lower?

LI: Sure. Sure. Absolutely.

JF: You didn't think your grammar was that bad?

LI: I have to tell you, in that time, in the area that we moved, in another area, and we have children, it was also many, many Jewish people.

JF: This was in the same Jewish community?

LI: No. We moved, I told you that. We moved, but it was also somehow near that area. Somehow, and there was many Jews in that street, in that street. I have to tell you right now eventually not to forget, that that street had an entrance, and here was a very, very big park, not still park, not a beautiful park but a park. Then one couldn't enter in that street but only for that park.

JF: Not from the park?

LI: Not from the park, it was only one entrance.

JF: Why?

LI: It will come in time and that will be very, very interesting, but in that area there were very, very many Jewish people, and also Romanian people. I have to hear many times "kike" or "Jewish to Palestine." "You have to go to Palestine."

JF: The Romanians would say this to you?

LI: Yes, the children.

JF: The children would say this to you?

LI: Yes, the older people don't have anything to do with children.

JF: Were there any youth groups or organizations within the Jewish community for young Jewish children that you were involved in, where you could be in a comfortable social situation?

LI: We were friendly, the colleagues which were in the same class and were Jewish, we saw together it was parties for birthdays, first of all...

JF: This was an all girls, school?

LI: No. Even in the Catholic school...

JF: There were girls and boys?

LI: No, only girls.

JF: Only girls in all the school that you were in?

LI: Yes.

JF: But the Jewish girls formed a social network?

LI: Yes, a sort of social network, yes, and that does exist here. A colleague of mine here in Philadelphia, who was a colleague with me in that Catholic school, and when I came here, and a colleague of another colleague of mine, a doctor, called me, she knew and she called me on the telephone and I saw her.

JF: There is someone here who was another Jewish girl in that Catholic school?

LI: Yes. The exact one who was told, "You, kike," and she came to me to tell me about the other one.

JF: What happened in 1933? You were 10 years old. Hitler had taken over Germany. What was the word in Romania, in your community? What was your father saying? What were the people around you saying?

LI: We had in our house, on the second floor was a sort of German family. He told us that he was from Switzerland and she was German, and she used to--we have not at that time a radio set. I don't know why they didn't buy a radio set, and she had a radio set, and she used to call my mother and tell her, "Hi, and come here, and if you can come here and to hear that man. That man probably is very powerful. That kind of man I am liking."

JF: She wanted your mother to hear this? She thought that your mother would like this?

LI: Yes, she thought that my mother would like this.

JF: Why did she think that?

LI: I don't think that she couldn't understand what he was saying because she was a German lady, but I think that she wanted to worry my mother.

JF: To worry your mother?

LI: Yes.

JF: Like a threat?

LI: Yes. like a threat. Yes. I shall tell you immediately something else. You used to play games between children in the street, and between us were mostly Jewish children, but also there were Romanian ones, and at one particular time came someone whose name was Hans Zauber or Hans Sauer. I didn't remember. That was very clearly a German name, and once we play hid...

JF: Hide and seek?

LI: Hide and seek, and we entered into a room of someone who had a chart, a Romanian chart on the wall, and he said all of a sudden, "Huh, your name Romania right now, but it will be Germany." And after that he became silent. We didn't understand very well, but "What is that? A joke?" And he said, "Yes, that's a joke."

JF: So, he had perhaps been hearing this somewhere else?

LI: Yes, his family, probably. My mother became terrified. We used to live down, and that German family above, and she told my father, "I don't want to go there and to hear such a voice that terrifies me, and I can't understand so well," but because she didn't know German too well, and very little Yiddish she knew, she couldn't understand him.

JF: Was there communication of any other sort, say, within synagogues or newspapers, or any other way that you could, you and your family, understand what was going on with Hitler?

LI: What was going on with Hitler was not clear, but was going on in our country, because in some '33, I have noted something came, the government, a very antisemitic one.

JF: At the time that Hitler took over in Germany, there was fighting in the Romanian universities?

LI: I think so, because you know, all the time after the war, somehow after the Twenties, it was not a--it was very clear that you are a Jew and that you had nothing to do more with me, outside the classroom.

JF: There was a strict social separation?

LI: Yes, it was a social separation. I had in my class, I told you, with this contest and so, my colleague who was with me in the same bank [meaning school bench] was in a very high family, Romanian family. Her father was a general who was something around the King, and she had also two brothers in the army who was officers, and her name is Collette, and she helped me in some way in autography and in something, I don't know in what, because I helped her also in French, and I did for her the

drawings she needed, and then we were in a good relationship, and when this kind of government came, she told me, "You know, I can understand your situation." She had a need to tell me that she understands my situation and she is still my friend. She is still friendly with me, and because she is her believing her political believing...

Tape two, side one:

LI: Her family who was in such a high situation and around the King, their political believing was not an antisemitic, clear, overtly antisemitic one...

JF: They were friends with the King Carol?

LI: Yes, and that was about money. This man was from time to time the first minister, and he was the liberal government. I don't know how to say, but we have to know also that in that time the Jewish youngster couldn't enter in the universities, that in that time there were very few engineers and they were not hired. They were hired very few of them to the railway, that is, the railway from Romania, the trains, this kind of things, very few engineers.

JF: This was under King Carol, or after?

LI: Yes, under the King. And this was the Old Kingdom [usually Walachia and Moldavia] because Romania, the real part of Romania, always being with a Romanian government was the Old Kingdom, that was Moutania and Moldavia, and Fortenia [phonetic] also and. The other parts was here from sometime under Hungaria, sometime under Russia, and it was also Dobruja, who was not completely to Romania all the time, sometime to Bulgaria.

JF: Tell me, then, how...

LI: And the medical school was, what you said before, a sort of--report--how to say? It was named *numerus clausus* [closed or restricted numbers]. Only 20% were allowed to enter.

JF: Now you applied to medical school in what year?

LI: No, no, no, this was much later.

JF: This was much later.

LI: First of all in--when was it that, when was the government a writer and Alexandru Cuza. They were antisemitic and they promised antisemitic rules, and all Jewish people was worried about and all they came to speak about all sort of crazy things. Going to Palestine, eventually going to Mexico, going to other places...

JF: Did your family talk about leaving?

LI: Oh, yes, my father came: "We shall go out from this country. It is awful for Jewish people. We shall go out." But after that, his boss, the Jewish one, and even the German one told him: "You may stay." He was a very good worker, and how to say? Fidel.

JF: Faithful.

LI: He was a very good worker and he was the first to come and the last to go and...

JF: So, they calmed him down about leaving?

LI: Yes, that will not be so much, and really it was not so much because they have not--the King was more powerful than them and this government didn't take too

much power, but only some months, I think, that was Goga-Cuza.³

JF: Did Cuza's government affect you in anyway, or was this a relatively calm time?

LI: That affected all of us. Some colleagues of mine came to school. We had a big coat that was the uniform, and on the uniform they have the *Hakenkreuz*. [swastika]

JF: The iron...

LI: The *Hakenkreuz*, the German *Kreuz*, bad. The cross. The crooked--how to say? The crooked cross..

JF: The twisted cross.

LI: Twisted cross. Yes, that is in German *Hakenkreuz*. We...

JF: Did all of the children wear these?

LI: No, because it was not a "must".

JF: The swastika?

LI: The swastika. It was not--you know that was from their own willing to do that.

JF: The children?

LI: The children, and, you can understand immediately it was their family will.

JF: At this time they were teenagers, right?

LI: Yes, they were teenagers, right, but in that time our teenagers were not so in that time as our teenagers right here. They are not so developed in their meaning. They were more modest and they have to learn it, was another...

JF: They were less mature?

LI: They were less by their own. They were very dependent on their parents, and the education was such that they have to do what their parents want from them to be done.

JF: So that what they were reflecting...

LI: It was some sort of regulation, and that were reflecting their family's thoughts and their feelings, etc.

JF: Okay.

LI: In that time, it was sort of movement and change in the person who was conducting our school and came more people who was Cuzist-oriented. The atmosphere was: "We don't need so much Jewish people," and they was more strict. The teachers were very interested not to give good scores, and eventually to put out from the school Jewish people.

JF: They were trying to get you out by giving you lower grades?

³Octavian Goga's National Peasants' party merged with Alexandru Cuza's League of National Christian Defense in late 1937 which led to the formation of an antisemitic government, the second such government in Europe after Germany.

LI: Yes. That was clearly--how to say--in the class, the position of those teachers. Some of them were really involved in that politic.

JF: What about the ones who were not involved? Were they under pressure to do the same thing?

LI: Somehow, somehow, they have had these attitudes. They had good words for you, that is to say, "Yes, you have had a good answer." And the score was little, or something like that.

JF: Perhaps they feared for their jobs, if they did not cooperate. Were any of the girls that you knew actually let out of the school during this period of time for these low scores that they were given?

LI: For the low score? Not for the low score. It was me who came. I was ill, I had a fever at that time and they didn't know what I had a fever, and they didn't know what I have, and my father was very upset of that, and instead to go to make my papers done at the right time, you know for the New Year, he went a little bit later, and they give to my father the papers to go out from school because I was not in time. "But, you know, that she is your..."

JF: Your prize student?

LI: "Your student." "It doesn't matter. You are late. We put others. All our positions are filled." That is something that doesn't matter, and I have that year, I have to stay home and to give the exams in a school that does exist for children who couldn't go to school day by day.

JF: When you talk about papers, you mean the original registration papers in the beginning of the year?

LI: Yes, my papers were there, but, you know, you have each year to make a new registration.

JF: So, they didn't accept you at all as a student in the school?

LI: Yes. Yes.

JF: Because your father came and you were ill.

LI: Came later, a little bit later, but my father said because she was ill, and "I couldn't think that you having that student all those years, year after year, she was in your school, and she is in your school and you know her very well." This secretary she didn't want to be herself. It was a new director.

JF: She blamed it on the director, the secretary.

LI: No, no. The director blamed it on the secretary and she stated, "You know, I didn't know that they were. We thought that you took out her papers. You can see her papers." And after a while... [unclear]

JF: How old were you at that time?

LI: I was 14, I think.

JF: So you had to study at home that year?

LI: Yes, I studied. I got my exams. That does exist, that rule for many, and there were some families who had their children at home with other teachers, I don't know, and they are taking only the exams, and I took the exams and when I go, I went back for the new year. I went to another school because I told to my father I never will go back to that school. Never, ever.

JF: What kind of school did you go to, then?

LI: Some sort of the same.

JF: Similar?

LI: A similar school.

JF: A private Romanian?

LI: No, it was a state.

JF: A state?

LI: I was in private only in the elementary school. It was a state school. It was the biggest because that school had the name of Queen Mary.

JF: The second *Lyceum*, or the first?

LI: The first *Lyceum*. The name of Queen Mary, and because of her, she came once in a year with her family, that is to say, her daughter who was the Queen of Yugoslavia, and with her two children, and we have to make drawings to present to their children. And it was, that school has a hymn, a special song for that. That was something. But it was another school, the same amount of importance, and I went there, and she took me and I--it was a good thing when I went in that school, because I met there one of my best friends, and I shall tell you about that best friend of mine. There was something...

JF: The same sort of treatment?

LI: The same sort of teachers, the same sort of dealing with colleagues between themselves, and the teacher with the children and that was. But they put us out because, after a while, after a year of learning there, they have bad feelings. That director told my father, "We shall lose some of our best people here, but we have no more rights to take Jewish children in our school."

JF: Now, was this a state decision at that time to kick the Jewish children out of the school?

LI: Yah. Sure. Yes.

JF: This was about 1938?

LI: Yes. Out from school I was in that time, I was going because of my interest I was going at the French library. You know, in Bucharest does exist something else, that is, the French Embassy, and in the French Embassy it was a person, a very cultivated person who gave conferences about painting and painters and school of painting, and it was very interested, and they have slides and they were very technical in a good style to make this kind of conferences, and I used to go there and it was a very cultivated man named Jean Mouton. And it was also a library there to rent you books, as

Free Library here, and I went to the library also, and I wanted for a long time to read *La Montagne Magique*.

JF: *The Magic Mountain*, by Thomas Mann?

LI: Yes, and the lady there, who was a very nice one, she told me she will be very aware about that, and she will find that book for me, and when all this kind of changed and the political situation changed, Monsieur Jean Mouton, when he saw me and my cousin, we were both going there to hear that conference. I was alone in that day and he took me and he stated to me, "Mademoiselle, I want to speak with you. Can you come in my office?" And I went to his office, I didn't know why he did that, and he told me, "You know, I know that you are in a state school right now?"

LI: "No, I am not more in a state school." "Then probably you are Jewish." "Yes, I am Jewish." "Please understand us." And he told me many times, "Please understand us, you cannot come here anymore. We are not allowed to let you come here anymore."

JF: The French Embassy, even, was under jurisdiction?

LI: That was in the French Embassy. Yes.

JF: Because the French Embassy, then, was dictated to by the Romanian government?

LI: No, they were changed also. I don't who was better or what was in there in that time. I cannot tell you. Probably their political--they have to do that to remain there in a good situation. More than that, I went--that was--and then I thought probably he did that to me because he was aware about whom, about the nice lady. The nice lady stated to me one day, "Oh, you know I found your book. I shall give it to you," and she gave me the book, and I took that book so, and she said to me, "Oh, I have only one. Can you give me your ID card from school, from your school?" You know, I have not my ID card, because I am not right now in school. "Oh, you are not. Ahah." And then she took it back.

JF: She took the book back?

LI: I shall tell you, one moment, I shall remind what she told me, "*Ce n'est plus la peine*." [It is not worth the effort any more to take the book.] I shall never forget. "*Ce n'est plus la peine de la prendre*." That is in English, "You may not do that. It's not more worthy to do that, to take the book." She didn't want to tell me, "You have not the right to take it." She wanted to tell me in another way, to be nice to me, but she had to do that, and she said these words to me to understand whatsoever I can understand, but I understood that she cannot give me the right to read that book.

JF: She said that it was not worthy of you to take the book?

LI: "*C'est 'est plus la peine*." You can--it's not for you to work on that. I don't know how...

JF: It's not for you, the book is not worth...

LI: She doesn't want to hurt me in any way. She doesn't tell me that I am not sufficiently because she tried to find that book for me. She knew me for a while, for so many time I went there to take books.

JF: So she phrased it in such a way not to hurt you?

LI: Yes, but to take the book back, it was...

JF: It sounds like you met up with many Romanians who ...

LI: She was not Romanian, she was French.

JF: With French and some Romanians as well who did not want to hurt you, but under the law had to follow certain...

LI: Yes, yes.

JF: Had to follow certain restrictions.

LI: It was a phrase that I heard so many times. Some of them came to me and said, "You know, if all Jews will be as you are..." and I wanted so much to ask them, "Do you think that all Romanians are as you are? Doesn't exist thieves or liars or something like that?" It was awful to tell me something like that. They thought that that is the best thing...

JF: A compliment.

LI: A compliment, that is the best thing they can do to me. And in that time was something else. Also, I don't remember. No. It was later on. It was later on. That was in that time, but it was a very bad thing. It was done in that time. We were put out of all schools, but it was not a law that was written in some newspaper, and we didn't know and our parents didn't know in that time that we are not allowed to take classes in Romanian schools.

JF: This was when you were about how old?

LI: Fifteen.

JF: Fifteen.

LI: Yes.

JF: This was 1938.

LI: Yes.

JF: In other words, there was no formal declaration that you were not permitted in the schools.

LI: Yes. It was somewhere, probably, in some sort of papers from rules, but we didn't know overtly and, then, my father and other fathers went to less important, less good schools, in some sort of school for ladies. I don't know what it was.

JF: Like a finishing school?

LI: To finish that school because we have to do more two years or something like that to finish high school, as is here. And the man took for all these parents, it were some 15 or 20 or more than that. I don't remember. He took all the money for the teaching for all the year, because my father came very happy. "You are allowed to go all the year to take that class."

JF: He paid in advance.

LI: He paid in advance, all, and he was not the only one who did that. And we went the first day of school, very happy that we have a school. And it was closed, and the man was in, and all the other parents who lost their money...

JF: The school was closed, or closed to you.

LI: Closed to us.

JF: They barred you from coming into the door.

LI: Yes, yes, in the courtyard. They stopped us in the courtyard, and I am reminded of the scenery because he has to go out, the director who took the money. And all the parents were so irritated and angry and told him, "You have to give us the money back if you don't take our children." No.

JF: He just refused.

LI: He just refused. Who can do to him anything?

JF: What did the parents do?

LI: Nothing. We couldn't. To go to where? If you were so stupid to give him the money, thinking that that school will be open to your children when that time the other schools are not that is the same kind of school. You have not the right, not the right to go in any sport, not the right to go dance, not the right to go swimming, not the right to go in the library, not to ride, not to go anywhere.

JF: What was your feeling about the action that your father and these other parents had taken? Did you feel that they had a chance?

LI: That they were stupid.

JF: You felt that they were stupid?

LI: Yes.

JF: At that time?

LI: At the time we were stopped to enter. Then we were--they saw themselves that they were stupid.

JF: When your father said that he had paid in advance, you questioned it, then, in other words?

LI: In that time, no.

JF: You didn't question?

LI: No, I didn't know. I didn't know. I asked him, "You are right?" Because I felt in some way very [unclear]. At the time that he refused my entrance and I told you that he went later.

JF: The year you were sick?

LI: Yes, the year I was sick, he went later. I was very frustrated, very, very frustrated with them.

JF: Did you feel that your father had made the right move when he gave the money in advance, or were you questioning?

LI: It was a question. I didn't want too much to go to that school, but I wanted to go in some school to finish my learning and, after a while, because not we were out, but the teachers, the Jewish teachers from academic--they were put out.

JF: They were put out?

LI: Even they were, and. here is my best believing, many of them were Jewish with despite their own feelings, they were becoming Romanian Orthodox, or something like that.

JF: They converted?

LI: They converted. But they converted only not because their feelings was that to have a better situation.

JF: These are the teachers you are talking about?

LI: Some of them were converted. Some of them were not, and they remained with their Jewish name, but they were academic teachers, that is, in universities, and they were put out.

JF: The Jewish teachers were put out? What about the ones that were converted? Were they?

LI: Also, all. All. Converted, not converted, all of them.

JF: So, the conversion meant nothing?

LI: That I wanted to tell, and that I want to tell all Jewish people from all over the world. "You may convert. You may convert not. In one time you will be said, 'Hey, you are Jewish. Don't tell me you are not because your grand-grandmother, I don't know from what part...'"

JF: You feel that none of the people in Romania who converted saved themselves in any way?

LI: No. None. None of them.

JF: Did the Romanian government go by the German guidelines about Jewish background? And how many...

LI: I think they did more than Germans eventually taught them to do.

JF: The Romanians did more?

LI: More than that.

JF: Why do you think that was so?

LI: Because they always were antisemitic.

JF: Do you think they were more antisemitic than the Germans?

LI: No, not than the [National] Socialist party, than Hitler's party, but I think that they were very antisemitic and some of them had some philosophical thoughts, sort of antisemitic philosophy, and others were only--you know, "What that kind of people, some of them have more money than we have, from time to time, you know. Or they are more jewelry, because there are some Jewish people who want to be pushed and to be seen and to do that kind of things. There are some. I want to tell you something, I think I

didn't tell you. I need to make some points here. [Pause] Then all people were out, even from elementary school. They were out from all kind of public life.

JF: Um hum.

LI: And they were not allowed to enter in some places, in concert halls, in dance, in sports, in public manifestation, and the journalists were out from the time before.

JF: The journalists were?

LI: That was one time, I knew from another friend of mine, for her father, they were not allowed to write in Romanian. They have to write in Yiddish.

JF: In Yiddish?

LI: They have--if they want to write in something, they have to write in Yiddish.

JF: This is the journalists?

LI: The journalist and the writer, also. The poet, the novelist...

JF: Could it be printed if it were written in Yiddish?

LI: No. No one will take to print their works in that way. If they have some Jewish printing, they are there...

JF: But if they were writing for themselves, it had to be written in Yiddish?

LI: From themselves, no. From myself, if I am writing you a letter, I can write you in Romanian. They cannot foresee that.

JF: When did they have to write in Yiddish? In what...?

LI: If they want to make a translation, if they want to have a newspaper to be...

JF: Circulated?

LI: Circulated. Or a book, or a novel, or a poem, or whatsoever, they have not the right to write in Romanian. That was in one time.

JF: This was my question, If they wrote it in Yiddish, was it printed and circulated? You were talking about novels and poetry and newspaper articles.

LI: But not by them. They can have some. They can have some...

JF: If somebody could print it?

Tape two, side two:

LI: The doctors were put out from all Romanian hospitals and from all clinics, and they could not in their own offices see Romanian patients.

JF: They could see Jewish patients?

LI: They can see only Jewish patients, and Jewish patient cannot go to a Romanian doctor, also, and...

JF: What happened with the Jewish community? Was there an active Jewish organization in the Jewish community?

LI: At that particular time it was very active. It become more active. It was before, also, but it become very active. When we have had no--there were some Jewish schools, I told you, where some poor Jewish children who have not the possibility to go in to Romanian schools, they have the possibility to go into Jewish schools, but now, they have had no high schools, or economical high schools.

JF: So, this could not be of help to you then, because you were already in high school?

LI: Yes. Then, now appears two schools, two Jewish schools, because all of those teachers who had not been allowed to remain in Romanian schools came and were available for us, and we have had for our last years of high school the best teachers we wanted to. We have had someone, a, I don't know if he's alive right now, but he belonged to a very intellectual, high intellectualized Jewish family. All changed their names. They had a beautiful Romanian name, were journalists, were philologists, historians. They were beautiful people. High-prized people, and they married Christian ladies, and all of a sudden they become aware that, "Remember, you are a Jew." Some of them remained, even these years, with their wives, because of their wives were very high-thinking people, and they are needed to remain with Jewish husbands, but the situation was not good for them.

JF: These were those who had not converted?

LI: No, they converted. These three brothers were very high-minded and very cultivated...

JF: Had converted?

LI: Had converted. Had Romanian names and had Christian wives, and they became all of a sudden Jewish...

JF: They were Jewish again.

LI: Jewish again. They were marvelous teachers. One of them, and one of these people was one of my teachers and he was marvelous and the others were also marvelous.

JF: Did you have an opportunity to talk with him about his feelings about what had happened to him? Here he had given up his Jewish background, become a Christian...

LI: No, never. No, but I followed him in his social life and I knew what he did after and what he did in that time. You know, now I have to tell you something. In that time appeared not only schools, high schools, even medical school and engineer school, because were people who could do that. There were so many teachers who were free to do that.

JF: You mean the Jewish community established parallel systems of higher education with all of these Jewish teachers who were ousted from the Romanian schools?

LI: Exactly, and all of a sudden we had two medical schools, also...

JF: They were all Jewish?

LI: Jewish, and also there were two high schools, Jewish high schools, two medical schools, engineering, architecture, and I don't know what.

JF: This was all in Bucharest?

LI: Only in Bucharest. That was in Bucharest. Now, I wanted to do architecture, but for architecture, you know, that you have to do mathematics, and I took this part. My school with mathematics was near a center of the Iron Guard, and one day they took some of my colleagues and they beat them. I run very fast...

JF: They beat them?

LI: They beat them. Then my father said, "You know, you shall do whatsoever you want, but you have to be alive. In order to be alive, renounce to that school and go to the other part and do Latin."

JF: Do Latin instead of mathematics?

LI: Latin instead of mathematics and whatsoever will be. You know, we have here is a meaning. We couldn't think too much of our future. "You have to think," my father said to me, "you have to think only to your near future. That is also something. It is a big thing, you can think to your near future. A long-time future? Who can know what will be with all these situations?" And all of a sudden we became a people who cannot think on the 20th step. You have to think on the other step. Each time, the second day. Each time, the second day. That day and the other day. You couldn't say, after a month I shall do that and that.

JF: Now, you were talking about the fact that the Jewish community was able to establish all of these schools?

LI: With some dangers, with these dangers.

JF: With the dangers that were in the area, physical dangers that were in the area. Did they also increase their services to the Jewish community? Was there more going on inside the Jewish community to make up for things that were not permitted on the outside? For instance, you were not allowed into social areas.

LI: Yes. Not too much, and I shall tell you after. Become two things right now in that time, yes. It was the Zionist movement. There were some people, some Jewish youngsters who become Zionists.

JF: Zionists?

LI: Zionists, but that was underground. Somehow in a while it was not and after that become underground.

JF: It was not permitted to be in a Zionist...?

LI: It was not permitted and I was there.

JF: You were there?

LI: I was there, but my friend who took me there, my friends who took me there, they got me some sort of centerist and that was also the meaning to go to Palestine, to have the possibility to leave Romania.

JF: They got you? I'm sorry...

LI: That was the Zionist idea. The Zionist idea.

JF: To go to Palestine?

LI: To go to Palestine, and the idea, the political idea. But there were many fractions and I got to the central or the right fraction. I don't know what, and it was not organized, and I didn't feel well, and after a while they told me that to go to Palestine in that time, it was such an amount of money, no one could do it, and then, I renounced, and I renounced to the idea to tell my father, even.

JF: Did your parents know that you were involved in this Zionist group?

LI: My--they had some slight idea. They knew something that doesn't want to tell to others, and to make from this kind of thing renowned between their friends.

JF: They didn't want to tell their friends that you were involved?

LI: I don't think they wanted that, because it was--you know the least people know, then, when another people come and ask you here and there, no one can know that and can tell. That was not an allowed thing to be done.

JF: Your parents would have gotten into trouble if it was known that you were in a Zionist group then?

LI: Yes, and I myself. It's going so fast, I...

JF: When you said that you renounced the Zionist group, meaning when you realized that you could not afford to go to Palestine?

LI: It was not good...

JF: It was not safe to be associated.

LI: Not safe. That was not for me to say. I put myself in such a--I have now to tell something else. It was one of my good friends. It was a very good friend of mine. He was

the nephew of my neighbors. I have to tell you his name probably, because it's a wonderful name. His name was Cornel Elias and he was in that time was an underground movement, also anti-fascist because the youth had the power to do something, to understand something, and to do something for themselves, for the people, for someone.

JF: This was a Romanian anti-fascist group?

LI: Yes.

JF: And your friend was Jewish or not Jewish?

LI: He was Jewish. Elias is a Jewish name.

JF: These underground movements included both Jewish and non-Jewish children or young people?

LI: Yes, very few non-Jewish. Most of them were Jewish.

JF: Most of them were Jewish.

LI: Most of them were Jewish. And he gave me some books about the result of the revolution in Russia, something like that. And it was at the beginning of our relationship, and I saw him, he was in prison some time...

JF: He was caught?

LI: He was caught. From time to time he needed money, and that was what I did for them. I gave them money how I could. But one time he was in a very bad situation, and I tell you that because of what was done to him after some time. He was caught [unclear], yes? And after a while he became very, he was very sorry and very sad, and his father was such a situation, was an awful situation, and he didn't tell me anything about what it was, but I think he knew that he went to his death, and he was, I think, 16 years old. He was put for the leaders, his leaders, to do such a thing, to take money, you know, paper of one, paper.

JF: Paper money?

LI: Paper money and to go to the tramway. You know what's tramway is?

JF: Yes, the tram.

LI: And to give to the cashier. It was a cashier. I don't know how it is here exactly, but when you enter, you may go only to him to take the ticket.

JF: He went to buy his ticket?

LI: To buy his ticket with this paper, and on the paper was written, "Death to Germans," or something like that. I do not know what.

JF: This was given to him by the leaders of the underground?

LI: Yes, and to do that, like she, he put many times on walls, when the situation was not to be seen by anyone, signs, announcements, you know...

JF: He wrote it on walls?

LI: Or to put some little piece of paper, he glued, and I gave him some help sometime.

JF: You did this, also?

LI: With him, very little, very little, and if he would tell me that, I would tell him because, you know, in the railways there were Communist men, but in the tramway, all the people there was Iron Guard people, and how to send someone in a tramway? You are stuck. You cannot run in any part.

JF: This is like a subway, under the ground?

LI: Yes, but it was like an elevator. It was over the ground.

JF: I see, but it was enclosed?

LI: It does exist here, tramways. You are jumping in, and all the doors are closed from this station to the other station, and in between you have to take your ticket paying, and if you are giving such a paper, the cashier has to know how much you are giving him to let you have some little money back or something. Then he immediately knew what was written here and he caught him immediately. And he was sent...

JF: The cashier caught him?

LI: Yes, sure, and he was sent to death.

JF: Do you know anything about what happened to him?

LI: Yes, I know all. Some came to me, a friend of his, and he stated, "You may go to live in another house, not in your house for awhile, for some days, because they were..." It was a good friend of his who knew immediately what happened from his sister. No, no, his sister came to me. I don't know, but someone came to me to tell me, "You have to go, not to remain in that house because Cornell was caught."

JF: He was in prison?

LI: He was in prison, and they did such a thing to someone who put him, tell all the names he know and also...

JF: Wait, they tortured him?

LI: Yes, they tortured him. They tortured in such a way to push him to tell the names he know...

JF: So this included your name?

LI: Yes, and she was afraid for him not to tell also my name.

JF: You did not know whether he had mentioned your name or not?

LI: I am sure he didn't, because no one came. He didn't. He didn't tell any names. He didn't. I am sure. Absolutely. He was somehow fanatic.

JF: He was somehow fanatic?

LI: Fanatic. He was sentenced to death very quickly, and his mother--he prayed also me to write for her a letter. She went to the King Mother⁴ to pray her, because he was so young, to let him only in prison.

JF: This was after the King had abdicated, though, wasn't it?

LI: This was in '44.

JF: This was in '44 that this happened?

LI: Yes.

JF: Now, he was a Communist, or he was just an anti-fascist? Which? You don't know exactly.

LI: I was thinking after that he was a Communist.

JF: You thought later that he was a Communist?

LI: Yes, because he never went more than that with me.

JF: He was never very specific about what...?

⁴Possibly the Queen Mother, to whom many requests and pressures to relieve the suffering of Jews were addressed.

LI: He was never very specific and but what they did to him, he had, you know, all one child of a [unclear] has the last wish, and his last wish was to see his mother and then we know that he didn't tell to anyone names, or addresses, or telephone numbers, or nothing.

JF: She told you this?

LI: No, she was not allowed. They didn't allow for him to have the last wish. They didn't grant it, the last wish and he was shot, shot, by a squad. That was...

JF: This was in 1944?

LI: But in between, what I want to tell you, there were some, all those people wanted to do something, and they were speaking in between them, but some knew some sort of organization, some not. That I know after the Zionist organization was disorganized, I told you that was disorganized that organization, I was in with my friend, was not good organized, and that was disorganized all over.⁵ I worked there two times at that address, very careful to see if it is someone there, but no one was any more there and I lost the relationship with them. In that time also were some people who, having some relatives in Bessarabia, or in Bessarabia they went through the boundary back because they thought, "Where to go?" That was the meaning: Where to go? In Romania it is not good, outside, and I know also some people who went so to say with little ships, little, I don't know how to name them, for Palestine, and was mined, and they...

JF: From Romania?

LI: And they were killed. Many of them were killed. Some of them remained in Cyprus.

JF: When you talk about these boats that left from Romania...

LI: That was after a while. I shall tell you also.

JF: Let's back up for a minute. The Iron Guard was exceedingly brutal to many of the people...

LI: Oh, I told you that we stayed in that street...

JF: Yes.

LI: Who has not entrance here? When the Iron Guard came to the power or sometime then I remember one afternoon, we saw tortures, fire tortures all around our street, and they went all around, but no one came. We enter immediately in the basement, in that time. Above us was a very good Christian one, a good one, a friend of my father, was friendly with us, not a good friend, but was friendly. He got me a gift, a little canary, a little canary.

JF: A what?

LI: Little canary, a bird.

JF: Oh, a canary?

⁵Possibly as a result of the dropping of two Jewish parachutists who were dropped over Romania and then managed to secure boats for several thousand Jews. A widespread search for them may have pushed all Zionist activity underground, or made it officially suspect. Nevertheless, it is known that some officials were bribed and arranged successful interventions.

LI: And he was good with us and he told us, "I shall not tell them that you are here."

JF: You were hiding in the basement?

LI: Hiding in some way, but if they will come, he couldn't stop.

JF: He couldn't stop.

LI: But they didn't come because that street was without the exit in that part, in the other part. They couldn't go, so, and they preferred to go around, and they took, and in that time they killed many Jewish people who were bearded, first of all, because they thought that they are Jewish, the men who are bearded...

JF: Bearded men?

LI: Bearded men. They killed many.

JF: This was the big pogrom?

LI: That was, if you want to call it "pogrom, pogrom," but was a slaughter.

JF: A slaughter.

LI: A slaughter, yes. They killed the father of one of my friends in face of her.

JF: In front of her?

LI: In front of her, and they killed rabbis and they killed people, but our luck was, after a while, they killed also Christian people who was not in their mind, and they killed also the Prime Minister, and then the King was against them and they couldn't stay on the government more, and--I think I mixed--I mixed because in that time, I mixed--because if that was in the '40, in the fall of '40, they stayed anywhere between fall, '40 and January '41, I think, and in that time they did many, many killings, and, when they killed a historian, a very good Romanian historian, and the Prime Minister, the captain was caught and sent to the most important prison in Romania and he was killed there. It was done such a judgment and they thought he was outside, and it was fog...

JF: Was there a reaction on the part of these people in the government when it was the Jews who were killed. or only when the Romanians and such people as...?

LI: No, when the Romanians were...

JF: When the Romanians were killed.

LI: Sure.

JF: When the Jews were killed, there was not any kind of protest.

LI: No. No. There were some who said to us after, "Oh, it's such a pity they did that." No. There was not some, and at that time we were not so involved with Romanian, because we were in some sort of ghetto, in our schools, in all this kind of...

JF: Um hum. Now, you said originally that your father had been permitted to continue with his job.

LI: He was put out very rapidly after.

JF: Ah, OK.

LI: That was one time with Goga⁶ when he stated to us that in one week I want to leave Romania. He remained there but he was put out of the service.

JF: Then what happened? Did he try to leave Romania after he was ousted from his job?

LI: I skipped very many things, and now I skipped one very, very important. We were out not only from school etc., we were out from our house and now...

JF: When was this?

LI: I think, I think in '41, in that time.

JF: With the Iron Guard?

LI: Yes, I think so. First of all, all shops, all belongings, shops, first of all. It was not [unclear]. We could see Cohen and Ionescu. Cohen was the owner and Ionescu was the one who...

JF: The one who ran the shop. Who took over the shop.

LI: Who give the Romanian character of the shop, and after a while the Ionescu took all and Cohen could go away.

JF: Which is what happened with your father's business?

LI: No, because my father had no business.

JF: No, the two men that were in charge of the company that he worked for.

LI: Oh, the company, the Jewish one went out and the German remained.

JF: The German remained. That was it.

LI: Yes. A few remained. It was a plant who changed.

JF: Was your father able to find any other kind of work?

LI: No, he worked here and there, here and there, but in that time--and he had had some money, and in that time it was something worse than that for us. They tell me that four Romanians to come into our house and for us to go out.

JF: Did you own your home?

LI: Yes.

JF: And they just took it from you?

LI: Completely. Upstairs, it was the aunt of, I told you, it was the aunt from this Cornell who was killed, as I told you, after being in prison, but before that, his aunt was upstairs and was our, how to say? They rent from us the upstairs, and the situation was that we have to let them come and see the house to make a choice if they want that house, without money.

JF: These were Romanian civilians?

LI: Yes, Romanian civilians, to come in our house to see the house and to make a choice if they want that house or another, or the other--I don't know what. My father couldn't stand it. I saw him, for the first time in my life my father crying, because he couldn't stay. He said to me, he was very honest one, who all the money he put, he

⁶Goga, Octavian (1881-1938), poet and virulent antisemite, prime minister of Romania for forty days in 1937.

worked very much, as I said to you, it was the last shot. He did that house, it was not a big house, it was a little house, but it was for his family, and he wanted for me to me to have the upstairs part, but I was not married at that time and I couldn't stay there. I stayed with them and he couldn't stay. I was the only one, my mother, because he became so weak, my mother she stayed with me but they let me, because I was somehow, as I said to you, sort of fighter at some time and I thought in my mind that I shall leave Romania. That house doesn't mean to me so much as for...

Tape three, side one:

JF: You said you were a fighter.

LI: No, when I, when I could.

JF: When you could?

LI: There was many times I couldn't, and I cried very much.

JF: When did you feel that you were a fighter? In what circumstances do you feel that you could express that?

LI: When there was an injustice toward me, or toward someone, I was a fighter, and even toward my class.

JF: In what way? Can you give me an example?

LI: How? To let them know that they did that and that it is not right. It doesn't matter what happened to me after.

JF: You would say this?

LI: I would say that to them and I said, when I was a little one, to that teacher of mine that what she did to me with that lousy thing was not right because I didn't do anything bad. My father then...

JF: You spoke up then for your rights?

LI: Yes, I spoke up.

JF: You felt that somehow you would get out at this time when your family was taken from their home? You felt somehow you would get out of Romania.

LI: Yes. I thought that I don't want to stay there too much.

JF: What about your parents? Did you feel that your parents wanted to stay?

LI: My father was becoming old and he thought that what was his situation, he couldn't do anything outside, that he has not technical knowledge to do something technical on his own.

JF: You mean, to leave Romania?

LI: To leave Romania and what to do in another part. First was, he would-- there are so many things that come in my mind that I think that I am, that I changed the time. Let me finish that because it was a family who owned a house in another area of Bucharest came to us to take the apartment upstairs, to stay there without money and to rent their own house, telling me-- I didn't know at that particular time--but telling me, "Oh, you are the owner, then I shall take the apartment upstairs, because I don't want, I am so good, I don't want to take your own apartment, the apartment of an owner."

JF: This was a non-Jewish family that was coming in?

LI: All. All. In one day came a lady, an obese one, who came from another little town in Romania and she told me, "I want to come in Bucharest. Then, I want to come here to be with my sister because my husband is an officer and he is fighting in Russia." You know that Romanians fought with Germany in Russia. "Oh yes, I like your house, and that, and that, I want to enter in that house." My mother heard that and came.

"You know, I want to enter in that house tomorrow, at ten o'clock." My mother said, "We have no place where to go. We have nothing." That was December, 1940, and I was there, but I had rubeola.⁷ I had a little bit of fever, not too much, and I had in that time that I was somehow ill, and my mother said to her, "Where to go? You know that we have no place where to go? Why to come from today to tomorrow?" "If you shall not be out from here tomorrow at ten, you see that vase?" And she took a crystal vase. "I shall put all these things in 80 pieces," or something like that. It was absolutely clear. The result was that we lost all our furniture and...

JF: She took all of your belongings?

LI: No, she took some little things. So, in her way, as the lady of the house, she became all of a sudden, in that first minute the lady of the house.

JF: And what did she do with your furniture?

LI: We took some furniture and we put it in a sort of a garage. Never saw it again. Never, ever. Some we could take with us. My parents went to my uncle's house, and my uncle was with his parents-in-law, and they had a little room for my parents, and my mother was there cooking and doing all of these kind of things for them and I was, how to say, in another place with another aunt, but she has also a little apartment, rented, and no one took that rented apartment because it was an apartment where the owner was a Romanian one. It was Jewish people but the owner, who was Romanian, was allowed to remain. If the owner was Jewish people and the Jewish renter was Jewish, they had to go and Romanian can come in. Then, I said, how you say, that was December, '41, that was not '40.

JF: December '41.

LI: And, that was two days before the New Year. That was probably why she was in such a hurry to be there, I don't know. I slept in the entrance hall of my aunt. When you opened the door, there was my bed, and that was--it was very hard for me.

JF: Were you in school at this time, or had you finished?

LI: I finished the high school and I was in the first year of medical school in a Jewish medical school.

JF: You had entered a Jewish medical school?

LI: Yes.

JF: Were the Jewish medical schools accredited by the state?

LI: No. Not in that time, after, after.

JF: After the war, it was recognized. In retrospect, anybody who had been there at that time was certified?

LI: Yes, because our teachers were all, belonged, I told you, one time to the Medical, regular Medical School of Bucharest.

JF: Can you tell me a little bit about medical school? Can you tell me what it was like at that time?

⁷Another name for measles.

LI: Was like at that time: We could do also dissection.

JF: You could do dissection? Where did you get the cadavers?

LI: They did. Despite the rabbis and all the other things.

JF: They were Jewish cadavers?

LI: They were Jewish cadavers from Jewish hospitals and we did not too much, I think, but when we enter after in the normal Romanian medical school, we saw that our colleagues who did the training in this time, did less than us.

JF: You had the cream of the crop, as far as your professors were concerned?

LI: Yes, as a teacher we had.

JF: And your education was not interrupted by what was going on in Europe?

LI: Was not interrupted. I had from my uncle his books, and if I wouldn't have, it was so we did a sort of good organization to learn, to have the possibility to learn.

JF: The hospital, there was a hospital within the Jewish section that was still functioning?

LI: Yes.

JF: One hospital, or more? You said that there were two medical schools.

LI: It was two.

JF: Two hospitals.

LI: It doesn't matter whose was because they were sent to work there without, we worked in the hospital without money. We worked in order to learn.

JF: You had to pay tuition for the medical school.

LI: Yes. Some. It was very variable, and the director was speaking with us, and I had to give very few.

JF: Very little money?

LI: Very little money, and others had nothing to give, even nothing because that was in the community.

JF: How many students were in medical school at that time? Approximately?

LI: I don't know.

JF: In your class?

LI: Could be 15 or 20.

JF: Fifteen or 20 in your class?

LI: Yes, and at the same time we had to do, you know that was enforced labor my father did, because you asked me what did my father. My father did what he could. If he had had some friends, Romanian friends and some others who was [unclear] Cohen and Ionescu and Cohen said to Ionescu, "Call this one because they can give some work for you, very good to clear your situation, not to be so bad," and then he could do some work in that way.

JF: So, he did some work for this Ionescu who was a Romanian who was helpful to him?

LI: Yes, and from some of them.

JF: That is how he got whatever monies he got.

LI: But he was taken for special labor, for imposed labor, what is that?

JF: Forced labor.

LI: Forced labor.

JF: What about you? Were you expected...?

LI: I was also, but I shall tell you what did my father. My father was put in that year, I don't remember the year, it was in that year we were out from our house, they put to pull a chariot; instead of horse they put men on that chariot, and he was put with others. They were four to pull a chariot, in summer, were rocks; in winter was snow, and he told me the snow was very weighty.

JF: Is what?

LI: Very heavy.

JF: Very heavy. So he was pulling a cart, as if he were a horse or an animal?

LI: Yes. I was sent to some sort of building, they did some sort of statistics with us. They gave us--took I, in one time I took the beans out from the other vegetables. I couldn't understand and I didn't want to understand anything, what I was doing. They give us something to take out a number or something, a very--the same thing for all these that were many, many papers, for some outside work from the crops, the result of the crops, and to take out some and to let the other and to do the difference, how was the crops in that year and what was the result for beans in another year, and what was the result for cabbage in another year.

JF: How many hours a week were you supposed to be doing this?

LI: All the afternoon.

JF: All the afternoon or all the day?

LI: No, all the afternoon.

JF: And, then, when did you go to class?

LI: In the morning.

JF: In the morning you were able to go to class?

LI: Some hours in the morning.

JF: Was there--the Jewish medical schools were not secret? The Romanian government knew that they existed?

LI: Yes. Sure.

JF: There was no objection to them existing?

LI: No.

JF: They did not interfere in any way with the functioning of the medical schools?

LI: No. They were not shut any time. But the government was Antonescu. This was a general who was somehow against the Iron Guard and who told Hitler, when Hitler had to make a decision who to remain in the power in Romania because...

JF: Antonescu was the cooperative?

LI: Antonescu said to him, "I have the army," and that was the real thing that made Hitler to make the decision, because he saw that after the captain was killed, Horia Sima⁸ fled, but he came back, and when he came back, Hitler saw that they are disorganized and they have not the masses, the population with them.

JF: And Antonescu had the people?

LI: Yes.

JF: And the army?

LI: Antonescu was also very antisemitic, but he--here is something, I think, from Romanian history to learn, that Romania being a little country, that country was dependent on another powerful country all the time. When they were under Turkey, when they were under so and so, they always had some alliances with a powerful one.

JF: They couldn't do it by themselves?

LI: Yes, and all war, they were staying somehow and they wanted to see who would be victorious to be with them. In the beginning they were with the Germans. You know that very well, and they were always with Germans because the King was from a German family. The first one, but Carol, who was the king in my childhood, during my childhood, was allied with French and English, but the French and English did Munich and the others, and the result was such that he couldn't stay any longer and he had to resign and to leave Romania, and his son came to the throne, but he was a child and Antonescu had the power.

JF: How do you understand, if you describe Antonescu as an antisemitic, how do you understand the fact that he permitted such a rich educational life to go on within the Jewish community?

LI: He didn't think that that was rich. He didn't think that that will be recognized, and he used so many people and he was involved in many things else, and that was not important for them. We have that was out, the artists were out. We had beautiful artists, actresses.

JF: They were kicked out?

LI: We have had also a theatre. Once.

JF: A very rich theatre.

LI: They did such beautiful presentations with some political understanding that even the Romanian actors and actresses came, that we have not always Germans, the Romanians. There were some who understood their real situation, but they couldn't do anything. It--one could not do. No one that [unclear]. No one can understand that no Jew could do anything. When we knew that many went out and was mined and they were killed. And there was no place to [unclear] that *Struma*, I told you. I told you that one of my friends was a very, not only my cousin I told you about my cousin who was a lawyer and an engineer...

JF: But we are talking now about the boat, the *Struma*?

⁸Leader of Iron Guard after Codreanu.

LI: Yes, and that was a very old boat and some of the people thought about that boat. It was a Greek [unclear]. How to say? As Onassis was, how to say? It was a Greek one, who owned, the owner, and it was very old and some people thought that this ship is a real coffin.

JF: A coffin.

LI: One of my neighbors, a young neighbor, a friend of mine, had a ticket for--it was a sort of madness. It was not the first ship to go out, and one of my friends had a ticket for the first--when was the first organized to go out, the first time for that ship to go to Palestine, and it was postponed because the ship was in such a situation, was impossible to...

JF: It was in very bad condition.

LI: Very bad condition, and after that were also two other postponements and the third one or the fourth one, I don't remember, my cousin said to us that he has to go immediately. I don't know why he worried about. I don't know why. He took his mother, his mother was my grandfather's sister, and he was the first cousin of my mother. He was a lawyer and an engineer and his name was Merlow [phonetic]. He was a wise, very respected one, and despite he was a younger one, he was not married and because of him, my other uncle gave him his son, my cousin, who was at that time 18, I think, 18 years old, he gave him to him in order to go to Palestine and to be the first of our family to be put in that country, and in that time on that ship went my friend, my neighbor, [name unclear]. He told me before, "I am reluctant to go with that ship because it was so many times postponed, and I wanted so much the first time, but with all these postponements, I don't think it is a good one. I don't want to go, but..." Another one, I told you we were in some street, very close to each other, and the other one named Louis Helibrant. This one was a very gifted one, he was very gifted in painting and architecture, and he wanted to take me with him, and I told him, "I shall not go without my parents, and it's not--if you want to go there and we shall write each other and we shall see what will be." That is my only guilt that I couldn't retain him to stay. He wanted so much. He wanted to go because being older, he lost years. He was put out from architecture. It took a while to do the architecture high school. I told you. I have to do two years of high school. The high school was there easier to be done because the elementary school was--and it was in the same classes or something, the same building, but the medical school or the university has to be built, and that took years, and many of my friends who were older than me, they lost years doing nothing or doing something or changing or--I cannot tell you so many things they did and forced labor, as my husband has done forced labor in a railway, for railway to...

JF: Digging for the tracks?

LI: Digging for the tracks, or whatsoever, digging, and that is the same thing that did my father in some way. Instead of digging he pulled the chariot.

JF: Did...?

LI: And after that, some of them also came to do the same thing as I did when I was in the university. I told you that we had to do a special work in statistics. I told you about this.

JF: Yes.

LI: But to come back to the *Struma*. That Louis wanted so much to go away, to be able to do his life. He couldn't see anything anymore. He has only his mother, and was in my neighborhood. And he, with his enthusiasm, he pushed his good friend, a marvelous young man, and this [unclear] who didn't want anymore to go, he came back and he said, "He will go." And other, on the same street, someone who was across from my home, and they were six which I know. They went with that ship, and on that ship was also the father of my colleague. He was older, and he was also sent by his family to be the first one to see what is to be done and how to prepare ourselves to go there, etc. And they were on the ship that was like a coffin, as I said. It was a very old one and it was fixed many times and probably not good.

JF: And the people who were going on the ship knew that before they went?

LI: No. These people, I told you, there was only one who had a ticket for the first voyage, and he thought something is wrong with that, because was postponed so many times. But the others thought, "Oh, I have the possibility, that possibility comes to me and I have to take it immediately."

JF: They were not worried about the ship itself?

LI: Yes. They didn't want to think about that. They were so happy to have it that they didn't want to know anything wrong about the ship and that was--I shall do a design for you. I don't know if you have in your mind that geographical--that is Romania, yes. That is Romania. Here is the Black Sea.

JF: Yes.

LI: And here is the Turkey.

JF: Right.

LI: And here is the Greece, yes?

JF: Yes.

LI: One have to go through Bospor. Before Bospor, before Bosphorus, they were stopped here. Here is the Black Sea.

JF: Yes.

LI: South of the Black Sea, the south coast, which was Turkish, and here is Istanbul.

JF: Yes.

LI: They remained here and remained here and couldn't go farther. I know that they ran out of water and no one allowed any other ship to give them water. That was one version. The other was that they were killed by a German ship.⁹ They were...

⁹According to the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* the ship, *Struma*, was sunk in error by a Soviet submarine with 769 Jews aboard (pp.1297).

JF: Torpedoed?

LI: No. German ships bombed them. But, in the time that they stayed there, one woman was pregnant and near to deliver. She was allowed to go in the Istanbul hospital and she delivered there the child.

JF: And what happened to her, do you know?

LI: I think she went in Palestine, I think.

JF: How did you hear about her?

LI: You know, I heard about the father of my friend one day when I went there. I think it was also in a newspaper, in some Jewish newspaper or something.

JF: The reports had been that there was only one survivor, a man?

LI: No.

JF: But you are saying there were two.

LI: Yes, I heard from many of our--knowledge of our ideas.

JF: From different sources?

LI: Yes, as example, my friend, [unclear] I tell you that I have a good friend for ten years, she was a colleague of mine in *Lyceum* and in the medical school also, and her father has a big house. They were wealthy, and they had a good radio set and they heard the BBC, London, London was our source, and from time to time we heard, we were there or he heard and he told me or he told his daughter, it was all sort of...

JF: He heard this story on the BBC, about the *Struma*.

LI: We know the *Struma*.

JF: No, about the survivor. I am talking about the woman that survived it.

LI: It could be that that was the BBC, I am not so sure.

JF: Okay.

LI: I am not so sure but I can ask someone. What I want to know...

Tape three, side two:

JF: The area of Bucharest that you were now living in, after you were ousted from your home, was this an official ghetto, now? Was this sealed off in anyway from the rest of Bucharest?

LI: No. Never.

JF: This was never sealed off?

LI: Never sealed off.

JF: You were able to go and come with freedom?

LI: Yes. Yes.

JF: Were you required in anyway to identify yourselves as Jews?

LI: No. In Bucharest, never. We have never had the yellow...

JF: Star.

LI: No star.

JF: There was a Dr Filderman¹⁰ who was quite...

LI: Oh, yes.

JF: Who was quite helpful.

LI: Dr. Filderman has had the possibility to speak with this general, the head of the state, and to promise him...

JF: Antonescu.

LI: Antonescu, and to promise him money and whatsoever. The problems, you know, they were sent, they took the north of Transylvania when the Russians took Bessarabia and Bukovina. The Hungarians took again the north part of Transylvania, and they sent in Auschwitz the Jews of the north part, but the Jews from Moldavia. There was also was a pogrom in Bucharest and was in Jassy. In Jassy a big part of my family was killed because they were very many were put in some special, you heard about cattle trains?

JF: Cattle trains.

LI: Yes, many of them, and they were killed in that train because they were not able to...

JF: They suffocated.

LI: They were suffocated, and some of them went in a special camp in Transnistria.

JF: The special camp...

LI: In Transnistria. I shall remind that--in Mogilev, in Mogilev.

JF: In Mogilev.

LI: My cousin came out from Mogilev and he was so...

JF: He was so thin?

LI: And he was with a sort of bag. You know bags for potatoes.

¹⁰Dr. Wilhelm Filderman, leader of the Jewish community.

JF: A potato sack?

LI: Sack.

JF: That is what he was wearing?

LI: We sent--the community, the Jewish community told us, if you have some dresses, clothing, something, and we sent for them many things. Very few came there, was stolen.

JF: You mean this was during the war?

LI: Yes, was during the war.

JF: Tell me more about the functioning of the Jewish community in Bucharest. You were not held to a ghetto. Dr. Filderman was able to speak with Antonescu.

LI: Yes.

JF: Tell me about the Jewish Council and the functionings of the government in the ghetto. What were they able to do for you and what couldn't they do for you?

LI: I think that they could sustain all of these schools. They did something not to have a problem, or to have other killing. They...

JF: How did they do that?

LI: I think they promised money.

JF: The Jewish Council promised the government money?

LI: I think so. I don't know.

JF: Where would the money come from.

LI: There were some people, who were--I ask myself, there were wealthy Jewish people before, and probably they lived somewhere in provinces, not in Bucharest, and not in the biggest towns of Romania, who were under the power of Legionaires [Iron Guards] or something like that. I think they have hidden and they have some money, or they have from outside.

JF: Were these people brought into Bucharest or did they come to Bucharest from the more rural areas around?

LI: Yes, many came from...

JF: Were they forced to, or did they come by choice?

LI: No, they came for protection.

JF: And some of these families...

LI: Can I tell you something very, very--it's not a joke.

JF: Yes.

LI: It is not a joke, it is reality. I told you that my family was in that town where the captain of the Iron Guard was.

JF: Yes.

LI: When they were in power, they called my grandfather and my uncles. My grandfather was not so wealthy, but my uncles had some shops, and they beat them, I told

you, they beat them, because they wanted money to make a fountain, how to say? A fountain...

JF: A fountain, a city fountain.

LI: A city fountain, but the city had not normal water. They have old fountains to take water from.

JF: A well?

LI: A well, yeh. And how to do a fountain if the water...?

JF: There was not enough water supply or pressure for a fountain?

LI: No, they wanted that as a monument for him, and how to do such a monument, exactly such a monument, in a town that has not water pumping? It was a crazy thing, absolutely crazy, and they were beaten, and I had told them, they were diabetics, and they had such a problem. After that, they came in Bucharest, some of them who could, two of them.

JF: People were free to come to Bucharest, then, to move into this restricted area?

LI: You know, Romania, one could deal with some people with money or with goods, and they realized, they had furniture, their homes, that is not so much for them. When they saw that, they saw that they have to run away from that place.

JF: The streets in Bucharest where the Jews lived, these were restricted, these were a restricted number of streets where they were supposed to live?

LI: No, not the restriction as you know in a Warsaw Ghetto. I was in Warsaw after the war and I saw, and I was at Auschwitz also. Better not to go there. But, that doesn't matter. I have had some relatives who were there, they were sent to Auschwitz, northern Bukovina, they were in Bukovina, they were in the north of Transylvania, I told you that, and the others to the other part...

JF: Did you know, when you were in Bucharest, during the war, exactly what was happening?

LI: Not exactly, not exactly.

JF: How much did you know?

LI: That is, I know that they did something wrong to Jewish people, more, but not only to Jewish people, also to some who were not in their political, in their mind. We knew that does exist in some camps, but not what was done in that camps. What we knew was that many people were killed on their spot in Romania. Most people were not sent in camps, was killed in their towns, in their places, where they were.

JF: When you talk about the Romanians who were killed in their spots, in their towns, was this killing done by Germans or by Romanians?

LI: By the Romanians, most. By the Legionaires.

JF: You are talking about the Iron Guard?

LI: Iron Guard.

JF: Was this under orders from the Germans, or was this self-motivated?

LI: I don't know. What I am thinking is they gave some sort of free-hand, and they beat by their own, because they did not only to Jewish people, as I told you, they killed very many, very high and interesting personalities. Political, Romanian personalities were killed in that time. In fact I told you about Jorga who was one of their renowned historians, about Duca [phonetic] who was a very good minister of them, about Calinescu and all these people and...

JF: They went after the intelligentsia, the artists, the writers also?

LI: Yes. Of them.

JF: Of the Romanians? Did they go after, as they did in Poland, for instance, where they wiped out the intelligentsia?

LI: The Jewish intelligentsia was put out from their work place.

JF: What about the non-Jewish? Was that also under attack by the Iron Guard?

LI: No. They were not.

JF: They were left alone. Okay. There were no deportations? There were no round-ups from Bucharest?

LI: There were some who disappeared, but we don't know.

JF: Individuals?

LI: Individuals disappeared. That was the meaning that this, the sister of Cornell, [phonetic] I told you came to me, but there were others who were more--she didn't know the exact situation. That was her meaning when she came to me, because I didn't know exactly what Cornell did. I know some. He just probably, probably I thought after, that probably he wanted to make me understand and go farther and farther to help him in his way.

JF: After his death, did you know much of what was going on in the underground movement?

LI: Yes, yes, after the liberation. [unclear]

JF: He died in '44?

LI: Yes.

JF: So it wasn't until after his death that you were aware of...?

LI: I didn't know him, I didn't know him much a long time before.

JF: It wasn't until you knew...?

LI: He was in prison for a while. He was in prison for a long while. He died in the spring of '44, I think. I am not so sure. I am not so sure. You could ask my husband because he knew.

JF: Your knowledge of the underground movements, then, the anti-fascist movements, were not until you knew him?

LI: No. No. I, I know that that exists when I lost--that there exists some underground, Zionist movement, but I couldn't locate it then.

JF: The Zionists?

LI: Right, the Zionists. I know that is--I heard that is a communist underground. I knew that does existed from him because he told me like that. Oh, I know from other one also, who was a Christian one, who was also a friend of another friend, who he came to me and told me, you know, for this anti-fascist, yes I know from more than his time about that, and I gave him also some money. I--it was also Jewish people who wanted money, or, Keren Kayemet, you know that? And we gave for Keren Kayemet was not only money, but was also goods, clothes.

JF: Was this done through the Jewish Council, or this was...?

LI: Jewish.

JF: This was done through the Jewish Council? And you gave clothes, you gave money, for other parts of Romania where the Jews were suffering?

LI: Yes, and for a while, for a time, we knew that was Mogilev, and after that we heard that was stolen by some...

JF: It was supposed to go Mogilev, to the camp in Mogilev?

LI: Yes.

JF: But you don't think that it got there?

LI: I don't know, I think they got some. When my cousin came with these beautiful dressing, he told us that they have had no much, and we thought that they have something, even not for eating, but for clothing. I don't know exactly what it was.

JF: What other kinds of functions did the Jewish Council perform during this time? They were supporting the educational system, the two medical schools. The names of the medical schools, by the way were...?

LI: Yes, one was Onescu. Onescu is a Romanian name but that was his name, it was a man who was a good organizer.

JF: And how was that spelled.

LI: O-N-E-S-C-U and Ernest Abason. Ernest is Ernest, and Abason is A-B-A-S-O-N.

JF: And which of the schools were you in?

LI: I was in the Onescu.

JF: You were in the Onescu school. So they were supporting these medical schools, they were supporting the hospital, they were supporting the high schools.

LI: The other schools. All the schools at that time because no one had--we have the theatre, and that theatre was, by the way, named Barashum [originally a theater in Bucharest]. If any one told you about Barashum, that was before that time. It was a Jewish club, a sort of club, a sort of unity between Jewish people, between Jewish men who worked together to be able to help poor people.

JF: What was this called?

LI: Barashum. And my father was a member of this.

JF: And they would get together for the idea of helping people?

LI: That was before the war.

JF: Yes, this was under the Jewish Council?

LI: Yes.

JF: And this existed afterwards.

LI: I think we have a big picture of them with the president in the middle, with all those people around.

JF: Were they also involved in any kind of religious, either education or for any kind of religious practice, during the war?

LI: I think that they sustained the synagogue, because in the time that I didn't tell you, but in the time of Iron Guard and even after, some synagogues were disaffected, or destroyed. I don't know if they were completely destroyed, but they were disaffected by the Iron Guard.

JF: How many synagogues were left during the war, that you know of?

LI: Two. Three very important. They were one for Sephardim, one for Ashkenazim, and they may be separated and there were some little who remained...

JF: Small Orthodox groups?

LI: Yes, not specifically Orthodox, but they go together, doesn't matter if there is a synagogue or not a synagogue because that was in the area where there were very many Jews.

JF: Were these like *havurim*, these groups?

LI: Yes, they handle to go into a good situation with police, you know, with the policemen who was in that area.

JF: Who permitted them to meet?

LI: Ya, he [laughing].

JF: He looked the other way?

LI: Exactly.

JF: So, this would be a very small group, like a *minyan* of people.

LI: But, there were many *minyan*. Many.

JF: Many, many.

LI: Because I know that, because that was--I told you that I have an uncle, not this one, another one, the brother of my grandfather, who was a doctor and who let his son to go with *Struma*. He had the house he left in that area where this little tiny synagogues were. They remained. My father was also to one of them in one time.

JF: So, there was no interference in the functioning of the synagogues by the police or by the government?

LI: From time to time, they want to see how we did something, stop it, close it or something, but...

JF: Generally they were permitted to function?

LI: And I feel, as I said to you, at one time the General knew that Hitler will...

JF: You're talking about Antonescu now?

LI: Antonescu, yes. Will not...

JF: He would not win?

LI: He would not win the war.

JF: This was why he...

LI: You know, he sent very slowly, very, very slowly, and that was our luck, because if that was a matter of time and power.

JF: So, he was protecting himself by protecting the Jewish...

LI: He didn't protect the Jews. He protected himself and the state, and Romania. That was. No, he never helped the Jews. No.

JF: But, he was protecting himself, given that Germany could fail.

LI: Because of the radio station and all our news we had in some time, it was such a believing that America will come, and France or English will come, and it was correct one time they entered in Italy, and by the way, we have two times Americans came by airplane, and they killed, was killed a big amount of Jewish people.

JF: How?

LI: How? They come to--their goal was to make a bombardment of that area where is the Romanian, the Romanian oil, [Ploesti oil fields] if you have some idea...

JF: This is what the Germans were counting on, the Romanian oil, so they were out to bomb the oil fields?

LI: Sure, they were right. But they missed the point in some. It was what I remember very well, it was once when they went to Ploesti, that is, the area near the mountains, after Bucharest, the south of Bucharest, that is Ploesti, and that is, so to say, the area with oil. They wanted for sure to make a bombardment on that area and to cut the oil there. But I don't know...

JF: They missed their target?

LI: They missed their target in some amount. It was very bad.

JF: And where were the Jews that were killed?

LI: That was once. The second time I don't know what they wanted. They came in August, in April the 4th, '44. It was '44. April 4th was a big bombardment on Bucharest because they were some Germans who, some German army...

JF: There was some German army in Bucharest?

LI: Yes, they wanted to destroy them, to change the way of the war, probably, and they did a bombardment on an area where the medical school is, and there is sort of a big house of the king, kings. I spoke with many mistakes, I think. And in that area were very, very many Jews, and you know, the only possibility to help yourself in that time, they have some hole, what to say, in the earth, linear...

JF: Holes.

LI: Holes, as in the war, you know, they were...

JF: Like trenches.

LI: Like trenches in zig zag, and when a bomb came, you were exactly in the earth. And were killed very many people there.

JF: There were trenches...

LI: Sort of trenches.

JF: ...that were in the city of Bucharest, and when the bombers came...

LI: Yes, they came overhead.

JF: The people in the trenches were killed. Did they hit the medical school?

LI: No.

JF: They didn't hit their goal?

LI: No. No. I don't think that the medical school was a goal. The only thing was a monument of a renowned doctor was down. That was all. No, they hit in some amount. We were not there because we were in our school. They hit in some amount, but not too much.

JF: Did you have much contact with the German troops that were stationed in Bucharest?

LI: The only time I saw them, no. But the only time I saw them, was, that was a bombardment when I was in the street with my mother, and we saw three German soldiers who were hiding themselves in a little plant, a textile plant, near our house. We didn't know that they were there, and after, when we came out from our basement we were in, and go to our house, we saw them, these three with [unclear].

JF: Handcuffs?

LI: Handcuffs. They were taken by the workers.

JF: What else happened during that time, before we get to the end of the war? Is there anything else that you can fill us in on, that you would like to talk about?

LI: Yes, many. Very many, I have not put together all of my ideas. Once I was to a concerto, in a little recital, it was a recital house.

JF: When you talk about something like that, was this Jewish?

LI: No, no.

JF: This was a regular, public...?

LI: This was before we were sent out from our home and not allowed in a public...

JF: Before there were restrictions?

LI: Oh, yes, and Mr. Kempff¹¹--you heard about Kempff, the pianist, came to give a recital. It was not he, the only one that came. Came also others, German people, but he was the only one who gave a recital in Daris [phonetic], that is the name of the building with the little recital room, and the tickets were sold normally, and I was with a friend of mine. At the beginning when he came, he said that he didn't want for any Jew to be there, to be at his concert. He took me out because I wanted to cry. Why, then, they sold the tickets? And that turned me out from all this kind. My hope was, my only good feeling was that the other one--I shall remember his name, he was a renowned one--who gave concerts but he never tell this kind of things and we were able to hear. I shall

¹¹Wilhelm Kempff, (1895-1991) noted German pianist.

remember his name because I want to--you know these differences are very important and I think that Kempff was not taught to say something. That was for his own will to say that.

JF: Oh, he was not told to say that? This was his own feelings.

LI: Yes, his feelings, because I told another person and they said, "Oh, he is such a good pianist." He's even now, I don't know exactly now, he's now very old. I don't know if he's alive but—Giesecking,¹² you heard about Giesecking?

JF: Giesecking did not say such a thing?

LI: I don't know what was his source either, but he never did that and, how to say, was the distortion of life what they did to us. They took for us our ideals. I wanted to do something in art. That war took lives as killing people, directly their bombing, or killing their psyche, or killing their dreams, or killing something in themselves or distorting their lives.

JF: You said that you knew somewhat what was happening. You knew that the concentration camps existed during the war...

LI: I knew that it was a camp in Mogilev.

JF: Mogilev.

LI: I knew about that.

JF: But, you didn't know about the death camps in the rest of Europe?

LI: No.

JF: During the war?

LI: I know that many bad things, beatings and worse things was done to Jewish people in Germany.

JF: You did not know that the Jews had been singled out for elimination?

LI: No.

JF: Until after the war?

LI: That idea was not, doesn't came, that wasn't, that they doesn't want, but was not clear that they did this kind of criminal things and to put them into mass killings. The idea of mass killings was not to us, was not clear.

¹²Walter Giesecking, (1895-1950) noted German pianist.

Tape four, side one:

JF: The idea of mass killing was not something, the idea of extermination centers, death camps, was not something that you had any idea about?

LI: That I know, no. I know that they did something very wrong, and something very wrong possible to be killed, as such, in cattle, in trains or in cattle trains...

JF: Did you fear that your family would be deported in some way?

LI: Yes, in such a way, killed in trains, killed being sent there.

JF: Like Mogilev?

LI: Like Mogilev or like this kind, or by soldiers who killed people here and there, here and there.

JF: Random killings?

LI: Yes.

JF: These kinds of random killings, these were going on in Bucharest, on the streets? Would people be killed at random, or were these the people who disappeared that you talked about before?

LI: They disappeared. They were killed when this type of pogrom were, and this kind of situation were, in the little town of the country, when was this change with Bessarabia and the other. We knew some of them were killed because some of our, not family, friends, were killed, some Jewish soldier were killed when was this change from getting Bessarabia to Russia and Transylvania to Hungary. These changing situation was immediately they took the advantage to do some killings and to revenge, or something like that, or to kill someone to remain with all his goods. It will be very good for friend to disappear. If you cannot make him disappear in another way, you can make him disappear in that way for sure.

JF: What else did you want to mention about the war period? You said that there were several things that you wanted to talk about.

LI: [Long pause] You know, it was a joke, one time. It was many jokes that was our, what we eat in that time, and it was such a situation, that was a joke: Someone is praying to God, "Dear God, for 5000 years we have been your chosen people, and that is enough. Choose another one now." That was the feeling that we wanted to be helped, and no one could help us and we were in such a situation, it was a sort of enraging situation, what to do? We couldn't do anything.

JF: You said that jokes were what you ate. It was an important factor in keeping your spirits.

LI: Jokes, yes.

JF: Can you tell me more about that?

LI: Oh, I don't know what it was, but there were...

JF: A lot of humor was used to keep people's spirits?

LI: Yes, you told me that you knew in Barashum. I told you in that building of Barashum all these people who were actors and actresses, Jewish actors and actresses, and entertainment and so, they did a very good entertainment.

JF: And they were permitted to do this throughout the war?

LI: It was in the time of the war.

JF: In the war?

LI: And they thought that they doesn't understood, it was some sort of, you know...

JF: Like a double meaning?

LI: Hidden, double-meaning, hidden meaning.

JF: This was Yiddish theatre, or Romanian?

LI: Was in Romanian and in Yiddish, was also in Romanian. There are songs, there are songs in Yiddish, songs in Romanian, and so. And I told you that they were also in Romanian because many of Christian Romanians came to see that.

JF: And they would not get in trouble for coming to the Jewish theatre?

LI: I don't think so because they were the most renowned. You know, some of the most renowned figures, they couldn't do anything very worse to them because of the public situation was sufficiently worse. At that time the war was somehow clear, that the war was not gained. It was lost, but no one knew and was another word that ran between us. If you can remain alive, you shall have a beautiful life after. No one knew what sort of beautiful life. We knew after what sort of beautiful life, but in that time all we wanted to remain alive. That was all. Wanted to remain alive and to help each other, because we were only in that way to help only between us. No one from outside could help us. All wanted from us to take advantage of something, to take our houses, to take our goods, to take all they wanted from us. And that was our meaning [unclear]. There were some who could do some, let us say, translation. Not to sign their name, or to remind their--some change their name you know when you are signing something, to sign another name. Now, to remind your real name and to put your real name, and that was in some--I don't remember for how long was that they couldn't write in Romanian. That was something that was absolutely more than a joke.

JF: Wait, the Jews were not allowed to write in Romanian? Was that throughout the war?

LI: It was not all the time.

JF: Not the whole time.

LI: Because [unclear].

JF: You started to complete the story about your medical training. You started medical school in what year? In '41?

LI: In '42. In fall '42.

JF: In '42. So that you were not done with medical school at the end of the war?

LI: No, I entered in the medical school in the third year.
JF: You were in the third year?
LI: In the medical school.
JF: And the war was over?
LI: The war was over.
JF: And what happened at that point, after the war? Well, let's talk about the medical school.
LI: After the war?
JF: Yes. What happened?
LI: They were some, they couldn't, they were not allowed any more for a while to say, "You, kike, you dirty kike," or something like that.
JF: They were not allowed to say that?
LI: But they said it.
JF: You mean the government said that they were not allowed?
LI: That was, you know the situation was that not to do things like that. But the king was in power in that time and he was a sort of, he wanted to be a democratical, liberal figure and understandful and all of that, but after that begin to be a very hard to deal with teachers. The colleagues I shall tell you something. My name was with "I." With "I" begin the name of Ionescu, like is here Schmidt or something like that. When they, in the first day, they read, one of the teachers come or an assistant or whatever, he was come to ask the catalog, to ask the name and to see if the person is there, they read three names of Goldstein. Goldstein was a Jewish name. Three Goldsteins. "So many Goldsteins here! What shall we do with them?" And after that came the Ionescus and they were only four Ionescu, Stephen. They were three: Ionescu, Alexander. A. Ionescu, S. Ionescu, V--and then came 15 or 20 Ionescus. That was not too much but only three Goldsteins.
JF: That was too much? The Jewish medical schools were closed when the war ended? What happened? They were dissolved?
LI: Yes. That were the teachers were again in a normal way. They were, I told you that one of them was an academical person in philology and he re-become a professor.
JF: They were reinstated in their former positions?
LI: Yes.
JF: Was there an agreement that the students who were in these Jewish schools could be accepted in the medical schools in Romania?
LI: Yes. Yes.
JF: Did you have to go through any kind of tests, or were you automatically allowed to enroll?
LI: No, the tests was the exams. You can remain or you went out.
JF: From the previous year?

LI: Yes.

JF: So that you automatically were allowed to re-enter as a Jew in a Romanian medical school?

LI: Yes, but we had, how to say? The exams we have had in that year, when all years, when finishing there are some exams in the middle and in the last part. They were very interested who is Jewish to make him a very good examination. It came out that the Jewish were better prepared in many areas than the others.

JF: Were the exams fair, as far as fairly graded, as far as the Jews were concerned?

LI: No, as far as their scores, not so. But it was not so important. Important was the contest.

JF: You were still allowed to continue?

LI: Yes.

JF: What happened when you were back in medical school under the Romanian system? What happened with the other medical students, the non-Jewish medical students? Was that a difficult issue?

LI: It was a difficult issue because they never become friendly with us.

JF: They never did?

LI: No, they never did. Very few of them did, very few. I finally have someone who was friendly with me when again, when again we were able, all of us, or some of us, we were able to help them in one way or another. Or to give them something. And never was there sort of friendship like a friendship between us, to come to my family, to have a chat, or something around the school, or around learning or, "You have a book where I shall learn with you," or something like that.

JF: Did you and your family talk after the war about leaving Romania?

LI: Oh, sure.

JF: And, what made you decide to stay?

LI: Sure. I wanted to leave Romania and I told my father. My father knew that his boss, the Jewish boss was in Palestine. He went to Palestine. You know what people went there, people who was very, very wealthy and could send some money there, or could send something to have something there. They--or people who was pushed to go, as my cousin, who was in a bad situation to remain there, or someone who had nothing, who wanted to, who thought that is the only possibility to remain alive. And many of them when we know that many of them were killed by this man that was stopped and after *Struma* and so we heard about that was there were not so many that wanted to. After the war, there were some who wanted to go. It was easier but they remained in Cyprus, again, to stay in Cyprus and to be sent in Palestine little by little until '48.

JF: Is this what your parents were afraid of, of being caught in Cyprus if they tried to get out?

LI: No, at that time there was no problem. I didn't want to go out because I wanted to finish my studies, my medical studies. I knew that going out, I would not be able.

JF: You would have trouble?

LI: I shall have some trouble and I wanted to finish that. My father wanted to go back in his home. Yes.

JF: Did you get your house back?

LI: Yes. Do you know how? She didn't want to go out. No. She had a very good lawyer and the lawyer of my father was a very stupid one, and because my father wanted so hard to go there immediately, he had to give her something. I don't know what, he never told me because I was so angry about that gesture of his, and to make change after being so--my parents to my uncle's house and I being at my aunt, at the last part of the war, we found a little apartment for rent, when my father was able to make accounting with more effective. And then, we were again together and we have a little apartment where we were in, and he promised, he made the change with this lady. The lady took up in that apartment and we to go in our house.

JF: And, she was agreeable to that?

LI: She was, but for us to give her also the possibility to make the movement, and my father ran to the men who was ready to move us to our house to move her back. That was after some months when the government changed. If she would have been in that house, she would have had to go out...

JF: Anyway. [Pause] Your father did not want to leave Romania ?

LI: No, he wanted. I have to tell you other thing. I don't know if he come to lose sight, he couldn't see, little by little, and once we thought that he was dealing with his accounting in a room who was all the time lighted not by the normal light and...

JF: He was becoming blind?

LI: He had a glaucoma...

JF: Ah!

LI: And this glaucoma he didn't want to tell us that he cannot see until I saw him going so afraid and hurting himself in something, he couldn't see. And one gave him an operation for the right eye, and one told me that he will have the sight that he had before the operation and the other one was a good eye, and with no one knowing why he lost all the sight after the operation and was a while he couldn't work anymore.

JF: He lost all the sight in one eye? In one eye?

LI: And, then, he lost--he went with the other eye and he worked. He worked very hard, he was very happy to work, and the lady who was the boss was very hot, was very tough to him and he was very irritated. I don't know, but all the doctors couldn't tell me. It was the situation he had during the war to pull that and to make all these, or you know that he was sent to take crops out from, that was the work that he did and to [unclear]. No one knows, and no one knows even now what is the cause of glaucoma.

No one from his family has ever had glaucoma. He was the first one. And finally, he had another operation, he had many operations on the two eyes and finally the government was, the Socialist government and we told them, "We give you all our belongings. Let him go out to have the operation because the last was a fault, the last operation was a fault here and was a hemorrhage, a vitreous hemorrhage. Is a long story. A big doctor, a big eye doctor from Switzerland came to Romania to see the best poet from Romania and being there he saw many patients, many problems, and I was a student, or a doctor even in that time. I wanted to show my father to him and when he saw that, he stated many things to be done immediately why was not done to him and I understood that he has not to remain there, and I wanted from the government to let me--that was after--to let me go or to send my father with someone else, I don't want to do something bad, but for him to go to have this operation. It was an operation done by an American doctor, Rosen or something like that, and by a French doctor, Katz. Both were very French and very American and they didn't allow it, allow us. No, we had to go in Russia and I explained to them that Russia has a very good school for eyes but not that, you know. That is a special operation, and finally they let us go in East Berlin, in East Berlin, and the professor we have the letter for jumped the wall in that time, and was another one who came from...

JF: He jumped the wall!

LI: Not jumped the wall. He went.

JF: He got in.

LI: He went, he renounced to be in East Berlin. He wanted to be in the West Berlin. And he went in the West Berlin.

JF: So he had left.

LI: He left. I, that was a juggle. My job to juggle. He did something to go beside the wall, and my father was there and was the surgery was done by another doctor who did that operation only two times and was a good--he could have some good result but, you know, you have to take from a corpse the vitreous and to put in another eye and that was not good taken or good...

JF: A transplant?

LI: A transplant. A transplant that was probably someone who had TB and he gave a sort of, not TB, another infection, an awful infection and because he thought not to have a septicemia for a foreigner and not to be killed, he took out the eye completely and my father lived for 18 years, and no one could tell us--and it was sure a [unclear] operation. No one could tell us if that glaucoma can come from what he was pushed to do.

JF: During the war?

LI: Right.

JF: Were you unable to leave in general after that time once the Socialists were in power?

LI: When I finished from medical school it was not more able. We were not allowed as a doctor to go out.

JF: They didn't want to lose you as a physician?

LI: Yes, I thought, but no one told me, I had had a friend who did that.

JF: Who got out, you mean?

LI: She was very cute. I don't know if I can tell you, but she was very cute. She went to a nursing school and she did the nursing school or technical school or laboratory school for some months, and she got a paper and she thought then, "I am a nurse. I am a technician."

JF: She didn't tell them that she was a physician and she got out? She came here?

LI: No, she is in Israel.

JF: So, you were kept because of your medical training?

LI: Yes, and after that, when I married, it was so. One time the doctor could go out but the engineer cannot and so on. My husband is an engineer and the good thing was, a very good thing was done by this man, the human rights, and when Gerald Ford came in Romania. And the good thing was that Romania needed money from America.

JF: And that's how you got to get out? It was an exchange? Your father died after you came here, or while you were still in Romania?

LI: No, this year it will be 10 years that he died.

JF: And your mother came with you?

LI: My mother came because her sister was here and her brother. Romania gives you the possibility to go out when you have first grade relatives.

JF: What year was it, then, that you came to the United States?

LI: Because her sister was here and her brother.

JF: What year was it?

LI: Ah, what year was it? In '79, in '79, yes. We went out from Romania in '78 but we remained in Paris for awhile. They had to do all the papers.

JF: And then you came here? Is there any thing else that you want to add to your story?

LI: My story is that I think that Jewish people want to become, to be absorbed. Has to think that what happened between that war that no one Jew, no one Jew, despite the fact that he has another name or has another religion or has another situation, they didn't escape. They has to remember. They were forced to remember that they are Jews. That is the--that it doesn't matter. I read, here is something very interesting in that situation also. I read a book written by Renate Offit [phonetic]. I don't know if you know it. It was a minister sometime in French government with that name, and this one is himself or his brother René who wrote a book and it's about some very renowned personalities in that world who have in their background a grandmother or a grandfather

or someone who was a Jew, and there are very renowned families in all Europe and in England and between the most renowned families, noble families. Not only Disraeli.

JF: His was just well-known.

LI: Yes, and there are others and, if I can, I shall tell you about Charles de Gaulle and about some of the royalties from Belgium, etc. What I want to tell also, is for some Jews to go to visit Auschwitz, despite the fact that they will have some nightmares, but it's to be seen because you can try, you can try to forgive, as Ben Gurion said, you can try to forgive but you have not to forget. I don't know why to forget who?

Tape four, side two:

JF: You were saying, "Who to forget?"

LI: Yes. And to go not only to Auschwitz, but to go to Prague and to see the old temple and the new temple and the cemetery and what little children what from some camps drew. And there are their drawings. They are very interesting drawings. There are their dreams and their dreams was food. They dreamt on food.

JF: You went into a speciality after medical school when you were in Bucharest, in pediatrics.

LI: Yes.

JF: Your experience with children, with young children who had, some of whom I would imagine had been born during the war and had been quite young during that time, what did you notice, what observations can you make about what effect that experience had had on them?

LI: When I came in, my speciality was not so immediately after the war, but after the war was a very bad situation, economical situation and we have very few food, and not normal food. We have not a normal tea to drink. We have something a chemical tea, or we have to, more corn flour...

JF: Corn meal.

LI: Corn meal, and something like that, and very many suffered from hypervitaminosis or hypovitaminosis, or something like that and it was very big poliomyelitis.

JF: A lot of polio?

LI: Oh, it was a very big epidemic in '49, '48 or '49, and in '52, something like that.

JF: You think that these diseases were in response to the malnutrition during the war?

LI: Not only malnutrition and with the bad situation of housing, and an example was poliomyelitis came in Romania through Yugoslavia, through people who came from Yugoslavia in Romania. And it was very hard to stop that because of housing problems. There were very many.

JF: You are talking about the crowding now?

LI: Yes. You know that we had--how to say? There were people also, poor people who had to stay in any place. They couldn't build houses or buildings and then they put people to stay in--if you had three rooms and you are a man and a wife, then you need only one room. The other two bedrooms go to another family or to other two families even, and in one apartment were many families with one cook and it was absolutely very amusing, very abnormal life.

JF: What about psychiatric or psychological disorders in the children that you were seeing as a result of the war years?

LI: I was not a --I was a pediatrician in that time.

JF: But as a pediatrician did you see...?

LI: I saw very many chronic and not so much--I have seen very many mental retarded, and I have seen very distorted families because of their children mental retardation or chronic disease, or something like that.

JF: Are you relating these chronic diseases or retardation to anything specific during the war?

LI: Could be, sure, absolutely, could be the war and with the food restriction and other things like that. I have had a family in that time. That is another history.

JF: Is there anything else that you want to add before we stop for today?

LI: We will stop. I have a headache.

JF: I want to thank you very, very much.