

Fani Cojocariu



This is a photograph of me, Fani Cojocariu. This is my dearest photograph, it's the nicest of all. It was taken when we returned from where we had been deported, if it wasn't in fact taken right there.

They deported us to Transnistria when I was 12. At first, they imposed some restrictions because we were Jewish - but I couldn't say what year that was. People started wearing the yellow star, we were allowed to go out for only 1 hour a day, that was all, the town authorities imposed those decisions. I believe you were allowed to go out for 1 hour in the morning, and that's when you had to buy something to eat, anything, and you had to hurry back home, you had no business being in the street. And in 1941 the deportations started. The town's prefect lived just across the street from our house. And my mother went to talk to him, to see if we could stay. But he said: "Yes, everybody wants to stay, but everyone must leave!" That's what I remember. And yet there were some Jews who stayed, but they had some restrictions too, they were punished as well and didn't have a good life.

And they came to every house, telling us to come out. We took with us whatever we could - at least an eiderdown, or a pillow, or whatever else there was -, we paid for a cart to take us to the train station. There were train stock cars waiting for us there, and they crammed us in, I don't know how many persons in a stock car. And the furniture, and everything else, was left behind in the house. And what we took with us - we didn't manage to hold on to that, either. We travelled for a long time, I don't know the route of the train, for they added cars to this train in Chernivtsi as well, or somewhere else along the way we went in order to cross the Dniester. When we arrived in Atachi - it was located in Bessarabia - and the train came to a stop, they came up to the stock cars - whether they were soldiers or not, I couldn't say - and said: "Get off now and take with you

whatever you can carry, we will bring you the rest by cart in the morning." A man told me: "Little girl," he says, "take my luggage for mine is better." How could he know his luggage was better than mine? Who knows what precious items he had inside, that's why he said it. But do you think I did that? Do you think I took his luggage? No. I carried mine, whatever I had, and his luggage was left behind in the train car.

It was night when we got off the train. But what darkness, what pitch darkness... We could see only mountains around us, such high mountains that it seemed they rose all the way into the sky. And how could you walk? Everyone got off the train, you stepped on people, you didn't even know where you were going - that's how dark and gloomy it was. We got separated, we lost our second-born sister, but we somehow managed to find her there, in the synagogue where they took us. In the morning as soon as we woke up in that synagogue, we saw it was all as if it had been machine-gunned [destroyed], it was all red with blood and there were holes, cracks everywhere in the walls. Who knows what happened there, how many people died there.