

Berta Finkel



This is I, Berta Finkel.

I, Berta Finkel, was born in Sulita in 1925. Formerly, Sulita was a nice little borough when I was a child. 300 Jewish families lived there. Now there is no Jew left in Sulita. There were handicraftsmen, tailors, it had everything. There were several merchants in Sulita, they had large businesses, they had money. One of them was Hers Lehrer, another was Simhe Meer Schwartz. They left to Israel, but I don't know if they're still alive. One of them was David Lazarovici, he had an inn, but he passed away, he and his wife are buried here. User Goldman lived next to us, he had a large store

where he sold wheat flour, candy, chocolate, scrabia [Probably a variant for "scrumbie" (scombroid fish) used in the region of Moldavia], all sorts of olives, lamp oil - one could always buy that there. And he had some 4 daughters and 3 sons. One of the boys is buried in Sulita, he was deaf and dumb. The other children left to Israel, and they all died, only the youngest of them is still alive, Rahmil Goldman. He came to Botosani 2 years ago and said: 'Where is little Berta, I would like to meet her so.' My name is Berta. Since we were neighbors there, in Sulita, and lived wall-to-wall, we were friends. Their father was a big millionaire. My father wasn't such a wealthy person, I couldn't say that, but we had enough to get by. And he wanted to see me. And another man living in Sulita, who is 1 or 2 years younger than me, didn't want to take him to see me, although he knew where I lived. We are not on such good terms. When I go to the shul, he doesn't even tell me 'Happy New Year!'

80 houses burned to the ground in Sulita in 1935-1936, and our house burned down as well. We had that house from my mother's parents. Someone washed some laundry and probably left the stove outside [burning], and 80 houses burned to the ground. But we received no help back then, not in the slightest, so to speak, absolutely none [not even from the authorities]. My father worked by himself, as he was such a hard-working man, and he rebuilt that house. And by now it has already collapsed, that rebuilt house in Sulita came apart. When I travel to Sulita I'm staying at some neighbors', who live there, close by.

When the war broke out, from Sulita we came here, to Botosani. They informed us that we had to leave, I believe it was the police - I no longer remember, I was still a child. It took us a whole day to get there. It took a while, as we were a file of around 80 families. We set out at 8 o'clock in the morning, and we arrived in a file in Botosani at 10 o'clock in the evening, as it was dark by then. For evening comes at half past nine, ten o'clock during the summer. We came by cart. The carts were supplied by the state, I believe, we rented them. And what could we take with us? We left everything behind, at home, and it went to smithereens, as they say. We brought a sack or two of corn flour, and a bit of grain that we kept in the attic. I no longer remember if soldiers came with us or not.

In Botosani, we lived at one of my mother's sister-in-laws, the wife of Zeilic Meerovici. Afterwards, we lived at one of my mother's nieces, Beatrice, the daughter of Zeilic Meerovici. We lived there for a while, then we moved on Bratianu St., we rented the place. Meanwhile, my father was sent to Tiraspol, for he had declared he was a furrier by trade. And those who knew a trade had to go to Tiraspol. I don't know what he did there, I think they gave him other jobs. Did my father know the furrier's trade? My grandfather knew the furrier's trade, may God forgive him, but my father didn't. But he left there as a handicraftsman. He wasn't the only one, several Jews from Botosani were taken to Tiraspol. My father stayed there for 3 or 4 years.

And we lived without him. We had our share of misfortune as well. We had a cow, which we kept somewhere in a stable. I can't remember exactly, but I believe we bought the cow in Botosani, we didn't bring it from Sulita. I couldn't milk a cow, nor could my mother, and I believe a neighbor used to come and milk our cow, and then we strained the milk, took it and sold it, so that we could have some money, so that we could support ourselves. We had to wear the yellow star. We weren't allowed to go to the market in the morning until 10 o'clock. And what could one find at 10 o'clock?

But I don't even remember how the war ended. It was over...