



Liane's Story

Liane was born in [Czernowitz](#) in the summer of 1934. Czernowitz, now in Ukraine, was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the First World War, after which it became a part of Romania. Liane's family was Jewish and their native language was German. Although Liane's paternal grandfather was a Vienna-educated rabbi, who later became a lawyer, they were not what is considered to be traditionally religious. Liane and her family respected Passover and the High Holidays. Liane's grandfather was an active Zionist and taught her the Hebrew alphabet when she was just four years old.

Liane's father studied medicine in Innsbruck, Austria, and specialized in general surgery in Berlin. He returned to Romania when the Nazis came to power and married Liane's mother, who had graduated from the University of Czernowitz. Liane remained an only child because of the threat of extermination looming all over Europe. Her father could not apply his excellent medical training in surgery in any Romanian hospital because they would not accept Jewish doctors. Verbal abuse of Jews was common from the local Romanian and Ukrainian population during the pre-bellie (prewar) period, intensified by the coming to power of the Nazi party in Germany.

In 1940 as a consequence of the friendship pact [Molotov - Ribbentrop](#) between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, Czernowitz and the surrounding area were occupied by the Soviet Army and Liane and her family became Russian citizens. For Liane, it was strangely comforting at the time because communism was not antisemitism. Liane's father was able to work in a hospital for a short period of time. In June of 1941 shortly before the outbreak of World War II, the Russians, however, deported numerous Jewish wealthy people to Siberia from where only few returned after the war. After the Russian had to retreat, German troops entered the city and real horror started.

Liane's father along with thousands of other men were arrested and then sent to a concentration camp in Targu Jiu, Romania. Liane and her mother had no idea if her father had been alive for two years. She and her mother were first on house arrest then moved to the Czernowitz Ghetto with all of the other Jewish people in the city. No schooling existed for Jewish children and food was scarce. In the ghetto, Liane and her mother were crowded with up to fifty people in a room, with no minimal hygienic conditions and lice infestations. Liane and her mother were scared to death by daily deportations to the camps in Transnistria, then to Ukraine, where the conditions were much worse. Both Liane's maternal grandparents and many relatives who were deported never returned. One day, Liane and her mother's turn came to be deported. Liane and her mother were already on the train when a miracle happened: a former patient of her father's, an influential aristocrat Baron Flondor, sent Romanian soldiers to take them off of the train to a hiding place in the city. They were in a basement hiding for a period of time, where she was always hungry and learned how to form words. Liane and her family returned to their home in Czernowitz in 1943, after some major progress of the Soviet army against Germany.



Liane's house was devastated, and robbed, but it was a time when Liane had both of her parents with her. When Russian troops came closer, the Romanians realized that as allied to Germany, they were losing the war. The Romanians turned the page and became Russian allies in August of 1944. In March of 1944, Russian troops were about to enter Czernowitz and Liane's parents and other Jewish families decided that to avoid deportation to Siberia, they should flee to Romania. Liane and her parents took the last train before the Russian occupation to Bucharest, leaving their three houses back in Czernowitz. They fled with one suitcase and her father's medical diploma.

Bucharest was still under a fascist regime for five months, during which Liane and her family were illegally there as Jews. Heavy bombardments from British and American warplanes kept them in the basement of the building for many hours, days, and nights. Strangely, Liane felt at ease in those shelters because there were other children and people weren't worried about who was Jewish and who wasn't. The city was severely damaged by the bombardments, the worst being in August of 1944 by the German army. They came out of the shelter and that was the end of the war for Liane and her family, but not yet the freedom from persecution. They were refugees without papers, a home, or money. Liane had to go to school, but she wasn't allowed to attend any state schools because she was Jewish. Her mother discovered a French school in Bucharest that didn't require any certificate of prior studies. The school took Liane in on trial, even though she didn't speak any French. After three months, Liane was able to speak, read, and write French almost fluently. During her teen years, Liane also joined Hanoar Hazioni, a Zionist Youth organization that prepared her for the emigration to Eretz Israel. She remained closely attached to French culture and in 2007, she became a member of the French National Academy of Medicine.

In difference from Western Europe where the end of the war meant freedom and starting a new life, Eastern Europe was now the domain of Bolshevik dictatorship. The USA brought enormous help to West European populations, especially to the survivors of the Holocaust. Unfortunately, the help did not reach the satellite countries of the USSR including Romania with a very large Jewish population. A communist government was established in 1948 forbidding people to leave the country including emigration to Israel. Zionism was declared hostile to the interest of the country and Zionist leaders were arrested and jailed for 6-7 years under the false accusation of trying to overthrow the Romanian government. Anti-Zionism became the new antisemitism. Studying Hebrew and English was punishable with a jail sentence.

Liane finished high school and started medical school where there was a very strong indoctrination with Marxism-Leninism. The atmosphere was charged with anxiety. One day in 1954, Liane was denounced for wearing a necklace with a Magen David and was brought to an assembly of the University to be judged as a Zionist and agent of American Imperialism. Consequently, Liane would have been jailed or expelled from the school, when a miracle happened. Stalin died a week later, and

Selfhelp

the politics changed, they forgot about Liane's necklace and she was able to continue studying. Anti-Zionism proved to be antisemitism. Now history seems to repeat itself all over.

Liane finished medical school and started a residency in gynecology obstetrics. She worked as a village general physician to pay back for having studied without paying for tuition. At this time, Liane and her family were desperate to leave for Israel or other democratic countries. In the late fifties, the Communist government, in need of cash, started to "sell" the citizens with relatives ready to "buy" them: Jews to Israel, Germans to West Germany, etc. Liane's uncles in Argentina and Israel, through a complicated process with British intermediaries, succeeded in getting Liane and her husband out in 1963, again with one suitcase and medical diplomas. Liane and her husband arrived in Haifa, Israel, on November 22nd, 1963, the same day as the JFK assassination. Liane worked as a gynecologist and a pathologist, and her husband was an ENT specialist for the following twelve years in a University Hospital in Tel Aviv. Her husband, Sergiu, served in the Israeli Air Force during the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War. Liane was taking her sabbatical year from Tel Aviv University at the Harvard University Boston Women's Hospital in 1975. She then decided to become Americans while keeping her Israeli citizenship while on her sabbatical.

Liane worked at Mount Sinai Hospital and Medical School for forty years and retired as a Professor Emeritus, at the age of 82. Liane's advice to younger generations is to never give up and keep your right to choose. Liane never spoke of her childhood until 1996 when she had an interview with the Steven Spielberg organization. During the years spent in Romania after the war although not formally forbidden, it was quite dangerous to even mention persecutions of Jews as this issue had no place in the Communist ideology. The present campaign in colleges and other institutions against Zionism is reminiscent of Stalin's campaign against Jews in the early fifties and gives me a feeling of "déjà vu".

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