

Iulius And Estera Wechsler On Their Engagement Day



This is a photo taken in Ploiesti, in the 1910s, with the occasion of the engagement of my parents, Iulius Wechsler and Estera Letzler.

My father, Haim Maier Wechsler, was born in Namoloasa, in 1883. My father came to Bucharest around 1900. His parents were dead, so a part of what he earned from the small businesses he did was destined for the support of his sisters, Blimette and Betti Wechsler. He changed his name to Iulius Wechsler before 1910. He got married in Ploiesti, in 1912. My father was a religious man. He went to the synagogue on Friday, on Saturday and in other days. He would go to the Great Synagogue [Bucharest], where he had a seat reserved for him, which he paid for.

Estera Wechsler [nee Letzler], my mother, was born in 1888, in Ploiesti. She attended a boarding school and spoke German and French. Naturally, she had also learnt Yiddish at home. All she told me about her childhood was that she used to be a good student and that her teachers thought highly of her, especially because of her skills in painting and drawing. Unfortunately, or maybe fortunately - who could tell? -, my mother married a tradesman from Bucharest and moved with him. She interrupted her studies. She would have liked to go to the Arts Academy [in Bucharest], and her teachers had encouraged her about going to college. My grandparents had had a religious, bigot upbringing. Religious Jews believe that girls should get married at an early age, and, if possible, to a rabbi - which is considered to be all that a young girl could wish for. This was my mother's fate.

My parents met through a matchmaker. It was probably someone from Ploiesti who saw that my grandfather had a daughter who had reached the proper age for marriage and who thought about finding her the best match. So it was through this intermediary that discussions were held on whether she wanted to marry the man and whether she found his situation acceptable. My father's social position was of a tradesman. Since most of the Jews were craftsmen, tailors, shoemakers etc., being a tradesman meant a good position for a Jew. My mother, who was more educated than her suitor (she had attended a boarding school, spoke foreign languages, had painting skills etc.), accepted to marry the man because of his material situation. Being a very beautiful woman, all her children were beautiful, except me. She agreed to this match with my father knowing that they both thought they would make a happy married couple. And so they did.