

They took her to the hospital, and then they interrogated her and then me. They arrested me. They took me to B, and then V [small towns], and they kept me under arrest for a week. I was threatened—that I would have to pay for her hospitalization; I wouldn't be able to, no matter how much I worked. It was her family that accused me, no one else. During the interrogation, I said it wasn't because of me. I didn't deny that I'd done the abortion. I told Mr. H., our policeman, that I wasn't guilty at any price; she went off drinking. They came with a commission and searched my house. No one said anything about my having broken that law about doing abortions. They only asked what she ate, what she'd had to drink. Her blood was poisoned. If it had been because of me, there would have been something with her uterus; they would have had to take it out, or do who knows what. It wasn't my fault.

After they took me there, she acted like a spoiled child. God only knows; she acted like she didn't know me at first. Then they put her in front of a large mirror and asked her if she knew that woman, who she was. "My neighbor," she said. "She's the one who did the abortion?" "Yes." "And what did she give you to drink?" "She didn't give me anything." "What did she give you to eat?" "Nothing. I drank some brandy and wine, and I went to the fields, and when I came back, I got really sick. The doctor came and gave me an injection, and I don't remember anything else about what happened to me." She did abort, and there were no traces that someone had done anything to her down there. The doctors were surprised that I'd been arrested when she hadn't hemorrhaged or anything; there was not one sign of anything having gone wrong. But if it was to be prison, there was no way out.

Before the trial, I was kept in the penitentiary in Baia Mare, and from there I was taken to the trial dressed in prison clothes. They couldn't get me to name anyone else [who did abortions]—there were six or seven—although she did. But God gets to everyone in good time. Her children are all pretty cursed. They also tried to get me to name the others for whom I had done abortions, but I didn't want to say and do harm to someone else so she'd end up in prison. It was enough that I was there! The witnesses were the woman's husband, mother, and family. There were no strangers there. No one else from the village was there. My case was publicized in the local newspaper. I was sentenced to three years, and did one year and ten months. I wasn't a party member. In prison there were doctors, engineers, priests, midwives—all sorts were there. And those who were there weren't idiots, only smart people were there in prison, from all over our country.

I got along with all the guards. I didn't make trouble. I didn't like to stay put, so I asked to work. I worked in the fields—that's how my sentence was reduced from three years to one year and ten months, through work. When I'd come back to my prison cell, I'd bring whatever I could from what we'd worked that day—tomatoes, onions. I'd walk as close to the cells as possible to give to the others what I knew they missed so much. From prison, you missed basic things a lot—fresh air, liberty, everything.

There were all kinds in prison. Many were there for embezzlement. I was in Jilava for a while. There was a midwife who'd been arrested for doing an abortion using parsley. I don't know what she did exactly, but the stem broke off

and entered into the woman's uterus. It rotted in there and she got an infection from it. The child was lost because of the complications. Both the midwife and the woman were interrogated. The midwife was old and all that she wanted was to get out of prison before she died, not to die there. She said the prosecutor had asked why she'd done the abortion. She had responded that the woman was suffering; she felt sorry for her. But the woman died a few months later and the midwife ended up in prison for life. How she cried! She wasn't even allowed to get the monthly package and postcard that we got.

Then there was a doctor—handsome, tall. He was a gynecologist. He had done a curettage on someone who had an infection; in the process, he performed something and she died on the spot. He was sentenced to ten years and one day. That [additional one] day meant life—beyond ten years, it was forever. Ceausescu was having a canal built. Prisoners were taken to the White Gate to work.<sup>75</sup> We weren't permitted anywhere near the place. I don't know what went on there, but many got sick there. It was obligatory labor. You had no choice. If an order was given to shovel a trainload of dirt in one day, it had to be done. If not, you were beaten to death. That meant a good journey to the other world. It was a very strict prison there. I don't know who intervened for the doctor, but whoever it was was very important and highly regarded. He was taken back to Jilava. There were other doctors like him. They didn't risk their lives for some small sum, but rather for a serious amount. They didn't give away their daily bread for just anything. But such is the risk. Sometimes it doesn't work out.

I got out in November 1981, I think. When I came home from the Rahova women's colony, barefoot, I didn't find anyone at home. They were all out working. They didn't know what to do when they saw me—my mother, child. They had heard I had escaped, that I had died. They couldn't believe their eyes.

Oh, from time to time, I'd done abortions for others when they were really down and out. I helped people in trouble. I didn't receive money. The women usually didn't have any, and I really did feel pity for them. That's how I am. Once, there was a doctor who had a niece. He was a dentist. He came to me and told me he had this niece, and, well, he fixed my teeth and I fixed the girl. She was three months pregnant. I used a thin tube and solution with her. He took me to B, where she stayed with her sister. I didn't take a root to do it that way because it was winter and you can't dig then; you can't even find it then. In the winter, you have to manage other ways. Anyway, there was no problem. I did an abortion now and then, but I was really afraid. And especially after I got out of prison; I wasn't going to end up there again. I said to myself, "They can harness oxen and horses for me, give me Ceausescu's villa, but never again." Once bitten, twice shy, as they say! After I got out, one came to me. H. [the village policeman] had warned me to be careful, that someone might come to me to have me do an abortion for her. If so, I was to let him know who it was. And one did come and said she was pregnant. Three months. I asked her if she wanted me to do something, and she said she wanted my help, if only with a word. I interrupted her, saying that she wanted to do me harm, which she denied. She only wanted to see herself free. I was afraid. It was nighttime when she came;