

VIO JORZA

I was brought up in a village near Arad in Romania. We were a poor family living in a poor village. My parents didn't have enough money to let me go to high school in Arad. I would



have needed to stay at the school because of the distance and there was no money for that. But I was a very determined person and was totally focussed on going to school and university. I say I was determined, but maybe it was more that I was a fighter, a survivor.

When I was fourteen years old, I went to the school in Arad and asked to speak to the director. I think she might have been surprised at my visit.

'Here I am,' I said. 'I have come to take the school's entrance exam. But, if I pass the exam, I will need an allowance to keep me while I am here. I am very poor and cannot survive without an allowance.'

'You are very courageous for a fourteen-year-old,' the director replied. 'Take the exam and let's see how you get on.'

I sat the exam and passed. Once again I went to see the director.

'This is my result,' I said. 'I have come fifth on the list. Now can I have an allowance to become a boarding pupil at your school?'

She was probably surprised at how well I had done.

'I think so,' she said.

The director argued my case and said that because I had come in very good time I should get a full allowance, meaning all my expenses would be paid. That year there was a system in place for reducing the costs for pupils from poor families, and there were some really poor families in Romania then. It was unusual for a pupil of my age to get a full allowance at that school. I could never have gone there without it.

HOME VERSUS SCHOOL

My father was a Christian who learned to read through reading the Bible. When I was young, I didn't realise what hard work that must have been and that, although he was not educated, he must have been very clever. My mother was not educated either.

Dad read Bible stories to me and my brother. I remember him trying to teach me about Daniel and the lions' den. It was an interesting story, but I didn't understand that it also had a meaning. I didn't take any message from it although Dad tried to tell it in a way to give me the message. Part of me didn't want to understand. You see, I admired my school teachers because they were educated. I looked up to them. At that time in Romania we were brainwashed at school. We were taught that there was no God. Because my teachers were educated and Dad was not, I thought that they must be right. He said that God existed; my teachers said he did not, therefore I decided there was no god.

For a long time I believed that my teachers held the truth and I wanted to be like them. As a child I was a Pioneer, a member of the Communist youth organisation. The leaders certainly knew how to indoctrinate children. We were all given red scarves that made us feel we belonged together and belonged to the Party. Sometimes we were taken to statues of Communist heroes and told stories of what they had done. We were so patriotic, swearing allegiance to the Romanian flag and things like that. My teachers were proud and they trained us to be proud Communists. Dad was so different; he was a humble man.



DAD'S STORY

Dad farmed a small piece of land. He had been a soldier in the Second World War. For a time he was under Russians and for a time under Germans. I remember him telling me how he became a Christian.

'We were in the trenches,' he told me, 'just waiting to be attacked. For the first time in my life I prayed to God. And my prayer was, "If you are God, you will spare my life and let me go back to my children and I will trust you."'

He already had children then although my brother and I had not yet been born.

After that battle, my father had to run for his life; they all had to run for their lives. Later, when he saw his long coat, there were bullet holes in it. His legs were not hurt although he was shot at as he ran. Dad was alive and he saw God. The bullet holes in the coat were a testimony to God protecting not only his legs, but his life. When he saw God, Dad said, 'You must be God and you spared my life.' I can't explain what happened to Dad. I'm just telling what he told me.

Soon after my father was back in our village, an itinerant missionary came and, when he and Dad talked, my father embraced the Christian faith. That day he told the missionary, 'I want to have more children and to give them to the Lord.'