

Maya Lazerson

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From Russia to Romania

Maya Lazerson was born in 1916 in Moscow to Meyer Abram and Berta Berner. They were Jewish citizens of Latvia who had subsequently emigrated to Romania. Their daughter received her Bachelor's degree in 1934 from a women's lyceum in Câmpina¹.

In the academic year 1935-36, Maya enrolled in the Department of Literature and Philosophy at Bucharest University, with the intention of graduating with a degree in modern philology. She decided to finish her studies in Italy and applied for admission to the University of Florence for the 1937-38 academic year.

University student in Florence

In 1937, the Italian Consulate in Bucharest sent the necessary documentation for enrollment, with the note «the responses regarding her conduct and the economic situation of her family are all excellent»². In fact, in 1933, the national Ministry of Education had ordered that the screening of educational qualifications obtained abroad should be the prerogative of the Italian diplomatic missions that corresponded to the nationality of the aspiring foreign student. The outcomes of these screenings, which were to be motivated by «suitability, from a political standpoint, for granting recognition»³ were to be included with the student requests. This practice, frequently disregarded by individual universities, was often reaffirmed in the

¹ ASUFi, AC, SS, f. «Lazerson Maya», authenticated by a birth certificate and high school diploma, November 16, 1937. Certain documents show the birth date as December 3, 1916, given that it was registered a few days following her birth.

² Ibid., Italian Consulate at Bucharest to Università degli studi di Firenze, November 18, 1937.

³ Cf. Elisa Signori, *Una «peregrinatio academica» in età contemporanea. Gli studenti ebrei stranieri nelle università italiane tra le due guerre*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 4, 2000, pp. 139-162.

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following years and was made more stringent by new regulations issued between 1937 and 1938.

We know that on November 4, 1939, the student asked to be accepted into her fourth year⁴ but she does not appear to have graduated.

Arrest in Riga and death

After the start of the war, Maya Lazerson was forced to return to her family, as indicated by her last given residence in Riga. Maya was arrested and killed in 1941 during the extermination action⁵.

Archival sources

- ASUFI, AC, SS, f. «Lazerson Maya».
- *The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names, ad nomen* <<https://yvng.yadvashem.org>>.

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Translated by Vera De Benedetti Bonnet

⁴ ASUFI, AC, SS, f. «Lazerson Maya», request to the dean, 4 November 1939.

⁵ *The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names, ad nomen* (accessed 31 March 2019).

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