

# Ibi Krausz

Ibi Krausz

Budapest

Hungary

Interviewer: Dora Sardi

Date of interview: March 2002

[Family background](#)

[Growing up](#)

[During the War](#)

[After the War](#)

[Glossary](#)



## Family background

My grandparents on my mother's side were Mihaly Kohn and Hermina Kohn. I don't remember my grandmother's maiden name. They were deported in 1944; my grandmother was 62 years old at that time, while my grandfather was five or six years older. Both of them were born in Gyulafirátót. They lived there for a long time, and when they were married and had two girls - one of them was my mother - they went to Győr. They moved there because they didn't actually like life in the countryside, though their parents were villagers. I'm not sure, they might have had an inn, or maybe a grocery store, or something like that. But the interesting thing is that one of my grandfather's sisters fell in love with their driver, and married him - this was a family story. And she became a real peasant woman. My grandfather broke off all connection with her; not because she became a peasant woman, but because she married a Gentile, although they weren't too religious. However, when they were old they made up with each other. As a child I always wondered what this peasant lady with a headscarf was doing amongst us. Well, and that's when they told me the story.

My grandmother was a housewife, while my grandfather was a livestock merchant. He traded in cattle or something like that. It worked like that - I only remember this from when they were in Győr, and I was a bit bigger, because he was still doing it even then for a while - he bought from the peasants a huge amount of livestock or only a few animals and he resold them at a profit. He didn't frequent the markets; business was rather transacted in cafés. They appeared there on certain days, and I don't remember clearly whether he had a few men who went out to the markets, but I know he didn't go himself. My grandmother was a woman with a very beautiful face, but she had a terribly bad leg, and she had to go to Heviz [famous Hungarian spa] for curative treatment every year. She walked very little; she preferred to be at home all the time. Though there was a servant - the same one for decades - she ran the household as well. They were at home in the afternoon. At that time my grandfather was already at home, too, and I don't really know what they did. I was at their place at least once or twice a week, and my grandmother cooked many family dinners. They were wealthy middle class sort of people. There were some Christian families with whom my grandparents were on good terms, but they moved mostly in Jewish circles.

They were definitely Neolog 1. My grandmother used to light candles on Friday, but after that one could turn on the lights. My grandfather didn't pray at home, except on seder. He led the seder, but I remember that he always hurried the dinner. They didn't work on Yom Kippur and on the high holidays. Actually they ran a kosher household, but not too strictly. My grandfather bought the newspaper every evening; it was the Esti Kurir [Evening Courier]. They didn't really read books. There was a so-called girls' room at my maternal grandparents' house, which was my mother's and her sister's while they were at home, and they had some books there. But actually there weren't too many there either. My grandfather didn't really walk, because his legs hurt as well, and his daughter and the servant bought everything. He didn't really go out. Neither did my grandmother.

The Jewish temple in Gyor is like the one in Dohany Street, only that it's smaller - but it has two levels, an organ, and is equipped with everything; it's very nice. [The Dohany Street Synagogue is the largest synagogue in Europe. It was the symbol of Neolog Judaism before WWII.] My grandparents used to live opposite it. This wasn't a Jewish neighborhood. There was a place called Sziget [Gyor-Sziget] where the Jews lived - the very religious Jews.

My grandparents had a nice big house. There were rented apartments and there were stores downstairs, and a great deal of the rent remained for them. They lived there, too, in a nice three-bedroom apartment on the first floor. Two Jewish families rented apartments in their house, but the others weren't Jews. There was even one man who was an anti-Semite but they couldn't get rid of him. There were problems because of that because when the Germans came in 1944, he had my grandfather taken into custody by saying that my grandfather cursed the Germans, and the Gestapo took him into custody. At that time I was already a big girl, and I ran to our lawyer, trying to get him to do something. And he said that it was impossible to get him out of Gestapo custody. And then they let poor grandfather out, but he was awfully intimidated. At that time they were preparing for the deportation of Jews. And they deported the whole family.

My mother was called Margit Kohn. She was born in 1903. Her sister Kata was three years younger than her, I think. They attended elementary school there, in the village, and then they finished middle school in Gyor. Kata got married; her husband was called Sandor Salzer. They had a daughter. Her husband was a grocery wholesaler - in a very busy location as well. And he worked with his brother. It was a company with a well-established name. But later somehow it didn't do so well.

My grandparents on my father's side were called Jakab Keller and Berta Keller. I don't remember my grandmother's maiden name. My grandfather was deported as well, he must have been about 80 years old and grandmother about the same. I know that grandfather's family came from Gyongyos, but as for grandmother, I don't know. They lived in Gyor, had a little house in the middle of downtown; that was their home. There were two stores downstairs and an apartment. My grandfather was a basket-weaver and his workshop was in the house. He had one or two assistants, and there was a little store downstairs, where they sold baskets, traveling baskets, trunks, and small tables with the upper part made of wood. They made and sold things like that. They didn't live so incredibly well, but didn't have financial problems either. But they had to take care of every penny.

My grandmother was a housewife. She was very religious. The family observed every holiday and I think they lit candles on Friday. I don't remember whether they turned the lights on or not. They

were more religious. My grandmother wore a wig, but my grandfather's head wasn't covered. They ran a kosher household; they took it really seriously. They also had a servant.

They had four boys and two girls. There was my father, Sandor; he was born in 1892 or 93. There was Pista, who was older than my father, and there were Lali and Zoli; who were considerably younger. Lali had a store in Győr, Pista lived in Acs, and I don't know what he did. Actually, we kept in touch more with my father's sisters, but about his brothers I can't really say much. The girls were called Olga and Ila. Olga got married, she had two beautiful girls, and she didn't work. Her husband was a traveling agent for a very big cloth-store. Ila lived with the grandparents. She didn't get married. She had a love for many years, a doctor, but finally I think they separated, and she never married. She worked in a dressmaker's shop. She sewed very nicely. Every two or three weeks, I went with my mother and father to visit her for a couple of hours, but I also used to go to my aunt Ila in the dressmaker's shop; partly because I liked her and went happily, and partly because she made my clothes.

My father finished middle school [2](#), then he became a merchant. I don't know when he opened his store. I think it was when he got married to my mother; he had a wholesale haberdashery downtown - buttons, pullovers, hosiery, tights, it had everything like that. In the villages of Győr-Sopron county there were stores of this kind, where people sold all sorts of things, and there was the so-called weekly market once or twice a week, when these merchants, who were very kind country folks, came in and bought a lot of things from my father. They had to assemble big bales. There were two assistants and an apprentice, and there was a traveling agent, too. They did the purchasing, but at the same time, if anybody came in and wanted to buy something, they still sold things. My father was in the store from morning until evening and my mother was there, too. She went in about midday or around 11 o'clock, and she was at the cash desk. It was a nice big store; there was a separate storage room, and my father had a little office. It was open on Sabbath; it was only closed on holidays. He had a few Jewish clients, who were all merchants. By the way, in Győr 70-80% of the merchants were Jewish.

## Growing up

My parents got married in 1919, I think, in the temple of Győr. I was born in 1921. I would have liked to have a brother or sister, and later I kept on asking them, because one of my girlfriends had a brother and I envied her, why I didn't have one. But I don't know why, they didn't answer, I can't remember any more. After my birth at first we lived in my grandmother's house for a very short time; there was a little apartment next-door. Actually I only remember that we moved downtown. And there was for the first time a so-called co-tenancy with two rooms, I think. And later, after a few years we moved into a modern two-bedroom house with a hall, and we were there from then on. That was a rented house. My parents had a bedroom; actually I didn't have a separate room, it was just that the other room was furnished in such a way that I lived there, and at the same time it was a dining room. Besides these, there were the bathroom, kitchen and servant's room, because there were servants. The last one was there for a few years; she was there even when we had to move away from that apartment because they had already marked those houses where the Jews had to go [the so-called yellow-star houses] [3](#).

My father worked from morning to night. Once a week for entertainment, they went out: my mother went to a rummy game, while my father played some Hungarian card game. They used to

go to a certain café, which still exists in Gyor, and they played cards there separately. Of course there was a cinema and theater in Gyor, but my father didn't frequent them. I used to go with my mother.

While I was a little girl, my grandparents, when they were in Heviz because of grandmother's leg, used to stay there for a month or six weeks, then they would bring me and my mother there at their own expense because my father never went anywhere. This was my summer holiday when I was a little girl. Very occasionally we went to Lake Balaton. There was a villa with rooms for rent, and my grandparents went there every year.

Generally my family were the kind of Jews that observed the high holidays: the dinner before Yom Kippur and the Kol Nidre was at my grandparents' place, we went to the synagogue, and actually, my mother and my aunt had permanent seats there. But other than that, we didn't observe much. We even ate the treyf, but to tell the truth, we weren't allowed to put it on a plate. We were allowed to eat ham, but only on a piece of paper. And we cooked only with goose fat; there was no pork fat. I know that my grandmother used to cook tasty fish-soup, but I don't know whether it was for the evening of the Kol Nidre. The next day, after the fasting, we went there and there was always very delicious ring-cake, cocoa, and chicken paprika afterwards. This was a kind of tradition, I think, in every Jewish house. We had chicken fricassee or something like that before the fast, and grapes and coffee. I remember that I used to gulp things down, up until the last moment, though I observed fasting only until midday. I don't observe fasting longer than midday even today. There was a Jewish butcher, I suppose my grandparents bought from him, but I'm not sure. But there was a very good butcher downtown, which we frequented, I know that. We always bought the cold cuts there, and the meat, too, I suppose.

There were no Zionists in our family. Gyor had a chief rabbi, Dr. Emil Grosz, who was a very famous scholar; he was a great Zionist, and he organized the youth. He didn't agitate in the synagogue, at least I didn't hear him, but the truth is that we went there only on high holidays. He held lectures, which we attended; not about Zionism, of course, but everybody knew he was a committed Zionist. But it was alien to me as well, I mean Zionism.

I never denied my Jewishness, and I never thought about converting. Though my best friend, who now lives in Brazil, converted because she thought she would escape that way. It didn't work, of course.

I attended a Jewish elementary school, which was near the temple. It was a big building, really serious, with four classes. And I finished the four years of elementary education there. There were at least 25 pupils in the class, boys and girls together. They taught Jewish history; otherwise I think it was the same as other schools. They taught us to read Hebrew, but I've already forgotten it. We used to go to the synagogue once a week, on Sabbath. When I was already in high school, it was obligatory to go on the afternoon of Sabbath. We had the summer holidays just as in other schools, and on Jewish holidays we had extra holidays.

There was only one high school in Gyor, which was called Count Albert Aponyi High School. It was a very beautiful building, and in my opinion, it's still one of the most beautiful buildings in Gyor today. There were eight classes. It was a completely Christian school, but many of us, Jewish girls, attended it. The difference was that everyone had their own religion class separately. We also had a religion teacher, he was called Jozsef Ullman, and he was awfully severe. We had to read in

Hebrew, but he mostly taught Jewish history, which was quite interesting. There were maybe eight or nine Jews in class. There was a team spirit among the Jewish girls, but I had some Christian girlfriends, as well. These weren't close relationships, but we were on good terms with each other. We had to learn a lot in high school because there were languages as well - German and French. Besides that I had private English classes. I remained on good terms with my private teacher for French and German, who was also Jewish, until her death. She lived in London later, I also visited her there, and when my son went to England for a long period of time, she was a great support for him. There must have been anti-Semite girls in high school, but there was no violence or remarks or things like that, I don't remember any such things.

Then I transferred to higher commercial school after four years of high school. Because my parents thought - and they were right - that in the future it would be much more useful to have learnt something practical as well. My best friend stayed in high school, but we remained very close to each other, and then another transferred to higher commercial school, and then a third one too, so several of us transferred. It was four years of study there, too.

We were regular cinema-goers and went to the theater a lot. We played tennis and went rowing. Of course, I was a good swimmer because the swimming pool in Gyor was very nice and we visited it all summer long. There was a club at which there were lots of Jews, though it wasn't a Jewish club. We attended a dance-school, and they held a dance-school ball at the end of the course. Then I was in a long white tulle dress, it was lovely. I was quite good-looking as a young girl and had many suitors. And I enjoyed these dance-parties so much. I love to dance. I went there with my girlfriends regularly.

I learned to be a milliner after school. Jewish girls had to learn some trade as well. At that time, the fact that young Jews couldn't hold serious jobs began to cast its shadow on us. I learned that trade and after I finished I came to Budapest for three months; there was a millinery in Vaci Street called Vilma Gergely, which was very elegant and distinguished; Mrs. Horthy [the wife of the Regent of Hungary, Miklos Horthy] <sup>4</sup> used to shop there, amongst others. They engaged me but without pay. My parents were rather well off, and I didn't really care about being paid or not. This was actually a kind of summer holiday. I have no idea who placed me there, but I worked there for three months, and lived with my aunt, my mother's cousin. I was only a salesgirl because there was a madam as my superior- this was a very elegant place. Vilma Gergely went abroad a great deal; she was a very elegant woman. Later she had a store in Vienna, because they left Hungary. At the same time a girlfriend of mine, who now lives in Brazil, also came to Budapest for three months, and learned to sew. She came for a tailoring course; the tailor was called Narvai, and his salon had a very good name, too. And at that time we used to go out a lot and we had a big circle of friends.

Then I went back to Gyor. However, I used to go to Budapest a lot, because I had a cousin, a boy from Ujpest and there was a large Jewish circle in Ujpest and among other people one of my good girlfriends used to go to this circle because my cousin was courting her. She introduced me to them, and actually I was part of that group, too. And then I also used to go to my father's store to help. At that time my mother didn't go there very often. But I didn't work myself to death. I attended classes as well - because I was learning English, French and German the whole time. But in fact I didn't work in such a way as to earn a lot of money. I got married rather early.

My first husband was Geza Szabados. He Magyarized his name from Schlesinger. They lived in Sopron. Geza was 20 years older than me; he was born in 1902. Gyor is a small town, and he had a transportation company somewhere downtown, where I used to go a lot because my aunt lived just opposite it. And I had many suitors at that time. My parents, when they knew I had Christian suitors, didn't say anything because they were mostly nice enough. As for my husband, it was like this: he greeted me, I greeted him, and once when I walked by, he came over, and we started to talk. And that was the beginning of the great love, which lasted a year and a half.

### **During the War**

We got married in February 1944 and lived together for three weeks. The wedding was in Gyor, in the synagogue, but it was winter, and the beautiful great temple wasn't open. There was a little synagogue near it, and we held it there - in modest circumstances, according to today's standards because we decided to get married very suddenly. My poor parents liked him very much because he was a very kind, smart and tender-hearted man, but they didn't want this marriage because of the twenty-year age difference, plus the child. But I was deeply in love and rather forceful, so we got married and then went to the big hotel on Margaret Island [in Budapest], where we spent our eight-day honeymoon. We went home, and after a few days he got called up. He had a little apartment, and we lived there. It was rather problematic because there was Panni as well, my husband's little girl from his previous marriage. We bought another apartment in a brand new house, although we didn't move there because he received his summons in the meantime. He was called to forced labor service in Ersekujvar. I was only able to visit him once, on exactly the same day that the Germans came to Hungary: 19th March 1944 [5](#). And I never saw him again after that. He wrote a few letters, and then they took him somewhere, while here the whole deportation story began.

They also designated the building where my father's parents lived, as a place where people [Jews] could go, and we went there, too. They deported my husband, but his daughter, Panni, moved there with us. So, the three of us lived there with three other people. His daughter was 13 years old when they took us there. My first husband wrote her a long letter telling her to come to Budapest [to her mother's] or go to her grandparents'. On 13th April [1944], while we were still living in our apartment, there was bombing in Gyor; they bombed the Gyor Carriage and Wagon Works, and we had to go down to the cellar. That correspondence was after this, and Panni wrote back that she'd rather die with me in the cellar than go to her mother or grandparents. And that's how Panni was deported with me. She survived, because she was lucky enough to be a very well developed child, and they didn't gas her. They took us to Auschwitz, and when they separated us for different tasks they assigned me, being very thin, to the hardest work, while she went to the factory. But my best friend, who is now in Brazil, went to the factory with her, and she stayed at that factory, as well.

We went to the house of my father's grandparents about the end of April, if I remember correctly. We spent about two weeks in that house. We had to go to the ghetto at the beginning of May. The ghetto was in Gyor-Sziget where lots of religious Jews lived. It happened at that time that the Christians from there got the Jewish houses from downtown, while the Jews moved into their houses. We could take their clothes, food, everything a person could carry. In the ghetto we lived 15 people in a two-bedroom and kitchen apartment: my grandparents, my parents, a sister of my grandmother with her son, and Evi, my mother's niece, and her parents.



Since my husband had a transportation company, I received a special permit, so I could go into town from 10am to 2pm. And then I could do the shopping, for what was available. It was written in many places, 'We don't serve Jews!' But there were places where they served us, and there were acquaintances that apparently felt pity for us.

In Győr there were the so-called barracks, which consisted of wooden houses, where the dregs of society lived, the disreputable moochers. And they took them from there, and moved them into the empty Jewish houses, and they took us there from the ghetto. They took us across town group by group, the policemen and the gendarmes driving us along. And naturally the people were standing on the sidewalk, and there were some who felt pity for us, and there were some that clapped their hands with joy, saying, 'At least they take the stinking Jews to a suitable place.' And then we were there in horrible circumstances. But I wish we could have stayed there until the end, because at least the family was together there. A Jewish council, and Jewish police and suchlike, were appointed. We were there only for a few days, but we already had to sleep on the floor there. And one fine day they announced that those whose husbands were in forced labor service could stay; the others would be taken to work. My husband was in forced labor service but I didn't stay. And of course they didn't say that after two days they would deport those who remained, as well. But I went with my parents and grandparents and Panni and the friends who were there.

This was June 1944, and the final destination, about which we didn't have the vaguest idea, was Auschwitz. When we arrived - under terrible conditions, there were 80-90 of us in a wagon, the whole family together, grandparents, my mother and father, etc. - they welcomed us to Auschwitz in the well-known way and drove us, 'Los, los!' [Go, go!]. Behind the fence, we saw those terrible close-cropped women - because we thought that it couldn't happen to us - and the poor souls shouted to us, 'Give us everything you have, they'll take it away from you anyway!' And the poor women asked mostly for food just the way we would, a day later. They drove us forward; there was no chance to give them anything, and then there was the well-known 'bath', one section gas, one section bath, the shaving, completely naked, our things thrown together. It's interesting that our shoes were the only things we found [after the procedure]. They threw us each a dress; I got one that didn't fit me. It was lucky that my first husband's daughter, Panni, was a very well developed, tall and pretty girl, and she got a big dress. We exchanged clothes immediately.

We spent six weeks in Auschwitz. There was no one else with us from the family. Supposedly they took my father to some mine - distant acquaintances told me this, but I don't know for sure. They separated us at the wagon, and he disappeared. Mengele sentenced me to 'life', but they took my poor mother - who, although quite young at 42, had grey hair and was plump - immediately to the gas. The Polish and Slovak women who were there from about 1940 knew Hungarian well and they kept shouting to us, 'We built Auschwitz for you!' because when they were brought there, there had only been bare ground. They suffered a lot, many of them died, and those who remained were completely under the influence of the Germans, and they were often even worse than the Germans, even though they were Jews. When on the third or fourth day a terrible smoke was coming out of the gas chamber, they shouted, 'Do you know where your parents are? They're flying up there.' So we knew there was a gas chamber there.

I trusted my father very much; and they took him to forced labor service where he supposedly died, in terrible circumstances, because he never came back. My father was 52 years old. They selected us again after six weeks. They said they were going to take us to work, but then we no

longer believed in anything because we knew what was happening in the baths. They took us to the baths two or three more times, but we didn't know whether we would be gassed or take a shower for real. We spent six weeks there in terrible conditions. Then they divided us into three groups. They put me among the strongest, I don't know why, as I was so thin. I tried to sneak to the group where Panni and my best friend were, but an ugly Polish Jewish woman saw me - one of the capos, who always walked with a dog-whip,- and she struck a blow on my naked back saying, 'Tsurik, tsurik.' [Yiddish: 'back, back'.]

So I got to Bremen, while they went to a factory where they made munitions and hell knows what else for the war effort. We didn't know where they would take us; after two or three days of traveling we arrived in Bremen, and then they told us we would be rubble-removers. The Americans bombed Bremen dreadfully. They took us to a place where everything was still smoking, the apples and pears were 'baked' on the trees; we picked them and ate 'baked' pears. We were in much more acceptable conditions because we lived in a former SS Lager [camp], where we were six people to a room, on bunk beds; there was a long table in the middle, an iron stove, and we could wash every week. Actually we got food in the morning; a little piece of bread with a black slop they called coffee; in the evening we got our usual soup and a piece of bread - about 300 grams of bread for the whole day - and a little margarine. That was what we got for the whole day. There were many POWs, ranging from French to English, and everyone had an ID mark in order to distinguish them; but they walked around free, whereas we had the big yellow stars on our back. We had two kinds of guards: SS guards and Wehrmacht guards; and when we went with the Wehrmacht guards, after a few weeks, when we began to get our bearings, two or three of us made ourselves scarce in order to get some food. After a bombing, it happened that we went down into a cellar - it must have been some butcher's cellar - and we found a big ham, white pudding and black pudding. It was sensational, and we took them back to the workplace. I was with my niece at that time and I shared it with her, and we had food for a few days. When we were woken in the morning at dawn, around 3 or 4 o'clock, they counted us twenty-five times a day, the SS soldiers woke us up saying, 'Los! Los!' and we had to get up quickly, while the Wehrmacht guards woke us with this, almost polite, expression, 'Aufstehen, meine Damen!' [Ladies, get up.] And there were two Wehrmacht soldiers who always brought the news and solaced us many times saying that it wouldn't last long any more.

We spent seven to eight months there. We had to walk about 20 kilometers daily; there were occasions when they took us by lorry; they put us in an open lorry, and we reeled to and fro, because the driver drove so fast; it also happened that they took us by train sometimes. When the Americans got close to Bremen, they evacuated us to Bergen-Belsen, which was the horror of horrors, and I never get tired of saying that Auschwitz was a health resort compared to Bergen-Belsen. In Auschwitz there was order and organization, while here was chaos, and the Germans were frightfully evil at that time because they knew they were lost. We got there in relatively good shape, although we had walked a lot on the road, and there was an SS woman who drove us into a barn and wanted to set it on fire, but a Wehrmacht guard didn't let her do it. So we got there in terrible circumstances but in relatively good physical condition.

Those people who were there were living dead; they moved on all fours because they couldn't stand up, and we wound up in the same condition. We were there for two weeks, and then we were liberated. But during those two weeks many people died around me, we were in poor health, and



during the last couple of days I could hardly get on my feet, myself. They didn't feed us; sometimes they gave us a cauldron of something watery. In the neighboring block there were Ukrainians who were bigger anti-Semites than the Germans; they knocked over the cauldron, so as the stinking Jews couldn't eat. We slept on the bare floor, just like in Auschwitz, all together. And at dawn, when they woke us up, we had to pull out the dead, but one couldn't tell who was dead and who wasn't because we all looked like living dead. We were liberated on 15th April 1945 by the English. Though they liberated us, they didn't have any understanding, any consideration at all. Looking back at those times I understand them because they were soldiers at war, but they treated us, at the beginning, as if we were enemies too; those few living dead who were there.

I had an aunt who was liberated from Kanitz; this was a cute little village, and the Jewish women threw the Germans out of their houses and homes and occupied it with the help of the Americans. Every family got a room, for example my aunt's family lived in a beautiful two-storied villa - this was the villa of the local banker. My aunt found out that I was in Bergen-Belsen, and she sent a military jeep with the local Jewish woman commander. They found me, and I was ready to go immediately. I wanted to take my niece with me, too, but she didn't want to come. I don't know why, maybe she thought that she would get home earlier from there. As for me, I didn't care about anything but getting to a place with relatively normal conditions because we were still living in tents, and I was between life and death, suffering from typhoid, with a fever of 40 degrees, at the toilet night and day. And when I got better I felt a terrible hunger and we didn't get enough food from the English.

Then I had to get to Kanitz; there I slept in a bed with an eiderdown, took a bath - I took a bath in a bathtub for the first time in eleven months, it was a wonderful thing - and they waited for me with a normal dinner because they cooked themselves. They got the raw foodstuffs from the Americans and everybody cooked there. This was around May-June, and I came home in the middle of October. I came home because the brother of one of my girlfriends came for her, and he said, 'I'll get you home, too.' As he was with my first husband, and they had been liberated, he told me, 'By the time we arrive your husband will be at home.' Well, we got home, but my husband had disappeared. After the liberation the Russians took them for a little forced labor, 'malenky robot' [6](#), and he was never found. He had been in forced labor service with my second husband; they took him, too, and he was out in a camp in the Soviet Union for a year. He was among the first to come home, and he told me that my first husband had had some boil on his hand, and as the train took them towards the Soviet Union, there was an outer camp in Romania where the train stopped, and my first husband told the soldier that he needed to be examined by a doctor. They let him get down to find a doctor, and then he disappeared.

## After the War

When we came home completely alone, I went to a friend of mine, with whom I had gone to Auschwitz, because I knew I had nobody, but she lived at somebody else's place as well, and we lived here and there in Gyor for a year. My poor husband had had a transportation company and I worked there, so I had no financial problems. His partner was very kind, he told me to go there - he didn't say that half of it was mine, but that he would give me something.

Then I met my second husband in Gyor. In fact, I had known him before the war. His name was Karoly Krausz. He was born in 1903. The fact that he was the last man who was with my first

husband, and he could tell me about him, put us in touch with each other; and we got together somehow. He was alone, and I was, too. He had been married as well, had two beautiful daughters, who were very pretty and smart. At that time they didn't admit Jewish girls in high school anymore [because of the numerus clausus in Hungary] [7](#), but one of his girls was so intelligent that the teachers of the Jewish school went with a delegation to the high school headmaster, saying that this girl must be admitted. She already spoke English at that time, though she was only ten years old. And they did admit her. But she never started it because we were deported in June, and that was when she finished elementary school. His wife died, and his two beautiful daughters, too. So, we started life again, together. I had never liked Gyor, and after that I particularly disliked it, because so many horrible things had happened to us, yet we remained stuck there. My second husband finished higher commercial school as well, and after the war he was the chief accountant at a big county company, and before the war he had been a manager in a relatively well-known mill, the Back mill, which belonged to a baron.

We got married in 1947. It was a civil marriage. We were on very good terms with the chief rabbi of Gyor, who later became chief rabbi in Vienna. I was 8-months pregnant and he often came to us. Once he came and I made some dinner - however, he ate only kosher, and we had no kosher food, but he ate it; he was religious, but he set little store by this - and then two couples who were friends of ours were there, and he held the marriage ceremony. So, we were blessed by a rabbi too, though at his request, because neither of us insisted on it. My first wedding was a religious one, too, but in very modest circumstances - because it was in February 1944. My son Andras was born in 1948, and Peter in 1949. Then I stayed home with them for years and didn't work.

In September 1952 I felt that I needed to leave the house. We had a domestic help. We were on very good terms with the deputy manager of the local OTP Bank [the Hungarian National Savings Bank], we were old friends, and he invited me to work three months at the OTP. And the three months turned into 25 years, and I retired to my pension from there. This was my only serious job: I was an internal auditor. In the meantime the children went to school; in those days, there were times when there was nobody to be with them, there was no domestic help, and they were quite independent at that time. There was a sort of school daycare; they ate there, they had a key and in the afternoon they came home.

During the Revolution in 1956 [8](#) we thought a lot about leaving Hungary, we almost started, too, but my husband didn't want to; he said he was old and wouldn't start a new life. The children were little. I don't know if we did the right thing or not. We didn't go. Gyor was a passageway, many of our acquaintances left; they got on the bus in Gyor and got off in Vienna. The chief rabbi, with whom we were on very good terms, was already there, and he sent us a message telling us to come, that he would arrange everything. I needed only a push, but I didn't have the courage to take my chances because there were the two little children. We didn't join any party. This caused us no problems; my husband was a leftist, I'm a leftist myself, and since he held a leading post they tried to persuade us many times to join the Communist Party, but he didn't do it.

My elder son is an engineer, he finished technological university in Germany, while the younger one finished the University of Economics in Budapest; but both of them have several diplomas, and speak foreign languages. Peter has been in Switzerland for ten years. He has four daughters: the eldest is a 3rd-year law student, the 20-year-old attends the Academy of Fine Arts; and there are the twins who attend high school. His wife is a lawyer; she is from Budapest and comes home every

month because she has an office here in Pozsonyi Street. Andras works at a German company, which makes sanitary articles and porcelain. He's an economic consultant there. He lives here in Budapest, and has two daughters.

The boys are called Krausz, their children too; none of them changed their name. My poor husband and I would have liked very much for them to have Magyarized their names before graduation, but no. They said that if the name Krausz was good enough for father, then it was good enough for them, too. Both of them were raised as Jews. At that time it was very fashionable that the parents kept this a secret, because they thought it would be better that way, but this wasn't for us; they knew it from the first moment we could tell them. They frequented religious instruction for a while in Gyor, but then it stopped. So, they knew they were Jews, but they weren't religious; neither were we, which I still regret, thinking that I should have been a little bit more religious.

We observed the high holidays, the Yom Kippur, when we went to the synagogue and made a dinner as well. My poor husband observed the fast all day long; I observed it only until the maskir. My sons acknowledged that. We always observed the seder. Before the war there were many more seders because we were at one set of grandparents', and then at the other set, on the two evenings. After the war only close friends gathered, and that's how we observed the seder. Then this started to falter, which I regret very much. I regret that I didn't bring up my children to be religious, to have some religiousness inside them. They are very good Jews, but they aren't religious. They always considered themselves Jews; both of them are worried about Israel, both of them have been there. Their wives are Jewish. Thank God they met these girls, but none of them are really religious. But both Andras and Peter are very self-conscious Jews. Their daughters aren't religious either. Yet one of the twins in Switzerland is learning Yiddish. They are in a Reform community. There's a rabbi with a beautiful voice, and he gathers the youth there. And one of them likes it so much that she is learning Yiddish. And she's there at every religious occasion. The other twin doesn't go at all. The one who is 20 years old goes there as well - from time to time, not regularly. The eldest doesn't go. It's interesting how it worked out.

We have had a few very good Christian acquaintances, too that we like but one feels comfortable if one can talk about anything. And with these Christian friends or acquaintances one has to keep certain limits. I think that my children and grandchildren feel the same.

We lived in Gyor until January 1977. My husband was already a pensioner and I had just retired; and my sons got married here, and my sons and daughters-in-law insisted on us coming to Budapest as well; thank God, because I couldn't have gone through it all alone. The poor soul lay in bed for a year and a half, though he had been an awfully strapping fellow. He ran rings round his sons even when he was 70 years old. As he was a sportsman, he did everything, including skiing, which was a big deal at that time. My husband died in 1983. After his death we took my husband to Gyor because he wished, as his father is buried there, to be buried in the same grave.

I used to have an Israeli partner for nine years. Originally he lived in Gyor, too; we got to know each other when we were at school. His father sent him to Israel in 1939, but his family disappeared in the Holocaust, too. He got married there and had a son. His wife died in 1983, just like my husband. The next year he came to Budapest. We hadn't kept in touch at all. I didn't even know what he looked like. He visited me, then we got together somehow, in the spring of 1984. We met again that same year, and from that time on we lived together as partners for nine years. He

wanted to marry me, but I wouldn't marry him. I said I wouldn't leave my family here; he would have liked me to go to Israel permanently. He was here for, let's say, eight months of the year, then we traveled for a month, I was in Israel for two months, and for a month we were apart from each other. It was a very pleasant relationship because he was a well-traveled person, and I had traveled before, but with him, I visited many places in Israel. However, I always longed for home.

My poor husband desperately longed for Israel but he never got to go there. I longed for Israel too, but I never thought that I would live there more than two years. I became really used to it, and I liked it, but there was always some fear in me. If for example, we went to Tel Aviv by bus, and an Arab got on by chance, or if we went for a coffee on the beach and there was an Arab at the next table, I was always scared. He said there was nothing to fear because those people were Israelis. Then it proved to be true how much one had to be scared. My partner had heart problems and said he would go home. He did, and after nine years, the relationship broke off and he died two or three years later. I still like Israel very much, and Jerusalem is my 'Liebling' [favorite].

My children and my grandchildren come to me often. Unfortunately I don't have any great-grandchildren yet. The world has changed a lot: girls study first, then they continue studying and they only settle down to have a family after that. On holidays the whole family gathers at my place and it's always me who does the cooking. We sit at the big table, there's always enough space for everybody. At the moment, thank God, everything's fine, at least it looks like it. And that's very important for me. I go out from time to time, I have three friends and we play cards every Saturday, always at someone else's place. I love this very much. Of course, all three of them are Jewish and we also talk a lot about things. I'm happy and I don't feel that I should have done something differently in the course of my life.

## Glossary

### **1 Neolog Jewry**

Following a Congress in 1868/69 in Budapest, where the Jewish community was supposed to discuss several issues on which the opinion of the traditionalists and the modernizers differed and which aimed at uniting Hungarian Jews, Hungarian Jewry was officially split into two (later three) communities, which all built up their own national community network. The Neologs were the modernizers, who opposed the Orthodox on various questions.

### **2 Middle school**

This type of school was attended by pupils between the ages of 10 and 14 (which corresponds in age to the lower secondary school). As opposed to secondary school, here the emphasis was on modern and practical subjects. Thus, beside the regular classes, such as literature, maths, natural sciences, history, etc., modern languages (mostly German, but to a lesser extent also French and English), accounting and economics were taught. While secondary school prepared children to enter university, middle school provided its graduates with the type of knowledge, which helped them find a job in offices, banks, etc as clerks, accountants, secretaries, or to manage their own business or shop.

### **3 Yellow star houses**

The system of exclusively Jewish houses, which acted as a form of hostage taking, was introduced by Hungarian authorities in Budapest in June 1944. The authorities believed that if they concentrated all the Jews of Budapest in the ghetto, the Allies would not attack it, but if they placed such houses all over Budapest, especially near important public buildings it was a kind of guarantee. Jews were only allowed to leave such houses for two hours a day to buy supplies and such.

### **4 Horthy, Miklos (1868-1957)**

Regent of Hungary from 1920 to 1944. Relying on the conservative plutocrats and the great landowners and Christian middle classes, he maintained a right-wing regime in interwar Hungary. In foreign policy he tried to attain the revision of the Trianon peace treaty - on the basis of which two thirds of Hungary's territory were seceded after WWI - which led to Hungary entering WWII as an ally of Germany and Italy. When the Germans occupied Hungary in March 1944, Horthy was forced to appoint as Prime Minister the former ambassador of Hungary in Berlin, who organized the deportations of Hungarian Jews. On 15th October 1944 Horthy announced on the radio that he would ask the Allied Powers for truce. The leader of the extreme right-wing fascist Arrow Cross Party, Ferenc Szalasi, supported by the German army, took over power. Horthy was detained in Germany and was later liberated by American troops. He moved to Portugal in 1949 and died there in 1957.

### **5 19th March 1944**

Hungary was occupied by the German forces on this day. Nazi Germany decided to take this step because it considered the reluctance of the Hungarian government to carry out the 'final solution of the Jewish question' and deport the Jewish population of Hungary to concentration camps as evidence of Hungary's determination to join forces with the Western Allies. By the time of the German occupation, close to 63,000 Jews (8% of the Jewish population) had already fallen victim to the persecution. On the German side special responsibility for Jewish affairs was assigned to Edmund Veessenmayer, the newly appointed minister and Reich plenipotentiary, and to Otto Winkelmann, higher SS and police leader and Himmler's representative in Hungary.

### **6 Malenky robot**

When the Soviet troops liberated Hungary from the Germans and the Hungarian Nazis in April 1945, they as the victorious army, took many Hungarians to the Soviet Union to work as compensation for the war losses and damages they had caused on the side of the Nazis. Some people came back after a couple of years, some after many years, others never.

### **7 Numerus clausus in Hungary**

The general meaning of the term is restriction of admission to secondary school or university for economic and/or political reasons. The Numerus Clausus Act passed in Hungary in 1920 was the first anti-Jewish law in Europe. It regulated the admission of students to higher educational



institutions by stating that aside from the applicants' national loyalty and moral reliability, their origin had to be taken into account as well. The number of students of the various ethnic and national minorities had to correspond to their proportion in the population of Hungary. After the introduction of this act the number of students of Jewish origin at Hungarian universities declined dramatically.

## **8 1956**

It designates the Revolution, which started on 23rd October 1956 against Soviet rule and the communists in Hungary. It was started by student and worker demonstrations in Budapest during which Stalin's gigantic statue was destroyed. Moderate communist leader Imre Nagy was appointed as prime minister and he promised reform and democratization. The Soviet Union withdrew its troops which had been stationed in Hungary since the end of World War II, but they returned after Nagy's announcement that Hungary would pull out of the Warsaw Pact to pursue a policy of neutrality. The Soviet army put an end to the rising on 4th November and mass repression and arrests started. About 200,000 Hungarians fled from the country. Nagy and a number of his supporters were executed. Until 1989, the fall of the communist regime, the Revolution of 1956 was officially considered a counter-revolution.