

Dezso Deutsch

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My family background

My paternal grandparents were born in Hungary around the 1850s. My grandfather's name was David Deutsch. I do not know my grandmother's name; I never met her. She died young, in childbirth. Grandfather David died in 1936 at home, in Bakonytamasi, where he . He had been living there all along. One of my father's grandfathers fought in Kossuth's army [in the 1848 Hungarian War of Independence]. That Which means that, beside having a strong Jewish identity, he believed and considered himself a Hungarian.

I do not have real living memories of my father's brothers and sisters. It is because I did not visited them very often. I know about one of his sisters of his, who . This sister helped her father run their store. She wagsot married, and her son and daughters who managed to survive the war, tnow hey all live abroad. My father had a brother, too, who moved to Ujpest and had a shoe store. He did not survive the Holocaust, either. Many of my relatives live abroad.

My mother's parents lived in Tet, near Gyor. Tet was quite a big village. There was a rabbi;, who lived there, there was everything a Jewish community needed. T, there was an Orthodox and a Neolog branch, too. There was a shochet, as well. The proper religious Jews devoted their lives completely to their being Jewish, to business and to the family.

Grandfather's name was Bernat Sauer, grandmother's Lina. She must have been born in the 1860s. My grandparents had a store which was then called the haberdasher's. They traded with all kinds of clothing and sold fabrics too. The store was on the Main Street, near the Main Square, in the city. It was named the Sauer Haberdashery. They had a big family house. I do not know how many rooms exactly, but four is for sure. They needed it too as the family was a big one. And the store was in the same building only it opened onto the street.

They [my grandparents] occupied themselves with two things: business and synagogue. They had their own seats in the synagogue. Grandfather had some kind of position in the Jewish community, I am not sure what it was exactly but he was a member of some committee and probably even the president of that board. Grandfather would go to synagogue twice a day. He prayed with the prayer shawl and leined [the reading of the Torah] tefilin [phylacteries]. Almost like an Orthodox of the

strictest kind. He wore ordinary dark gray suits [not a caftan]. He had little payot, which he tucked behind his ears. He did not have a beard but his head was always covered – he wore a hat even when at home. Grandmother naturally wore a wig and in the house she wore a kerchief on her head. Grandmother partly ran the house, partly worked in the store. But as a matter of course, there was a house maid as well.

It was mostly at summertime that we would visit them, but not too much of that either. I was not too enthusiastic about the [maternal] grandparents and was not very keen on visiting them anyhow. We, the young generation had a little more modern way of life and thinking, in the school too, and we were raised without being compelled to wear caps, and I had a moderate hairstyle too. I was about 13 or 14 and had a hairstyle when I went to visit my grandparents and the first thing they did was to have my hair cut saying that one could not appear before the rabbi like that. And there they would see to it that we wore something [hat or kipa] on our heads all the time.

My mother had five brothers and sisters, two of them my mother's elders. There was Kari [Karoly], then Aunt Riza, Aunt Sari, Naci, Uncle Dezso and my mother. My mother as well as the other children received the same [strictly Jewish] education. We were really and truly religious yet everyone of us spoke Hungarian but of course we all had an excellent command of Yiddish as well, and sometimes we switched over to that language.

The young ones worked for the [family] business for a while, then each went on their way. Some moved to Paks, others to other places. Some opened a store of their own. Each had some kind of a store but none of them dealt with foods. Sari had a leather goods store. All of them got married. Aunt Sari had two children, both of them girls, Aunt Lisa had two as well, one of them, Shmule lives in Israel: he emigrated as a young lad in 1939 and took part in the wars of liberation too. He established a family in Israel. Dezso had three children – two girls and one boy, the latter died during the war. He [Uncle Dezso] also had some kind of a store. Uncle Naci became director to a store that belonged to a big mining company, he sold [mining] tools and accessories. I do not know where it was: he became a little estranged from the family. He too had a family, wife and children as well. Karoly had married already before the war and they all died, they were all taken to Auschwitz along with the grandparents. Karoly alone came back home and here he remarried, established a new family then went to Israel and died.

My father's name was Mor Deutsch. He was born in 1882 in Bakonytamasi but of course he did not live there. My mother, Iren Sauer, was born in Tet in 1887. My father actually completed his elementary studies only, then, I think, he went to Vienna where he worked and learnt the language. First he married a very religious woman from Papa. It was an arranged marriage. Unfortunately she died in childbirth, but the child, Zoltan, survived. My father remarried, there was a young lady recommended to him – as was the custom of those days – and he married her. The little boy was less than a year old when he came into the custody of my mother. To me Zoltan was as if he had been my own brother and as far as I remember I only came to know later that he was not full kin to us. Later he came to live in Celldomolk where he opened a small store which in time grew bigger and bigger.

Growing up

[In Celldomok] the majority of the Jews settled in the core of the town but not in separation. There was no ghetto, but the Jews lived close to each other, not in one single street, but in a few streets within one neighborhood. Our next door neighbor on the right was Christian as well as the one on the left side. But we had a good relationship. The Jews mostly made friends with Jews but we maintained good connections with the others as well, partly on account of the business. In Celldomok there was an Orthodox and a Neolog community. The two communities were not on good terms with each other at all. They spectacularly neglected each other. The two schools fought and eventually the Orthodox community took over the school where pupils from Neolog families could come as well, however there were Neolog families who sent their children to some other school. Nevertheless, friendly private connections did exist between Orthodox and Neolog people.

Our store was in the center of Celldomok, and I think it was the best store in Celldomok. It offered everything except for food, that is, fabrics, haberdashery, shoes. It belonged mostly to the family as we were four of us brothers and two sisters and my mother was an excellent business woman. She also worked there part time but there were employees too. Generally eight or nine people were employed, mostly Jews.

In the store there was everything on stock: carpets, fabrics, silk. The store was in a one-storey house but it was a long building. It consisted of several departments. There was the textile department, the department of accessories, then shoe department. Later, after having finished school, I became the director of the shoe department. My father bought the goods mostly in Budapest, but there were wholesalers in Papa, or in Szombathely. Partly he himself traveled, and later we also went up to Budapest to get stuff, partly the big firms had their agents who toured the country with the collection and one could order from them.

My parents worked very hard. A holiday was out of the question for them and we were there to help them. There was nothing like going on holidays like people do today, only at times of religious celebrations would they close the store. The family never had their lunch together except for religious festivals. No such thing as lunchtime existed at work: we would go and get our meals one after another in the flat at the rear end of the house. Evening dinners were more like family gatherings because by that time the store was already closed. In those days business was very important for Jewish families. When opening hours were regulated by law, the store was open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. But in the wintertime, when Sabbath was over, my father would go and open the store even on Saturdays. That's when the new week came in early and he would go and open the store at around 5 for an extra hour or so. There was a steady system of credits. We had lots of customers who worked for monthly salaries and came regularly to us and were indebted to us and many would purchase goods on credit. There were some who would pay only a part of their debts, and accounts had to be kept for them. At the same time we ourselves purchased goods on credit. This was a widely accepted custom.

My mother did not have to struggle too much with household chores as she herself worked in the store. She would not go out shopping too often. At the time of weekly fairs we had so many customers, it would have been impossible for my mother to go to the market. It was always the housemaid who went [to market]. She was the one who cooked, she knew what to buy. But she went to kosher places only – she was not allowed to go anywhere else. But our customers often brought us presents, like fruits or vegetables. It was an absolute necessity for us to have a

housemaid who was capable enough and would keep an eye on everything because most of the time my mother was busy with the store. And that stood for my grandparents too. Because my grandmother was also busy with the store. Women had their very important, decisive role in the business. The housemaid was a real family member for us. She would help with everything, she learnt how to keep kosher and was verily like a grandmother. She lived with us – there was a place fixed for her next to the kitchen but she never ate with us – she had her meals in the kitchen.

My mother also had a beautiful wig. Every day someone came to comb it. They put the wig on for her and so she was ready to start the day. Ladies wore only long sleeves even in summer and the tops were long too, as well as their skirts, but they looked very attractive all the time. My mother's deepest concern was to raise us in the manner that we become good Jews, but she accepted that times were changing and she considered, for example, that maybe it was not so very necessary for us, boys to wear caps all the time, though it is also true that in spite of our conduct which was a bit closer to modern ways, we still remained very much Orthodox. We did not really digress from religion, just handled certain things in a different way. In fact the Jewry of the time had two main concerns: the great fair and the religious holidays. Those were the events we were always preparing for. Of course we young people frequented cafes, we were allowed to go to the dancing school when I was 18-19-20 years old. I and my brothers and sisters were absolutely Orthodox, but not that old fashioned. Well, my mother was not so happy about it, but what could she do? A typical reaction of hers was when I received my call up to the army, in her first shock she asked: "yeah, but what about your meals?"

My parents were not particularly educated, and we did not have too much money, so we did not buy too many books. They would rather read books on Jewish matters if they read books at all. We subscribed to the paper Egyenloseg [Equality] and to the Pesti Naplo [Pest Diary] which was the best paper of its time, a daily. Then there was the Miriam [prayer book for women], which was in Hungarian. My mother, however, read Hebrew beautifully too, only she did not understand what she was reading, so she would rather read the ladies' prayer book in Hungarian.

During the first world war my father served in the Italian front from 1917 to 1918. He came back when the war was over. He received a decoration and I remember that he brought his pistol home, which he kept hidden somewhere. And at home he was a Jew and a Hungarian at the same time. And as being a member of the Alliance of Front Warriors decorated with an award of war merit, he was convinced he would never suffer any harm from the Hungarians, then see what happened.

Where I was born that was a smaller house and the store was in a separate building. Then later we had a pretty big house with a big yard and the store in the front and the family lived in the rear tract. We had four rooms which we needed too because I had two sisters and three brothers. My eldest brother was Zoltan. He, just like everyone of us, worked in the store, then in 1937 or 38 he became self-employed and moved to Dobrokoz. That's where he married and he went on working there. He had one child. He always observed his religion very strictly. Then there was Jenó. He was born in 1911. He too started working in the store and never left. Then he got married and two children were born to them. The elder must have been about three and a half when he was deported to Auschwitz, the other one less than six months old. Jenó was drafted into forced labor and died a few weeks before the end of the war in Mauthausen. Nandor was with him all along. The next brother is Nandor. He too worked in the family store, got married, was deported and his wife

and little daughter perished. He alone came back from Mauthausen. Then I came in 1918, then my sister, Rozsi who was born in 1921. That time it was the custom that children had to help in the store. But she finished her studies too. She was a beautiful, intelligent girl. Unfortunately in 1943 she got married. My father strongly objected. not because of the boy but he said "You have four brothers and if one of them is unable to attend the wedding ceremony, you should not get married." But she did and that was her bad luck. She too was deported and when her hairs were shaved the doctor noticed that she was pregnant and immediately she was sent to the gas, though she had been selected for work because she was strong and healthy, she could have survived the camp. My youngest sister, Margit, was born in 1928. She was 12 when I left, a beautiful one, still in school. She was 16 when she was deported. She was also killed.

School years

I went to the Jewish elementary school which was a school of six grades. It was run by the Orthodox community. Here everybody was Jewish and as far as I remember there were Orthodox students wearing payot, but that was the only difference between them and us, we were all equally religious. We did not wear payot. Everybody spoke Hungarian, but the schoolteacher spoke Jewish [Yiddish] occasionally. We understood both.

When I finished elementary school I wanted to go to middle school. At first my mother strongly objected and said I did not need it and why should I go to a totally secular school. Eventually I went to the middle school in Celldomok which was said to be a very good school. My mother consented to it on condition that I was not going to do any writing on Saturdays. The director was a decent man so it was I alone in the whole school who got the permission to be exempted from writing. [On Sundays]. I would not even bring my schoolbag to school - everything I needed I packed on Fridays, I left them in my desk and on Saturdays I would just be sitting and listening all day. In the school there were some Jews, they were Neolog, not religious. I had Christian classmates, but neither from them nor from the part of the teachers ever came anything [anti-Semitic remarks] because there was this director, a very strict and firm person but very nice and honest at the same time. My favorite subjects were arithmetic and geometric. I was the best student in my class. I also liked German, because I knew Yiddish so I was good at it too. I did not have to attend religious education. When the class started I would just go home, when it ended, I walked back. During my school years I played football, I was member of a team. Later we played these games, mostly table tennis, and teams were set up by Catholic, Lutheran and Jewish societies.

From my first grade on I attended another school too, where I studied Jewish subjects. It was not a proper yeshiva, it was a kind of pre-yeshiva. It was run by the Orthodox community and we were about the ten of us students there. We studied Humesh [the five books of Moses], Rashi [commentaries to the Talmud written by Rashi], Gemore [Gemara, part of the Talmud which interprets and explains the Mishna which preceded it], as well as Tosefot [critical and analytical glossaries attached to the Mishna and the Gemara]. The classes had their special choreography. There was a copy of the Talmud and we would read out from it, then the bocher [yeshiva student] explained it, then we discussed it and gave the explanation of the different stories and we were supposed to understand the different points of view of the sages. We translated everything into Yiddish. Then sometimes we discussed the same thing in Hungarian. The discussion was in Hungarian. There was no homework but a so-called review or report on Sundays. It was conducted

by the rabbi and he asked questions on the subjects we had covered the previous week. It was not a proper exam but rather a discussion of the material we had studied the previous week. He would ask questions and he would add his own explanation to the given question. I liked going to this place but it was quite stressful because I would come home from school, have my lunch and by two o'clock I had to be there. I generally studied until six and I had to do my homework in the evening [for the middle school.]

Friday evenings and festival nights in general were decisive in the life of the family. [On Fridays] we would go to the synagogue with my brothers and sisters. Women would stay at home because they prepared the dinner with the help of the housemaid, of course, who was naturally a Gentile. She would serve the Friday meal and she would fetch the Saturday dish from the baker's. [After worship] there came the Friday dinner. According to the tradition my father blessed the boys one after the other, every week, which was such an uplifting feeling. [For dinner] we often had stuffed fish, also soup and chicken stew. After dinner there was zmirot [psalms], singing. Then on Saturday mornings we would go to the synagogue. Then we would have lunch.

Of course all Jewish tradition was strictly observed in the family. I have a very vivid memory of an event. One Saturday morning I was out in the yard when someone knocked on the door and one of our regular customers stood in the door with her sobbing daughter. As it turned out the daughter was to have her wedding the next day and her shoes which they had bought in our store were too small for her. So the mother said, "Please, Mr Dezso, I know that this is a holiday for you, but please, do me a favor and let me exchange these shoes. I am not even going in, you just hand it out". Well, I did not have the heart to refuse her, I went in and brought a pair one size bigger which meant I did not have to touch money at all or anything, and just when I was handing over the shoes my father came. He saw me coming out of the store with a parcel in my hand, on a Saturday, and the lady started to explain that she was responsible, she was the one who asked me to do it and the like. My father did not say a word, he just simply went into the house. But when the customers were gone, he started to shout at the top of his voice. He actually hollered and declared that as long as he lived and the store belonged to him, nobody in that house would ever be allowed to work on Saturdays. In short he was always aware of what was the most important thing at a given moment: business, synagogue, family.

All holidays were strictly observed. The store was closed, we celebrated the holiday and went to worship. The most distinguished holiday was Pesach because that is one of our most important holidays starting with the Seder night. On Seder night we went to the synagogue, then we held the Seder which could go on until as late as half past eleven. There was a rich Seder plate, with naturally charoses [a mixture of ground nuts, apple, wine and cinnamon] on it, along with bitter herbs and eggs and there was salty water on the table. It was my father who held the Seder, he explained everything. I, as the youngest boy read the Haggadah out. Everything [all utensils] were kept apart for Seder. In this period nothing was used from what we used normally, everything had been carried up to the attic. On the day before there was the process of doing hometz [the removal of all leavened products from the house] which lasted for one day. I did not take part in that, it was done by my mother and the maid. Whenever we were given any new clothing as children, it came for Pesach.

Then there was Succoth. Outside the entrance to the house we had a kind of fenced arbor. In the summertime one could sit there then in the afternoon my father and his friends played cards there. Then at the time of the Succoth it was very easy to prepare the tent, and everyone would eat there during the holidays. We had of course lulav [palm tree branch], and etrog [a kind of lime fruit] in the house and we would be sitting out under the tent and read the Kohelet [Ecclesiastes; one of the five scrolls] and other things. My father would explain things and we also told what we were taught about those things at school. At Chanukah candles were lit in the synagogue, every day, as it came, one after the other. My mother would light them at home too and she told the blessing on it each evening, along with the girls. We, children would play, played with the spinning top. At Purim it sometimes happened that some kind of a role-play was staged in the school. They would animate the story of Esther, they would put on costumes, learned the roles and perform the play. We would prepare presents, some cookies. Everyone would bake some, send it to their friends and close acquaintances and of course would get a lot in turn. There were some students with us who lived in the countryside but wanted to go to some Jewish school and so they came to live in Celldomolk and “eat days” [i.e. they would go and have their lunch with different Jewish families each day]. My mother regularly received such students then at each holiday we would be given huge parcels from the parents of these children.

During the war

I finished the middle school in 1938. Then I started to work in the store. At first [my duty was] selling goods, keeping the place tidy, then later on I did the purchase along with my father. We had a separate shoe department which was not a common thing those days and I became assigned to direct that department. My father would never stay behind the counter. There was a strict counter-system those days. My father would stay in the customers’ area while I stood behind the counter. I worked in the store until 1940.

In the middle of 1940 I received my call up letter from the army. I registered as a regular soldier and did not know that that could be the beginning of something. We were taken to Koszeg where after two sessions of training we were rounded up and told that we weren’t trustworthy enough to defend the country so we would serve as laborers. An indeed this was the first forced labor division, so we became the first Jewish forced laborers. We worked in Koszeg for a while, then at road constructions, trenching and unloading train carriages. There was also some agricultural work. It was all quite hard but we were all young and strong. From time to time we were allowed to send a postcard home but were not given any leave. From places all over the country Jews who were liable to military service had been directed to Koszeg, so two divisions were set up. We were told that we were expected to follow absolute discipline and the slightest breach of discipline would be sanctioned. There came 1942, the two years almost passed [the duration of compulsory military service] when in the summer of that year we were instructed to write a postcard home and say that we wanted them to send us all the necessary clothing for march as well as for cold weather because we were not entitled to be given any clothing any more. They packed us into a train and that was when a very typical scene occurred. The trains that carried the soldiers of the Hungarian Army to the front were finely decorated with flowers. When we arrived at the railway station a train beautifully prepared like that was standing there. When our commander caught sight of it, he ordered that all flowers should immediately be removed because we were only Jews and not Hungarians defending their country.

We traveled almost one week by that train. Food was not distributed too often and when we stopped we were already on the territory of Ukraine. Then came the march on foot. We were informed that we were going to cover more than 1,000 km in cavalry march – which meant 30 km per day and there would not be any rest only after having walked 15 km – so we’d better throw away all luggage that was not absolutely necessary, like canned food, and so on. The march lasted for more than a month and not once did we sleep under a roof. During the march we were given food too, I won’t say that it was sufficient and delicious but some kind of catering it surely was. And the weather was not that bad, as it was the summer period. Then we arrived at the river Don where we got accommodated in nasty tents and the trench digging and tank trap setting started. It was an absolutely senseless work to do and in the meanwhile fall, then the merciless wintertime and the frontline was approaching. Until fall we had been having a relatively nice commander who had no ill intentions. But when it dawned on him that the front was rapidly approaching and it would be impossible to defend ourselves, he asked for a leave and never came back. He was replaced by another one who was ruthless and a sadist and we were falling like flies.

I got hit in November and to my great luck I was taken to a hospital where the Hungarian soldiers got treatment, but the Jews were just thrown into the basement without beds or anything. The doctor would come down once a day but did nothing -- Jews were not supposed to get medicament or bandage. We were given some kind of food and when I was already recovering I started to help those around me. One day the First Lieutenant Surgeon came downstairs to visit and he was accompanied by a girl. After the doctor had left she hurried up to me and asked “Mr. Deutsch, don’t you recognize me? I used to be a regular customer of your store in Cell[domolk], see these shoes, I bought them in your store. I am not in the position to help but I will try to keep an eye on you.” Days were passing and all of a sudden she comes and whispers in my ears that the next day everyone capable of walking would be sent back to the front, because the hospital was too crowded and I’d better figure out something. So the next day the First Lieutenant duly came and told us that we should be on our way. I told him I had just been written to my unit and asked for my clothes that I left behind when I was taken to the hospital and if I were to get back right now, I would just outright miss my baggage, and it was minus 30 degrees Celsius there and I was sure to freeze to death right away. He was a decent guy so he took me off the list and said that I should go by the next transport. And a few days later he even managed to organize me as a help-all in the basement, along with another guy. We had to bring the food, carry out the dead, look after everybody and the like. So I got access to the kitchen where I was sometimes given an extra portion and that way I could share my regular portion with the other people downstairs.

That was going on like that for a while and one morning we woke up to realize that the hospital was empty. Food and all equipment lying around, the whole building deserted. While the Russians attacked, the Hungarians fled and no one cared about us, we were just left behind. For a few days we did not really know what had happened, then the Russians came and told that we were prisoners of war. For a short period of time we stayed on, then we were transported to camps. We went by train as far as the Eastern borders of Russia. It was already summertime by the time we arrived at our destination, the summer of 1943. Here I stayed for five years. Our job was the felling of trees. It was extremely cold, the rule was that we went to work only when the temperature was above minus 40 degrees Celsius. If it fell under 40 degrees we would be given a day off. Boarding was all right and all those who reached these camps starting off from the road construction in

Hungary, all of us survived. Here one did not have to die any more.

Post-war

In 1947 those who were not fit for work because of their health were sent home – regardless of their being Jewish or German or Italian or Hungarian – we were all put together, but in the barracks people were separated according to their nationalities. The Jews however were not accommodated separately, we lived where the Hungarians lived. I'll never forgive them for treating us the same way [as the non-Jewish Hungarians] and that we were not sent home earlier. In 1947 we were given a postcard so we had the chance to write back home (it was the first time after five years that I was allowed to write home) that we were alive and well. And as I did not know whom to write and of course one had heard many things of what happened to the Jews, I wrote the postcard and addressed it to the Mayor's office in Celldomolk. My brother got my card and knew that he could expect me home. Then in the spring of 1948 we too were released and sent home – that year there was a big release campaign .

I went to Celldomolk straight away as I got home from captivity. My brother had already been home for almost three years, he got married and had a child too. I went home – in our house there lived my brother, his wife and their six-month-old little daughter. My brother told me what happened to whom. It was horrible. I helped my brother in the store but that time stores already started to become nationalized so I was given a job in Szombathely in a textile emporium where I dealt with the distribution of products. This store fulfilled the demands of the whole Vas county. I got promoted to a relatively high position. I joined the party but then those days that was kind of natural, although I never became a very busy party member.

Of course one had to work on Saturdays too but I always remembered that it was a holiday. And I went to the synagogue on the high holidays. I took a day off so that I could attend the service. It was quite obvious to everybody but I would never talk about it in particular. It was maybe the day before Yom Kippur when the secretary of the party comes up to me and asks whether I am taking a day off in order to go to the synagogue. I told him that it was so. So he says “you'd better not go, it is not really appreciated.” So I answered that at Yom Kippur there is a ceremony when we remember our deceased. During the war my grandparents, two brothers, two sisters, my parents and cousins got killed. He stopped bothering me, I think he got the message. I attended the synagogue anyhow, not much for prayers but I was seeking connection with my fellow Jews. There was a common room above the prayer hall – the synagogue itself was too big for us – where we played cards and chatted, I went there quite frequently. I kept connection with the Jews all along.

It was in Szekesfehervar during a business trip that I got acquainted with Klari, my wife, who lived with her father. Her mum had been killed in Auschwitz, but she and her father had come home. Her father Andor had an upholstery while Klari worked as a shop assistant. When we decided to get married I applied to be transferred to Szekesfehervar. By that time I was already the second person at the company, but Klari would not leave her father on his own and no place else could we have such a nice and spacious home as in Szekesfehervar. So I got transferred to a local textile center as a distributor and purchaser.

We had a civil wedding, but afterwards we went to the Szekesfehervar rabbinate, accompanied by a very few people only, and the rabbi also married us. In the mid-fifties this was not a common

thing to do but to us it meant a lot. We regularly attended the synagogue and we were active members of the Jewish community. The Jewish community had about 30 members. That time it was not trendy to be Jewish and there were lots of mixed marriages. At the time of holidays we were always present in the prayer house – there was no proper synagogue functioning here either – and we would organize meetings as well.

In 1956 nothing extraordinary happened in Szekesfehervar. A few people demonstrated, but nothing could be felt of what was going on in Budapest and in some other places in the country. In 1956 I was already married and had a job. We had my wife's dad to look after so I was not in the position of thinking about emigrating to Israel. But when there were the wars in Israel I was deeply concerned. Of course I was not in the position to help, but I kept my fingers crossed for Israel. It was very comforting for me to know that Jews were able to protect themselves against others, that they had arms and they were able to fight and win. It was good to know after all that had happened in the second world war. It is not just that it gives you the feeling of security that there is a Jewish state. I also appreciate that country very much and I would be really happy if there were real peace over there. Although I was not able to emigrate because whenever we were about to go and visit my relatives, my wife fell ill. We decided several times to go, but in the end we never went. It was only after her death that I managed to get there in 1998. It is a fascinating country.

Since we moved to Budapest I went more often to the synagogue. At first I attended the synagogue in Dohany street then the one at the Rabbinical Seminary. Since my wife died I am in the synagogue each Friday and I pray. I spend my afternoons at the Shalom Club where we play cards with my friends. I keep connections nearly exclusively with Jews. I have my doctor in the Jewish hospital. It's among them that I feel secure.