Katalin Kallos Havas

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Katalin Kallos Havas and her husband live in a house they bought four years ago in the Gyorgyfalvi district of Kolozsvar. The rooms are imbued with pipe scent. Her husband’s favorite pastime is smoking his pipe. This scent, the old books of the study and the modern computer give the house a special atmosphere. Katalin spends most of her retirement at home and occasionally goes to the Jewish community to meet her friends. When she is at home, she usually reads or tends the flowers in the garden. Katalin has a graceful and kind-hearted nature, and in spite of her advanced age she is mentally very fresh. However, she only remembers selectively the period prior to the Holocaust. She only has fractions of memories about her family and childhood; the way she explains it, she wanted to start a new life when she came back from deportation; to forget the past that carried memories of the loved ones she lost.

My maternal grandmother, I don’t remember her name, was originally from Upper Hungary [which is part of Slovakia today], from Trencsenteplice, which was mostly inhabited by Neologs [1]. She and my grandfather, I don’t know his name either, moved to Des before World War I, and their children were all born there. My maternal grandparents were Neologs; they observed the high holidays and used to go to the synagogue, but weren’t religious. They didn’t keep a kosher household either. They had modern ideas about life. I only knew one of my grandparents, my maternal grandmother. She was left a widow early. She had to bring up and marry off her five daughters, which was really hard because they each needed a dowry. After her husband died she became a businesswoman, which was quite unusual in those days. She had a lumber warehouse, opposite to where the courthouse was at the time. The workers she employed were Christians. She brought up and married off her daughters using the revenues of this business. Of course, they had to marry suitors who were content with a smaller dowry. The girls got betrothed through a matchmaker, and their marriages were arranged by their parents. My mother and her little sister were the youngest ones, and their marriages were love matches.

My mother’s eldest sister, Elvira, got married and moved to Budapest. She had one child, Denes, who killed himself at a young age. Elvira perished in Auschwitz. The next oldest sister was Iren, who got married and moved to Brasso, which was then part of Hungary [following the Trianon Peace Treaty] [2]. Iren and her husband, Grosz, were wealthy. A baron called Grodl had a lumber mill and a sawmill near Brasso, in Kommando. Uncle Grosz was the foreman for the baron and they stayed there all summer, and spent the rest of the year in Brasso. As a child I spent all my summer holidays at Aunt Iren’s in Kommando, and those were the happiest days of my life. They didn’t observe the religious holidays either. Nobody in the family was religious. They had two sons, Laci

and Geza. Aunt Iren emigrated to Israel with Laci and her daughter-in-law after World War II. Laci now lives in Nazareth. Geza remained in Brasso and started a family there. Iren died at the age of 94 in the early 1970s.

My mother's third sister, Sari, got married to a Yugoslav man, from a place that was then Southern Hungary [Voivodina] [3]. I only know that they were amongst those shot into the Danube by the Hungarians [during the Novi Sad massacre] [4]. They had two daughters. The younger one, Lili, got married and moved to Italy, before World War II, and that's how she escaped deportation. The older one, Edit, was deported to Auschwitz, but she came home. She married a Yugoslav Jew called Rosenberg and emigrated to South Africa at the end of the 1940s. Then they moved to Israel, then to Holland. Edit's husband was a construction engineer, and specialized in building sugar factories. My mother, Vilma, was the fourth daughter. She was born in 1896. Etus was my mother's youngest sister. She married in Des, and emigrated to America in 1918 or 1919.

My father's parents were born and lived in Des. All I know about them is that they were observant and had a furniture transporting business, but I don't even remember their first names. Their last name was Selig. My father had five brothers and sisters: four boys and a girl. My father, Jeno Havas, was born in 1892. He and one of his brothers, Marci, were the ones who took the surname Havas. They both served in the Austro-Hungarian army and they probably Magyarized their names there. However, I don't know exactly when and why. The sister and the other brothers kept the name Selig. Out of all them, only my father graduated from college. He became a lawyer, whereas the others only graduated high-school and all worked in the transportation business, without exception.

The boys weren't religious. One of them lived in Galac, another one in Arad, and a third in Braila. Only my father and his younger brother, Marci, remained in Des. His oldest brother, Jozsef, whom we all called Jasszi, lived in Des with his family for a while. He was an illegal communist already, as early as 1933, and was imprisoned for quite a while. During those periods his wife, Edit, and their children lived at our house in Des because they had no other source of income. His wife was originally from a landlord's family from Kapjon. Kapjon is a couple of kilometers away from Kolozsvar. His daughter's name was Zsuzsi. Since my father was a lawyer, he helped out Jasszi many times, getting him out of prison. At the end of the 1930s they moved to Galac, and then, after World War II, to Bucharest. As a member of the Communist Party since 1933, he was expelled from the Party in 1945. Only after he died, in the 1960s, was his name cleared, thanks to his daughter's intercession.

My father's second oldest brother, Gyula, lived in Arad. The third oldest brother, Bumi, lived in Braila. He was born after my father, in the middle of the 1890s. I don't know, I don't remember his real name because they moved out from Des very early, and he died in World War II. I think his wife's name was Regina. As far as I know they had no children. My father's other younger brother, Marci, was shot in the lungs in World War I and died shortly afterwards. He had a wife and two sons. One of his sons was also called Marci.

My father's older sister, Szerena, married a religious man and she remained religious. Her husband, Suranyi, worked in the transportation business. They had a large courtyard, and in it they had carriages and horses. As far as I remember, they had large carriages, and in the early 1900s they transported the statue of King Matthias to Kolozsvar. [Editor's note: The King Matthias statue group

from Kolozsvar was set up in 1902 in the main square of the city. The work representing the Hungarian king, Matthias, and his generals is one of the most important works of the sculptor Janos Fadrusz.] They lived in Des, had a daughter and a son. The entire family perished in Auschwitz.

Around 1930 there were 3,000 Jews living in Des. There were more Neolog than Orthodox Jews, they had their own synagogue and several places of worship, but I don't remember the ratios. In Des there was a Jewish area around the Neolog synagogue, where the poorer Jews, who rented their homes, used to live. The wealthier Jews lived spread out in different areas of the town, and had their own houses. We never had a house of our own, and I don't really know why, but it wasn't too important to have a house of one's own. We only had a vineyard, jointly with my father's sister and his younger brother, in Bungur, where the ghetto was in 1944. Bungur was in fact a forest in the outskirts of Des. The arable lands and vineyard nearby were named after it. The ghetto though was set up in the forest, in the open air.

My parents never talked about how they met, nor about their marriage. They got married in 1916, and my oldest brother Gyorgy was born a year later. I was born in 1922. When I was a child, my parents were amongst the wealthy middle-class. They dressed according to the middle-class fashion of that period; they used to go to get-togethers, and had an active social life. Their circle of friends was very diverse; it didn't matter whether someone was Jewish or Christian. As far as I remember they were both very good-looking. The family called my father 'laughing eyes.' He was a jolly and funny man. My parents weren't strict. They never forbade my older brother or me anything. We lived in a very beautiful house on the bank of the Szamos River in Des. A large household lived in the family house, which had plumbing and electricity. We all had our own rooms. The laundry and the kitchen were in the basement, and the food was brought to the dining-room with an elevator. We had a housemaid, a cook and a Fraulein, that is, a governess. The servants were all Christians and they lived in our house. It was my mother's principle that everybody must work for their bread, therefore we children had some duties around the house; even though there were people who could have done it for us, we had to do them. We cleaned up, helped out around the house and had to keep our closets tidy.

I was already a good swimmer by the age of five. My father taught me to swim by throwing me into the deep waters of the Szamos in Des, at a spot where even he couldn't touch the bottom. Then he said, 'Now come out', and I did. I discovered that the water kept me afloat, and I learnt to swim. I was a tomboy and I had quite a lot of fights. That's why the family called me 'Fiupista' [boy Pista]. I had a cousin, Marci, who was the son of my father's younger brother, Marci. He was a year older than me. He used to come to our house quite often, but he always left crying because I always beat him up.

My parents weren't religious. We didn't light a candle on Fridays and didn't keep a kosher household either. On Pesach we used to spend the seder at my aunt Szerena's place.

We spoke Hungarian in the family. Our mother tongue and culture was Hungarian. Neither of our parents spoke Yiddish. We had a large library at home. My parents read a lot, but it wasn't them who led me to read. I just had the bookshelf there, so I read. We didn't have any religious books, but literature. I learned German when I was three from the Fraulein, who was a Saxon girl from the Brasso region, and I knew Gothic characters at the age of seven. Now I know only a few of them. At the age of seven I could already read and write in Hungarian. From the age of 11 I read regularly,

and at 13 I was already reading Zola. [Zola, Emile (1840-1902): French writer and critic, leader of the naturalist school.]

My older brother, Gyorgy, read everything that fell into his hands. He took piano lessons from a private teacher who used to come to our house. Gyorgy's closet looked like a little girl's; everything was in place. He was the 'golden haired child' in the family because he was tidy. My parents always nagged me because even though I was a girl, I was very untidy. I was on bad terms with my brother for quite a long time. I was around 15 when we became very good friends. We had no secrets from each other. He enlightened me on many subjects. Our close relationship remained very strong even after he got married. His wife was really annoyed about this; she was jealous of me. Gyorgy used to tell me more than he told her. His wife, Rozsi, was a Jewish girl, originally from Maramaros, and they got married in 1943. She was still a medical student then. Their marriage was a simple civil one, without any religious ceremony. They didn't even organize a party afterwards.

I attended a Romanian middle school. There was no independent Jewish school in Des. There was a school for boys and one for girls, with well-trained teachers. In the school they didn't make us feel different because we were Jewish, although there were many Jews in the school. I didn't feel I was despised or treated like an alien. My favorite subject was mathematics, and I was only interested in what was related to mathematics: physics, chemistry and logic. We used to go to the theater, concerts and movies with the school. On several occasions they took us to the Romanian theater in Kolozsvar. The first opera I saw was Carmen. I was 14 then. I couldn't understand a word they sang, but it was all new to me and I liked it.

My maternal grandmother lived with us until the early 1930s. Due to the economic depression it became harder and harder to make a living. My father was the manager of a bank in Des then. The bank went bankrupt and with it we lost a considerable part of our wealth. My father then returned to his career as a lawyer, but he didn't make enough money. Therefore my grandmother decided to move to Brasso, to live with her other daughter, Iren. I was around eight or nine then. Because of the difficulties we had to sell the most valuable things from our house: furniture, porcelain and crystal. As our poverty grew we moved into smaller and smaller apartments. It was very useful for us that my mother knotted Persian rugs because from the 1930s until our deportation it practically supplemented the family's income. In Des it wasn't the thing for women to earn money, neither in the Hungarian, nor in the Jewish upper-class families, and my mother felt quite uneasy amongst her friends because she worked. Her friends began to turn away from her. They visited and invited her fewer and fewer times.

Finally, in 1936, when I was 14, we moved to Kolozsvar. My older brother, who was 19 then, was already a student in Kolozsvar. There were no cars in those days, so we moved to Kolozsvar by train. My father remained in Des and only came to Kolozsvar in 1939. I think there was a conflict between my mother and my father. They never argued in front of us, so we, children, didn't know anything about what was going on between them, but during the three years they lived separately, he very rarely visited us in Kolozsvar. At first we lived at the beginning of Pata Street [today Nicolae Titulescu Street], then we moved to the center, into the courtyard of the current puppet theater on Kiraly Street. Later, we were deported from there. When we moved to Kolozsvar, I attended one more year in a Romanian middle school [5] . All in all I attended four years in middle school. My older brother was a student and he gave lessons, while my mother took in students, but

it was still not enough to maintain the family. With the help of Aunt Iren from Brasso, my mother bought a stocking ladder-mender in 1938 and took on jobs. From then on we lived in somewhat more normal conditions.

I did a lot of needlework; I had good manual dexterity. I learned to sew in the public trade school, and then I worked for a Christian lady. Her name was Mrs. Veress, and she and her husband were supposedly of noble descent. We were on very good terms, and she valued me. Instead of the normal three years, I became her assistant in 1939, after only two years and then she gave me a salary already. The workshop was in the main square and had only two rooms. Five or six of us worked there. The customers were mainly Mrs. Veress' acquaintances, but there were other customers, as well. When the Hungarians came, in September 1940 [the start of the so-called 'Hungarian times'] [6], we made Hungarian gala-dresses for many customers, including some countesses, and decorated them with real pearls. I was by then chief decorator with pearls. For instance I put pearls on the dress of Koleszar's daughter. Koleszar was the best ophthalmologist in Kolozsvar. While the three of us lived together, until 1939, my mother did the accounts for the family. We all put our salaries together, and at the end of the month she gave a third to each of us. We could do anything we wanted with our share.

I was 17 years old when Poland was invaded. We found out about it from the newspaper. The Romanian laws also reflected the changes. The anti-Jewish laws [7] taken by the Goga-Cuza government [8] in 1938 were further intensified by the royal dictatorship installed in February of the same year. In 1939 the number of Jews in the professional classes was increasingly restricted: it was harder and harder for Jewish lawyers and engineers to find a job.

I was a sportswoman - that's what I was interested in. The Jewish community from Kolozsvar had a sports club, the Hagibor [Hebrew: The hero], which had several sections: soccer, Ping-Pong, tennis, water polo and fencing. Hagibor had many young and reputed athletes. There were, for instance, the Eros brothers. The younger brother of Laci Eros, Csibi, was a foil fencer and even took part in European Championships. Laci was a sabre fencer and a water-polo player. My cousin from Brasso, Geza, married the sister of the Eros brothers. They brought me into the Hagibor. At the end of the 1930s, the Hagibor won the national Ping-Pong championships. I was on that team, and so was one of my girlfriends, Eva Weisz. I was placed first in Ping-Pong at the Balkan Championships in international doubles with Sari Kolozsvari, in 1939. There were no Christians at Hagibor, except for one athlete, a Ping-Pong player called Vladone, who used to come to our club. We were happy to have him. I think he even won the national championships. Because I was one of the best defensive players, I also trained with the boys, including Vladone. The president of the Ping-Pong club was Farkas Paneth. I did fencing and Ping-Pong, both competitively, but I had no special success in fencing. Our fencing trainer was Jeno Mozes. He perished in Auschwitz. He was an outstanding technician. While we were allowed to compete, we attended each other's games. I was pursuing other sports as well: skiing and swimming, but these were only for fun, and after 1940, when the Hungarians came, we had to stop. The anti-Jewish laws prohibited the athletes of Hagibor from participating in any competition, so we couldn't compete. [After the entry of the Hungarians to Transylvanian, anti-Jewish laws of Hungary came into effect here as well.] [9]

My friends were from the Hagibor. One of our friends, Marcell Roth, whose father was a wealthy pharmacist, had a phonograph. He had beautiful classical music and opera records. One afternoon

every week, we gathered to listen to music. There were people among us who were connoisseurs of music, and talked about the piece we were listening to. We knew all the great composers, symphonies and operas. In another circle of friends we used to talk about books, and everybody talked about what they had read most recently. Due to the limited possibilities we had after the Hungarians came, that's how we lived. We used to go on trips with our friends, but not very long ones. For example one day we went camping at Lake Cege with tents and returned home the next day. [Lake Cege is some 60 km from Kolozsvar, in the direction of Des.]

I had a Jewish boyfriend called Dery, whose parents were furriers. They had a house at the end of Donat Street, on the banks of the Szamos, and every summer we went there to bathe. Their garden gave onto the Szamos, so we weren't bothered by anybody while bathing.

The Jewish youth from Kolozsvar was seriously involved in the leftist underground movement. My older brother, for example, was an illegal communist as a student from 1938, but he already had connections with the communists from 1936. He was a regular member, he had no special position in the communist organization. The Communist Party was banned by the Romanian authorities already in the 1920s. From then on it operated in secret, illegally. That's why its members were called 'illegalists'. I came in contact with the communist movement in the trade school on Pap Street, where the communists often gave lectures. They usually didn't talk about their ideology, but the practical part of socialism, about how it should be implemented. My brother Gyorgy brought me to one of these lectures, and later I went there by myself. One of the speakers was a Jewish medical student, Odi Neumann. I attended these lectures each week, and that's how I learnt about communism. Thus I never had any contacts with Hungarian communists because I only moved in Jewish circles.

My brother and I were atheists already from a very early age, we believed in communism and that someday all citizens would be equal. We believed in the progress of mankind, and we didn't leave our sorrow and difficulties for God to solve. We had to resolve them ourselves. Regardless of religion, we had a Jewish identity and were proud of it. We knew about the Zionist movement. There were many different factions, including a left-wing one. My brother had an eye on such a left-wing Zionist organization, the Hashomer Hatzair [10], but this was liquidated in 1938.

Before 1940 I raised money for the underground organization Voros Segely [Red Aid] from its sympathizers. There were many wealthy young people who wouldn't dare to become communists, but sympathized with the movement and backed it financially. This all went on in secret. Communism was spreading, especially within the student circles. After the Hungarians came [in 1940] I even took part in distributing leaflets. We encouraged people not to let the others exploit them, and to put up some resistance at work.

There were cells in Kolozsvar, but I didn't know who their leaders were. [Editor's note: the communists were organized in small groups called cells.] We only knew one person, who gave us instructions. Everybody had such a contact person, and we called them 'the contacts.' My brother's contact was a Christian boy called Zoltan Kiraly, who was taken to forced labor in 1941, to the Russian front. My contact was a boy from Des who lived in Kolozsvar. I knew him as 'the Hollender boy'. I didn't know anything else about him. He was caught by the police in 1942 or 1943. He was imprisoned in Szamosfalva – the prison for communists –, then he was beaten to death. Laci Farkas was also imprisoned there. He was of Jewish origin. I met him at the end of the 1930s. He was

originally from Kolozsvar but operated in Des. The illegal communist organization from Kolozsvar sent him there to help in organizing the communists.

When the Hungarian armed forces marched into Kolozsvar in fall 1940, my father was very happy at first. He had waited for Hungarian rule to return, because he had fought in World War I for the army of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy [the KuK army] [11], and he even received a decoration. Even though we knew that there were anti-Jewish laws in effect in Hungary, we wanted to live there because our culture and mother tongue was Hungarian. But they quickly made us feel unhappy that they'd come, even more than the Romanians had before. My brother felt it for the first time, when in 1940 law students attacked him with sticks at university. He was studying to become a chemist and was preparing for his doctorate. He came out of the laboratory holding vitriol in his hands, when they surrounded him and beat him. When he came home his face was so swollen up, he looked like a horse - that's how hard they beat him. From then on they made us feel we were Jewish.

At the beginning of 1941 my job was terminated. When the Hungarians came in 1940, my boss' husband was appointed mayor of Des, and the workshop was relocated there. Due to the anti-Jewish laws I couldn't take any other job, so I worked illegally here and there. It paid off for the owners to employ people illegally, because that way they didn't have to pay the corresponding taxes and health insurance. And the inspections weren't severe.

During the war my father worked as legal adviser at a bank, I think it was the Agricultural Bank. Its headquarters were above the then EMKE pharmacy. I don't know what EMKE stood for, but the citizens still call the building that. Back then we called it the sinking house, because its front became cracked and started to sink. I think my father was dismissed in 1944, but I don't know where he worked afterwards. My mother then worked as a stocking ladder-repairer. There was a Jewish store with a workshop. My mother rented a small place there; she installed her machine there and worked on her own account. The owner had a very nice employee, and the owner transferred the store and the workshop to him by deed – I think it was in 1944 – after the Jews weren't allowed to have stores anymore. Since my mother wasn't employed there, but only rented the place, she wasn't thrown out and could work there until her deportation.

The period following March 1944 was very difficult for us due to the restrictions, which we had to acknowledge because there was nothing we could do about them. We weren't allowed to buy things in Christian stores and we were only allowed to walk on the streets within specific hours. I don't remember exactly when we had to start wearing the yellow star [12], but it was probably in the spring of 1944, when the Germans came. [Editor's note: The invading German forces marched into Kolozsvar on 27th March 1944. Wearing the yellow star was made obligatory on 31st March.]

We heard nothing about the deportations. Even those who went to the Jewish community regularly didn't know anything. Only a very small group, the leadership, found out about it, just before people were put into ghettos, from the Polish Jewish refugees who came to Kolozsvar. They brought the news, but nobody believed what they said. Even though some of them had escaped from Treblinka. We knew the Arrow-Cross men [13] were dangerous. We were getting news about people being beaten, killed, shot into the Danube, but the people at the Jewish community calmed us down.

There were public announcements on walls regarding the date the Jews would be taken to the brick-yard, and what they could bring along. After one or two days, on 3rd May, the gendarmes came. When they showed up at our house, everybody's bundles were already packed up. We left everything in the house as it was: furniture, pots, everything we owned. All we were allowed to take with us – food, some clothes and valuables – was packed in our bundles. They put my family – my parents, my brother and myself – on a truck, along with the other Jewish inhabitants of the house, and took us to the ghetto set up in the brick-yard. Many Christian citizens were happy they took us away, because we left many things behind, and everybody could have their share of them.

The brick-yard is still there, near the Irisz housing estate, close to the railroad. We spent three weeks in the ghetto, in terrible conditions. I don't remember us cooking anything, since we had nothing we could cook in or on, and we had no electricity. I don't remember whether we had a communal kitchen. I don't even remember whether we had the possibility to clean up, there were no toilets. They gathered quite a lot of people there, the entire Jewish community of Kolozsvar. Every family had some three or four square meters of space, regardless of how many members they had. There were no chairs there to sit on; we couldn't do anything. There were things to lie on, which we could take up and sit on. We were kept in the brick-yard.

They said they wouldn't take us out of the country, but that we would be scattered in different regions of Hungary to work, everyone in his professional field, if possible. They announced that it would be better if the doctors and engineers went with the first transport, to take up their jobs. And since my sister-in-law, Rozsi, was a doctor, and my brother an engineer, my family went along in the first transport. They squeezed some one hundred people into a cattle-car. When we saw through a small hole, the name Csap [today Chop, Ukraine], we knew that was it; we were going to Poland, because Csap was past Hungary. The Hungarian gendarmes escorted us to Csap, where they handed us over to the SS troops. By the time we arrived at Auschwitz, many of us had already died. We couldn't lie down, only sit or stand, and if one wanted to stretch a bit, another member of the family had to stand up. There was no water, no toilet, we only had a slop-pail, which was a tin can, in the corner. One had to get through to it to relieve oneself, in front of the others. It was inhuman.

In Auschwitz the Germans waited for us with dogs. They forced us off the cars, then they split us up: men and women were put in separate groups. There was no possibility to say goodbye to your family. Everything was driven by the element of surprise, leaving us no time for anything, neither to think, nor to say anything. They took us, the ones left alive, to the wash-room, the real wash-room. They stripped us naked, then took us to a room where they shaved all our hair off to protect us against lice. Slovak Jewish girls did this. I asked the girl who cut my hair when I would see my mother again. She pointed out the window and said, 'Do you see that smoke? That's your mother coming out.' They were terribly angry with us because we were still sleeping under silk quilts while they were satisfying the needs of the German soldiers on the front, and then they were brought to build Auschwitz. They had already been in the camp for four years, so we found out immediately from them, what was to come.

The most horrible thing in Auschwitz was that we had absolutely nothing to do. We sat all day long and recited poems or sang; everybody showed off with whatever they could, to get through the day. The most horrible thing was the idleness. There was no possibility of work. There was

Lagerstrasse [Camp Street], some blocks and nothing else. There was no way out from Lagerstrasse. Even free passage between barracks was restricted, and going to the toilet was limited, too. Since we had no medication, many died of different illnesses, and diarrhea was the most dangerous one. Quite a lot of athletes, especially the big-bodied ones, perished first, even though they were sportsmen, because their organisms couldn't take starvation.

My sister-in-law was working in one of the barracks opposite, the Rewier. This was the barracks for the convalescents. I was able to go there just a few times. Even she, as doctor, couldn't move around freely, she had to stay in the Rewier barracks. She was very pessimistic. After a while I didn't even want to meet her because she kept saying, 'Why are you struggling? Can't you see there's no end to this, nobody will leave here alive?' But there one needed all the optimism one could get to try to live, and she always demoralized me. She became obsessed with finding my brother, and left slips everywhere she went and asked everybody about him who came to her for examination. Of course, he was nowhere to be found. There was an SS hospital corpsman who went from camp to camp, inspecting them; he was responsible for the entire district, including Bergen-Belsen and Buchenwald. I don't know if my sister-in-law and he became friends or what happened, but she asked this man to take with him some slips, which said, 'I'm looking for Gyorgy Havas.' My brother was working in Niederorshel, a smaller camp in Buchenwald. One day the corpsman found him, and my sister-in-law was beside herself with joy, and from then on she sent a package to my brother every month – because this corpsman made his tour monthly. So they knew each other's whereabouts. I only found this out later, after we came home. By the way, a French man included this story in his book as an interesting case to prove that not every German was a murderer, even if they wore SS uniforms.

The wife of Laci Farkas and I were Stubendienst [room orderlies]: we distributed the food. We were responsible for two or three bunk-bed groups. There were nights when the so-called Blocksperre or curfew was in effect, that is, we weren't allowed to circulate between the blocks. We got out at the back of the block onto the car track because we were curious to see why it was Blocksperre. These were rare occasions. Then we saw three trucks taking naked gypsy children, screaming and crying, to the gas chambers. They knew where they were going because until then the gypsy families had been together. There were no other children in the camp because they were separated from their parents and taken to the gas chambers already at the initial selection. I don't know whether those gypsies were from Hungary or Romania or from somewhere else. We didn't know anything about them.

There were Czech Jews in Lagerstrasse, next to us, also with their families. They were wearing their own clothing and their hair wasn't cut off. They were brought from Theresienstadt [14]. The Germans were showing Theresienstadt to the foreigners to see how they were treating the Jews: the inmates lived in houses and wore their own clothing. Their hair wasn't cut off and they looked human. We watched as they selected people, men and women, fit to work. Then they took them away in one transport. The others were left there, and they threw their medicines and everything they had over to us – there was only a wire fence between us and them. They knew where they would be taken, so they didn't need anything. The next day they were taken to the gas chambers.

An organization called Todt [15] – I don't know what this acronym stood for – came there all the time. It selected people for different jobs and sent them to different locations in Germany. I also

got into such a working group. This happened in October 1944. They took me to Silesia to dig tank-traps. Digging tank-traps wasn't really a job for women, especially ones in as poor shape, as we were.

When the Russians were closing in – we could already hear the gunfire – they sent us off on foot. We walked for 2,000 km. We entered Germany in Dresden, then we set foot on Czech soil at Marienbad. This was the westernmost point of Czechoslovakia. Those who tried to escape were captured, brought back to the group and shot dead in front of us. When we arrived in the first town, Domazlice, the Czechs behaved in such a way that one could feel there was a chance to escape. By then we had had nothing to eat for six days, and we were starving. The Czechs threw food from the windows into the street for the groups, and as we went further into the town there was some sliced bread and apples put in the middle of the street. They put out any food they had around the house, for us to eat. Despite all this no one tried to escape, although there were opportunities to do so. Only one person went missing. In the next village I thought the captives would beg for food and I decided to try to escape then. I escaped in Nevolice. The SS soldiers who were escorting us were quite far from each other, and I went up behind the first SS soldier in line in order to be as far as possible from the next one. I broke out of line and ran away through an alley. By the time the next soldier arrived there and started shooting, I was already well away, and as the other captives spread out, they had to deal with them. This happened on 24th April 1945.

There was a girl from Munkacs who escaped with me, without any prior arrangement. Her name was Bozsenna. Fortunately she spoke perfect Czech, Russian and Hungarian. A single Czech lady let us in. I don't know where her husband was. The women had all been left alone, there were only a few men in the village. They needed the labor. But I only weighed 36 kilo, so I wasn't fit to work. She accepted us only out of mercy. It was astonishing to see that a simple countrywoman knew how to feed us, and keep us alive. Many had died after liberation due to exactly that reason – they didn't restart eating properly. For example there was always a pot of white coffee on the stove, and she didn't let us drink water. If we were thirsty, we had to drink the coffee because it was more nutritious. I put on 12 kilo in two months, so by the time I took off for home I weighed 48 kilo.

The Americans came in on a jeep, with four soldiers on it. I don't know what rank they were. They drummed up the people of the village in the center of the village. One of them stood up in the car and said in Czech, 'You're free.' Two days later, on 8th May 1945, when the war ended, we went to the town, to Domazlice. The reception of the refugees was already organized there. They set up temporary accommodation in boarding schools and schools. The Americans supplied us with medication, as well. Bozsenna and I decided not to stay in the temporary accommodations but to go and look for a job in the town. We first looked for a house that had a barn. When we peeked into the courtyard, we saw a young person in a wheelchair. We thought this place surely needed some help. Bozsenna, who spoke good Czech, asked the woman whether she would accept us to work for her for board and lodging. She answered that she would, because she had a big garden and raised some animals, so she needed the help. Then Bozsenna and I went back to the boarding-school accommodation and announced to them that we had found an employer and we would like to give up our places, and told them to give them to others.

When we went back to the house, the woman said she had changed her mind and could only accept one of us. Bozsenna spoke Czech, so she chose her, but she recommended me to the

neighbors, the Kicbergerovas. They spoke German, so we understood each other. Even in my wildest dreams I couldn't have imagined taking a bath that same day, and, furthermore, in hot water! The family worked in the transportation business and they had a son and two daughters. The two daughters didn't live there, as they were married. The son lived upstairs. He had a separate room and kitchen, but he ate downstairs with his parents, and he also used to listen to the radio there. He had a girlfriend his mother didn't like because she was older than him and was using him. It took only a few days for him and me to become friends. He told me once there were no girls in Czechoslovakia one could talk with about books, literature or music, but that he could do it with me. His mother was very happy when she saw what good friends we became. She wanted to adopt me, and even inquired at the authorities to see what the procedures were for that. However, I wanted to go home to Kolozsvar as soon as possible. One day the woman asked me who I was, but I didn't say anything. I told her I could say anything, because there's no way they could check it, so I preferred to say nothing. The Czech family initially employed me to help out around the house, but they didn't let me work. They were very nice people. I spent a month there.

Bozsenna, the girl I escaped with, got acquainted with an American soldier and they became friends. She remained in Domazlice. What happened to her after I left, I don't know. I set off for home with three other people from Kolozsvar – two women and a man – when the first trains left. One of the ladies was called Teri Hirsch, the other one was her younger sister, Ibi. The man's name was Ocsi Schonberger. Even after we came home we kept in touch. They all remained in Kolozsvar. The Hirsches took some jobs, while Schonberger went to university.

The trains were still running sporadically in May. The railroads had been blown away, so there was very little traffic. It was extraordinary how the Czechs treated us. My hosts from Domazlice loaded us up for the trip with fried doves and a large loaf of bread. They even gave us a map of Europe, which later turned out to be of big help, for the destinations the trains were running to, were written on them with chalk. Everything going south-east was good for us. We got on a train, traveled somewhere and waited at the station for another train that would take us in a suitable direction. It was summer, it wasn't cold outside, so we had no problem with spending the nights outside. We only had the Russian soldiers to fear because they were very aggressive. At each station there was a Red Cross unit, and they gave us tea or coffee, bread and food. The Czech people were very nice to us. On the train people saw who we were, stood up and gave up their seats to us. In Slovakia people treated us like dirt.

I traveled for three weeks. I arrived home on 4th July 1945. The local Jews were waiting for me at the station. How they came to be there I don't know. Maybe they had been in forced labor camps because they had been sent home in 1944. They were closer to the front, so they were liberated earlier than we were. When I arrived home, I had nobody and nothing. From my family only me, my brother and his wife survived the Holocaust. There were some very poor people, but they all had a plate, a pot, a spoon, a fork, a sheet, a pillow and a blanket. When I came home, I didn't even have those things; I had absolutely nothing. I had only the clothes on my back, nothing else. This is how I had to start a new life. I was unable to accept or imagine how I could continue with my life, so I decided I had to forget, and I blocked many things out of my memory. But this plan worked too well. I didn't forget what I wanted, but many things from my childhood.

We were all lost and didn't know what to do. Those who were left all alone and had no place to go were accommodated in the former Peter-Pal villa [16]. The villa was on the banks of the Malomarok [the mill-course], almost on the corner of Pap Street. That was used as accommodation. The meals were given away in the same place, three times a day. I was in a lucky position because when I arrived there was a boy and his mother at the station. They were looking for the boy's fiancée, who had been deported. They were asking everybody about her. I knew her by chance and told them I met her back in Auschwitz, but I knew nothing else. They then decided I shouldn't go to the Peter-Pal villa, but to their house. They had a big house on Kossuth Lajos Street, with four or five rooms, but there were only the three of them staying there: the boy, his mother and his father. They asked me to ask a couple of decent children I knew to come there because they would take them in. It was in their best interests to do that, because this was in the house-requisition period, and any apartment occupied by too few people was taken away. Even if they did it in their own interest, they were very fair to us.

The father, Uncle Friedmann, was of Jewish origin and his wife was Christian. Uncle Friedmann was a member of a sect called The Children of Jesus, and they even had a priest. Their objective was to rope in Jewish children and to baptize them. I think they were part of the Protestant Church, but I don't know that for sure. He tried to convert us all, but he couldn't convince anybody from the house. Apart from that they were very nice to us and we were nice to them, too, and when Uncle Friedmann was left all alone, without any financial means, all of us who had lived there helped him out, usually monthly with anything we could. We tried to thank him for having given us a home. We even called the house the 'Friedmann hotel'.

I went to our former house on Kiraly Street, but it was occupied. They weren't at all happy when they saw me. They didn't even let me in. I told them we had been deported from there and we'd left all of our furniture behind. They told me they had received an empty house. There was nothing I could do to claim it back, and no one to turn to. Those days nobody tried to reclaim anything.

Two of my father's brothers were still alive, one of them in Galac, the other one in Arad. The one from Braila, Bumi, died of a heart attack before 1945. As for the others, they never returned from Auschwitz. After I came home they both invited me to visit them. I spent two weeks in Galac and another two weeks in Arad, and that was all the contact we had. They told me that after Kolozsvar was liberated, but before I came home, they tried to recover some of the things we'd left behind. They managed to rescue some bed-room furniture, a gas-stove with four burners, a large carpet and a commode. My brother and I split those between us. He kept the gas-stove and left the rest to me. My uncle from Galac, Jozsef, moved to Bucharest in the 1950s. I always visited him when I went to Bucharest. My brother kept in touch with them, since by that time he was living there, as well.

When I arrived home I knew absolutely nothing about my brother. I first received news that he was alive in August. His wife worked in Auschwitz as a doctor right until the liberation. After that she was taken to another camp in Bergen-Belsen, and she continued to work there as doctor. When Buchenwald was liberated, my brother got a bike, and along with one of his doctor friends – who was also a Havas, Andor Havas – went to Bergen-Belsen. In the meantime my sister-in-law got typhoid, and my brother had to wait until she got better. His friend came home, though. I didn't know Andor Havas, but when he arrived home he looked me up in Kolozsvar and told me my

brother was in Bergen-Belsen and would come home in two weeks' time. Andor Havas later died on a plane while flying to Israel. He had a heart attack when he was quite young.

When my brother came home he joined the Party and immediately got himself a job in Kolozsvar. He became chief engineer at the pharmaceutical factory. In 1948 he was promoted and sent to Bucharest. Transylvanians were hunted because they were good professionals, and he became the executive manager of the national pharmaceutical industry. He had ministerial rank for twelve years. But then, in the 1960s, he was almost thrown out of the Party, and he was sacked from his job. The reason for this was that one of his colleagues emigrated to Israel and my brother was suspected of giving away secret information about the Romanian pharmaceutical industry to him. They thought the information was then sold in Israel. The pharmaceutical factory in Iasi was built in that period, and it was the first place in the country where penicillin was manufactured. They accused my brother's friend of industrial espionage and my brother of being an accessory. This was all a fabrication. In the end my brother remained in the ministry as quality controller. He retired from there for health reasons, the result of the beating he had taken from the law students in 1940-1941. He still lives in Bucharest. He has a daughter, Eva, who emigrated to America. His wife, Rozsi, died of cancer.

Immediately after I arrived home, in 1945, I joined the Communist Party. It was the obvious thing to do, since I had had connections with the communists even before the war. They wrote in my party book that I had been a member of the Party since 1943, but I only became an actual member when I came home. I had nothing against them writing 1943, though, I didn't really bother about it.

I met my husband, Miklos Kallos, in Kolozsvar at the Dezsisz [Democratic Jewish Youth Union], right after I came home. This was the meeting place for the Jewish youth. He was originally from an observant Orthodox family from Nagyvarad. His family wasn't large; he didn't even have brothers or sisters. Before Auschwitz he was religious, too. His father was employed at the synagogue. My husband used to help his father out in his work. Even though he was Orthodox, he attended elementary school in the school of the Neolog community of Nagyvarad. He graduated from the Jewish high-school. He even attended talmud torah. They studied in Hungarian, so he spoke Romanian with great difficulty, and he had a strange accent. At home they spoke Yiddish, but he grew up with Hungarian culture.

My husband was deported from Nagyvarad at the age of 17, along with his family, and he was the only survivor. He only spent three days in Auschwitz, then he was transferred to Buchenwald. After liberation he was taken to a hospital and spent three weeks in a sanatorium. I don't know exactly where this sanatorium was, somewhere around Buchenwald. After deportation he was left all alone. When he came home he joined the Communist Party and became an atheist. None of his relatives were left alive, so he had nothing to do in Nagyvarad. He came to Kolozsvar because here he had all the friends he had made in the camp.

He finished two grades in one year and graduated from high-school in Kolozsvar, based on the Voitec-law [17]. He did a lot of reading and studying. In 1947 he was accepted to the Philosophy Department of Kolozsvar University, and in 1948 he was already a trainee at the university, even though he was only a 2nd-year student. He was by then working at a Jewish newspaper, the Uj Ut [18], a paper from Kolozsvar. The editorial office was in the house next to the Neolog synagogue, and Samuka Kahana had been its chief editor from 1945 already. All I know about Samuka is that

he came from a very strange family, originally from Brasso. There were three Kahana brothers, one of them was upper middle-class. He was the owner of the Brassoi Lapok paper even before the war. Samuka Kahana was a communist and worked as journalist before the war. He had a Christian wife and two sons. Both of his sons are journalists, and they live in Bucharest and work for different newspapers today. The third brother, Mozes Kahana, was a writer. He lived for a long period in the Soviet Union as a writer. Then he came back and died here, in Transylvania.

Our wedding was a regular civil one, without any religious ceremony. We got married in 1949. I got on my bike and went there from the factory because our wedding was scheduled for noon. We went to the registrar, we said our 'I do's and I went back to the factory. That's how it happened. One of the witnesses was Andor Bajor [19], and we invited him for lunch. I don't know who the other witness was, because we needed two witnesses. My husband and Andor Bajor were class-mates at university. They were members of 'the coach and five', that's what they were called back then at Bolyai University. The others were Sandor Toth [20], Samu Benko [21] and Tibor Szarvadi, of Szekler origin, who died later. He and his wife went for a trip in the Fogaras mountains, got lost and they perished there. Erno Gall [22] was older, he was a different generation, but was good friends with my husband, since they both came from Nagyvarad.

In 1946 I was working in a co-operative called Victoria, I was knitting: I organized the housewives so they knitted at home. I took the orders at the co-operative and distributed the work, then I put together the clothes. There was a strait-laced communist there who declared that employing housewives was exploitation, therefore the co-operative shouldn't do that. We had lots of orders, and somehow had to fulfill them. That's why in 1947 I left the co-operative, got a license and worked this way for six months. I managed to finish the jobs I undertook at the co-operative, legally, declaring everything. That's why in 1952, when the Party cleaned its ranks, I was excluded as a class-alien. They justified their decision by saying that in 1947 I had pursued an activity that exploited people. In 1956 they took me back saying there was no better communist than me.

In 1948, thanks to some influential friends, I was employed at the Somesul knitwear factory as a simple seamstress. The factory was on the estate next to the law courts, in a courtyard. Back then it was only a very small workshop, and the owners of the factory – they were denounced as exploiters – were picked up together with their equipment from there in 1948. This was the basis for the new factory, including the Ady hosiery. [Editor's note: In the interwar period one of the most important factories in Kolozsvar was the Ady hosiery. Its manager was a man of Jewish origin, Jeno Laszlo.] There were 98 employees there all in all. Then a printing house operated there, and I don't know what's there now. I don't think I'd even recognize the building. The factory operated only for two months there, then it was relocated to Monostori Street. Its name was changed to Varga Katalin. Everybody I knew who worked there was Jewish. The foreman was a communist woman called Gizi Mezo. She was a member of the illegal Communist Party even before World War II. Her husband was Jewish. The chief engineer, Ella Rosenfeld, was a communist with Jewish origins. But it was of no importance whether one was Christian or Jewish.

Since my husband already had two half jobs, we had no problems making a living, and I let them put me to work on any machine they wanted. Usually people didn't like to go from one machine to another, because learning to handle the new machine meant material loss. I didn't mind that, though. I worked on every special machine in the factory.

I became pregnant in 1949, and in 1950 I gave birth to a boy, Peter. In this period the Varga Katalin factory was given a house at the back of its courtyard that gave onto Furdo Street. The management decided to set up a day nursery there and entrusted me with organizing it. I didn't know, of course, how that was done, but I bent to the task. Organizing became my actual profession. This was my job in my first month of pregnancy. I managed to get a doctor, like no other day nursery had, and a cook who loved children. I don't know how I managed to gather such a collective that made the day nursery of the knitwear factory the best day nursery in Kolozsvar. My older son, Peter, was raised in this day nursery. Five weeks after I gave birth, I returned to work in the factory. Organizing the day nursery was only to make it easier for me.

In 1950, when I returned to the factory, I became head of department and I was involved in a lot of good things. Back then Banseg was used in the production of knitted dry goods all over the country – these were machines for manufacturing textiles. Its use is similar to a buzz-saw in carpentry, only that it has a more delicate cutting blade. Manual cutting is an extremely difficult job, and isn't accurate enough. I knew where I could find a Banseg in Kolozsvar, so I went to the Flacara factory; I made friends with the manager and obtained an old machine from them. I took it to the Varga Katalin and tested it. It turned out we could make finished goods with it, we could tailor the material tied together in bundles. This significantly improved quality and productivity. This method was then spread all over the country. I always loved figures, even now I like to play with them. I created a system that allowed identification of each bundle – the textiles came in bundles of twelve on the conveyor belt. So when I went to the factory in the morning, I looked at the production reports from the previous day and I knew where to find everything. I knew if there was a backlog, and where an adjustment was needed. This system was taken up to Bucharest and was spread in the other factories, as well. Anyhow, I was always trying to think up new things.

Before I was thrown out of the Party I was the party secretary at the Varga Katalin. I never spoke about the party leaders, I never praised them. I wasn't interested in those things, but I was living and working in accordance with the communist principles. I always fought for the rights of the workers, to give them work, to ensure their salaries, I attended to absolutely everything. But I knew by then this system could neither solve the Jewish problem, nor the social problems. After Stalin died and Khrushchev [23] disclosed the situation within the Soviet Union, we came to realize that the same was happening here. Until then we were full of hope and thought we were the generation of sacrifice, and later it would all take a turn for the better. I still believed in communism, but I saw the mistakes of the communist regime, and I had a much more critical approach.

In 1952, when the Party cleaned its ranks, I was expelled from the Party as a class-alien. In 1953 I began to work in the trade union and I organized the mutual-aid society without any help from the government. This was just coming into fashion then. Every person who joined paid a minimal amount of money each month. Any member could get a loan if they had been a member for more than three months, but initially they could only request the sum they deposited thus far. The interest on those loans was minimal. This society had grown to such an extent that it was possible to borrow serious amounts of money. Some people borrowed for one year, others for two, but they had to pay the same minimal interest, and that was of great help to everybody. There was another mutual-aid society at the university, and my husband participated in it. We bought our car using it and paid it back in monthly installments.

In 1959, when I left the Varga Katalin, I spent one year at home. I joined a co-operative that allowed me to work at home. I did embroidery, and this way I supplemented the family's income. I couldn't just sit back and do nothing. I had to stop working because my older son had some problems at school and had to stay at home. He was too bright compared to his classmates and was disturbing the classes. Someone had to stay with him to prevent him becoming a delinquent. At home Peter used to sit in his father's lap all the time. I don't know how my husband managed to work while his son was sitting in his lap, continually asking questions. My husband was working with the typewriter, and in the meantime our son learnt every letter on it. The director of the day-care told my husband, 'Your son is our greatest help, but he is the examiners' nightmare.' The trainees of the kindergarten-teacher school were examined in the day-care of Bolyai University. For example one day a Szekler girl was being examined and she had to tell a story. As she was telling it, and talked about an automobile, she kept saying 'oetoe' instead of auto. My son, of course, interrupted her saying it's not 'oetoe', but auto. He used to interrupt the examinees, so they often got confused. The same happened in primary school. He was too bright and he wasn't too ashamed to show it. He could already read and write when he started school. He was disturbing the teacher, always interrupted the classes. And at parents' meetings I had to listen to all this. The teacher was desperate. He finished the primary school on Teglas Street.

After we got married we lived in different places. My brother, before he was transferred to Bucharest, got a one-bedroom apartment as chief engineer, and in 1949 he left it to us. Before the war the house belonged to a wealthy jeweler called Stossel. To get to the apartment one had to go through a beautiful courtyard with pine trees. The courtyard and the house are now owned by Flacara clothes factory. The apartment was very small: it had one room, plus a small bathroom and a toe-hold of a hallway. We installed a rangette in the bathroom, and we cooked on it. Our son Peter was born here in 1950. After four years we moved to Budai Nagy Antal Street, into another one-bedroom apartment. We told them we would like to have another child, but there wasn't enough room there, and if they gave us a larger apartment, we could have a child after nine months. Indeed, nine months after we moved out from there, in 1955, our second son, Gyorgy, was born. This apartment was in a peasant house with no plumbing on Szamoskozi Street. The neighborhood wasn't developed and organized at all, it was almost village-like. When my husband went to work from there, he had a pair of shoes and a clothes brush in his briefcase, because if there was rain, the mud was up to his chin, and otherwise his trousers were dusty up to the knees. We lived there for three years, until 1958.

Finally, in 1958, we got our new house in the center of the city. My husband, beside his teaching job, was working as an activist. He became a county activist, he was responsible for Hungarian culture. He verified the operation of the Hungarian media and theater in Kolozsvar, and his approval was needed for them. Basically this was the reason we could move. This apartment was on Deak Ferenc Street, on the corner. The windows gave onto the statue of King Matthias, in the center of the main square. It was a beautiful apartment, of course it had its disadvantages. It was built above the bank where my father worked prior to his deportation. The living-room, which gave onto the statue of King Matthias, was made to the size of the bank's council-room. It was 36 square-meters, and it was a beautiful large, bright and sunny room. The air vent of the bathroom gave onto the kitchen. The kitchen was so small that everything was installed on the walls and only one person could come in at a time. That is, it had an area of two square-meters at the most. We

had one more room that was also beautiful, it gave onto the courtyard, and a long hallway. That's all we had, but it felt like heaven.

By the time we moved to Deak Ferenc Street, our life was easier. I began to work again. The city hall had all kinds of companies, and one of them, the 'munca la domiciliu', that is, 'work at home', had a ready-to-wear department. I was employed there as technical leader. This was an independent company, but later it merged with Chimica Company, now called Napochim. Working at home meant that we employed more than 200 women who weren't able to go to work due to their family or health condition, but could do sewing. We also had a tailor workshop, and we parceled out work from there. The management thought I was an excellent organizer. The company had a leather section that made watch-straps. They told me to take over leadership of that section, too. I told them that wasn't my profession, and I didn't know anything about it, and if I didn't know something, I couldn't lead it, because I wouldn't know what to expect from people. Fortunately I had a very good foreman, an outstanding professional. He was a Hungarian man, but his name was Muresan. He told me not to mind, he would teach me anything I needed, I should just take over the leadership of that section: 'The company needs you here, so be it. Don't do anything, I will teach you everything.' And indeed, he taught me everything about leather.

The company also had a trunk-making workshop. There were four people working there, and the company asked me to take that over, too. I didn't want to, of course, because I was already working twelve hours a day, but in the end I accepted. One day one of the city leaders had to travel abroad and we had to make some trunks for him. He got the raw materials from Herbak factory, and we had to manufacture it, of course, for free – that was the way it worked then. I said I wouldn't do it. The comrade had a higher salary, so he had enough money to pay for our work. I would have it made, but I'd have to pay my men for it. I'd hand over the finished trunks to the warehouse, with all the official documents, and from then on they could do whatever they wanted with them. My employees had a small salary, and I wasn't willing to put them to work just because the comrade needed some trunks. I had a real argument with the manager over this issue, because he said the comrade's request couldn't be refused. So I told him, 'You know what, you have already loaded me with all kinds of stuff, and I can't take it anymore, so I'm leaving.'

When the managers of the Drumul Nou and the Flacara companies heard I wanted out – I don't know how they found out – they came to me. [Drumul Nou and Flacara were clothes factories.] The manager of Flacara came to me and told me they wanted to open the ladies' wear department and they wanted me to join them. Until then they only had a men's wear department. The production manager from Drumul Nou, a man called Sztojka, came to me and asked me to go to work for them because they had good working conditions there. A car was waiting for me in front of the house and they were ready to show me the factory. He was a very adroit man and talked me into it. So I went to Drumul Nou. Later he became the president and we worked very well together. I was charged with organizing the ready-to-wear clothes department at Drumul Nou. Initially we worked for Bucharest and made beautiful things using Greek materials. Then the IC-COP was established in Bucharest to deal with the international relations and co-operations. Then we began to work for Quelle. Later another German company came to work with us, it was a smaller company from Dusseldorf; they already worked with delicate commodities. The technician of that company was a lady of my age who used to spend four months in Kolozsvar twice a year. She assisted the entire process of production, shipment – everything. We worked for them for 15 years. Even now two

sections of Drumul Nou are working for them. I retired from there in 1979.

During this period, in 1978, we exchanged our apartment on Deak Ferenc Street for a three-bedroom second floor apartment on the corner of Zola and Dozsa Gyorgy Streets. We moved from there to our current house in 1999.

We had all kinds of friends; we made no distinction. During the communist period I didn't experience anti-Semitism. On the other hand, we avoided talking about the Holocaust. We didn't even talk to our children about what had happened to us. However, we let them read everything related to the Holocaust, we let them become what they wanted to be. We didn't influence them in any way. For instance, we had nothing against them marrying Christian women.

My older son, Peter, was a musician, he graduated in flute at the Conservatory and became a music teacher. Currently he lives in Bucharest and works as a translator for the Hungarian broadcast of Romanian national television. He translates from Romanian into Hungarian and from Hungarian into Romanian. He is often employed as a simultaneous translator by the Hungarian embassy. When Viktor Orban [24] visited Bucharest for the first time, Peter was the translator. The mother of Peter's wife, Nora, is Romanian, and her father is Hungarian. They divorced early on because her mother forbade them to speak Hungarian at home. My daughter-in-law understands Hungarian, and she's also forced to because we are quite indiscreet with her – not on purpose, of course because we are on quite good terms, but we spontaneously talk in Hungarian. She always understands what we are talking about, but can't speak Hungarian. My grandson from Bucharest doesn't speak Hungarian. His name is Robert and he was born in 1976. My son scolded us for not teaching him Hungarian, because he spent his summer holidays with us here in Kolozsvar. We couldn't teach him because we didn't spend enough time together for that.

My younger son, Gyorgy, is an engineer. His wife is a Hungarian Christian; her name is Marika. They live in Nagyvarad. They have two daughters: Renata, born in 1989, and Patricia, three years younger. They are both baptized and will confirm. I asked my son, 'What does the minister think about you bringing your daughters to scripture lessons, you being a Jewish husband?' He said the minister is very intelligent, has a high rank and they are on very good terms with each other. He told me, 'Whenever I take my daughters there, we usually chat for 20 minutes. We respect each other. He doesn't want to convert me, we don't speak about religion.' His wife's parents are religious, they insisted on baptizing the children. And in order to preserve peace within the family, my son had nothing against it. He said, 'When they grow up they will think and act at their own discretion, anyway.' None of my sons are interested in religion. They are aware of their Jewish origins, but they don't observe the Jewish traditions.

We considered those who emigrated to Israel brave people because they dared to start a new life again. We didn't consider ourselves brave people. Another reason for us not being brave was that, after all, my husband was a university professor and I had a fair job, we were both respected and we were simply afraid to start a new life. Not to mention that both our sons have professions that couldn't bring them prosperity in Israel. I never thought about emigrating. I went to Israel for the first time in 1968 and visited Aunt Iren and her son. I was curious to see Israel and how people lived there. I loved everything I saw. I had friends all over the country. It didn't take me long to tour the country, since it's not too large. I even traveled through the desert as I visited Eilat. Both my aunt and her son died. I only have friends there now. We are even more concerned with the

situation there than the Israelis. We are in permanent contact with our friends.

I was a member of the Jewish community even before 1989 – I was in contact with it. I was an active member in the sense that I did some social work, I used to visit the elderly. I didn't mind that the Party didn't like this. The Jewish community was an officially recognized organization anyway, so they had nothing to comment on. My husband wasn't a member though because he taught at the Department of Marxism, and this was incompatible with life within a religious community. Besides, he was very busy, he was completely absorbed by teaching. Neither of us was religious. This was an odd situation: the Jewish community isn't in fact a religious organization, just a Jewish organization, regardless of its members' religiousness. The community has members who converted to Christianity and there are wives or husbands who are members even though they are Christians.

Following the Revolution of 1989 [25], our attitude towards religion didn't change. I usually go to the synagogue twice a year: when we pray for the dead and when we commemorate the deportations. The other occasions when I go to the synagogue are not religious, but cultural events. My husband still isn't a religious man, but despite that he goes to the synagogue to pray each Saturday morning to have the minyan. He speaks perfect Yiddish because his family used to talk in Yiddish at home. He can read the Torah, and that's quite rare these days. My husband was the president of the Jewish community for four years, from 1997 to 2001. He goes to the community to help out, even though he has too little strength and time for it. He still lectures at Babes–Bolyai University; there are still doctorates under his guidance.

I had a Jewish acquaintance who had two sons. The younger one had to be seven or eight when he asked his father, 'Tell me, dad, will people become Jewish when they get old?' Because that's how it is, as people get older they feel increasingly attracted back to Jewishness. I have a very good lady-friend who is Christian. Her son is a doctor and he read every book about the camps. He was very interested in the Jewish community. She told me she had to have some Jewish ancestors because her son had inherited it. Finally she found out that the mother of her father, that is, her grandmother, was Jewish. Those who were never interested before or never considered themselves Jewish somehow began to be attracted. The same happened to me. I'm still not religious, but for me my Jewish origin is growing in significance. I was raised in the Hungarian culture, my mother tongue is Hungarian, but I consider myself Jewish.

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 to (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] Trianon Peace Treaty: Trianon is a palace in Versailles where, as part of the Paris Peace Conference, the peace treaty was signed with Hungary on 4th June 1920. It was the official end of World War I for the countries concerned. The Trianon Peace Treaty validated the annexation of huge parts of pre-war Hungary by the states of Austria (the province of Burgenland) and Romania (Transylvania, and parts of Eastern Hungary). The northern part of pre-war Hungary was attached

to the newly created Czechoslovak state (Slovakia and Subcarpathia) while Croatia-Slavonia as well as parts of Southern Hungary (Voivodina, Baranja, Medjumurje and Prekmurje) were to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (later Yugoslavia). Hungary lost 67.3% of its pre-war territory, including huge areas populated mostly or mainly by Hungarians, and 58.4% of its population. As a result approximately one third of the Hungarians became an - often oppressed - ethnic minority in some of the predominantly hostile neighboring countries. Trianon became the major point of reference of interwar nationalistic and anti-Semitic Hungarian regimes.

[3] Voivodina: Northern part of Serbia with Novi Sad (Ujvidek, Neusatz) as its capital. Ethnically it is the most mixed part of the country with significant Hungarian, Croatian, Romanian, Slovakian population as well as Roma and Ruthenian minorities (and also a large German population before and during World War II, which was expelled after the war). An integral part of Hungary, the area of present day Voivodina was attached to the newly created Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (Yugoslavia after 1929) at the Trianon Peace Conference in 1920. Along with Kosovo it used to be an autonomous province within Serbia between 1974 and 1990, under the Yugoslavian Constitution.

[4] Novi Sad massacre: From 21st-23rd January 1942, a small rebellion near Novi Sad served as a pretext for the slaughter of Jews and Serbs in Novi Sad by the Hungarian armed forces. The action initially started as a fight against the local partisans, but later it became a retaliation in which mostly innocent Jews and Serbs were killed. Total curfew was ordered, Jewish homes were searched and pillaged, and their occupants were murdered in the streets. On 23rd January more than 1,400 Jews, including women and children, and 400-500 Serbs, were deported to the Danube, shot and thrown into the river. The remaining Jews of Novi Sad were killed in forced labor camps and in Auschwitz. Outraged by the massacre, the regent of Hungary, Miklos Horthy, ordered an investigation into the mass killing. Those responsible for the raid were tried in court, but the German authorities brought them to Germany, where they joined the German armed forces. After the war the Hungarian authorities handed them over to the new Yugoslav government and they were executed.

[5] 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, mathematics, natural sciences, history, etc., modern languages (mostly German, but to a lesser extent also French and English), accounting, economics were taught. While the secondary school prepared children to enter the university, the middle school provided its graduates with the type of knowledge, which helped them find a job in offices, banks, as clerks, accountants, secretaries, or to manage their own business or shop.

[6] ‘Hungarian times’ (1940-1944): The expression ‘Hungarian times’ refers to the period between 30 August 1940 - 15 October 1944 in Transylvania. As a result of the Trianon peace treaties in 1920 the eastern part of Hungary (Maramures, Partium, Banat, Transylvania) was annexed to Romania. Two million inhabitants of Hungarian nationality came under Romanian rule. In the summer of 1940, under pressure from Berlin and Rome, the Romanian government agreed to return Northern Transylvania, where the majority of the Hungarians lived, to Hungary. The anti-Jewish laws introduced in 1938 and 1939 in Hungary were also applied in Northern Transylvania.

Following the German occupation of Hungary on 19th March 1944, Jews from Northern Transylvania were deported to and killed in concentration camps along with Jews from all over Hungary except for Budapest. Northern Transylvania belonged to Hungary until the fall of 1944, when the Soviet troops entered and introduced a regime of military administration that sustained local autonomy. The military administration ended on 9th March 1945 when the Romanian administration was reintroduced in all the Western territories lost in 1940 - as a reward for the fact that Romania formed the first communist-led government in the region.

[7] Anti-Jewish laws in Romania: The first anti-Jewish laws were introduced in 1938 by the Goga-Cuza government. Further anti-Jewish laws followed in 1940 and 1941, and the situation was getting gradually worse between 1941-1944 under the Antonescu regime. According to these laws all Jews aged 18-40 living in villages were to be evacuated and concentrated in the capital town of each county. Jews from the region between the Siret and Prut Rivers were transported by wagons to the camps of Targu Jiu, Slobozia, Craiova etc. where they lived and died in misery. More than 40,000 Jews were moved. All rural Jewish property, as well as houses owned by Jews in the city, were confiscated by the state, as part of the 'Romanisation campaign'. Marriages between Jews and Romanians were forbidden from August 1940, Jews were not allowed to have Romanian names, own rural properties, be public employees, lawyers, editors or janitors in public institutions, have a career in the army, own liquor stores, etc. Jewish employees of commercial and industrial enterprises were fired, Jewish doctors could no longer practice and Jews were not allowed to own chemist shops. Jewish students were forbidden to study in Romanian schools.

[8] Goga-Cuza government: Anti-Jewish and chauvinist government established in 1937, led by Octavian Goga, poet and Romanian nationalist, and Alexandru C. Cuza, professor of the University of Iasi, and well known for its radical anti-Semitic view. Goga and Cuza were the leaders of the National Christian Party, an extremist right-wing organization founded in 1935. After the elections of 1937 the Romanian king, Carol II, appointed the National Christian Party to form a minority government. The Goga-Cuza government had radically limited the rights of the Jewish population during their short rule; they barred Jews from the civil service and army and forbade them to buy property and practice certain professions. In February 1938 King Carol established a royal dictatorship. He suspended the Constitution of 1923 and introduced a new constitution that concentrated all legislative and executive powers in his hands, gave him total control over the judicial system and the press, and introduced a one-party system.

[9] Anti-Jewish laws in Hungary: Following similar legislation in Nazi Germany, Hungary enacted three Jewish laws in 1938, 1939 and 1941. The first law restricted the number of Jews in industrial and commercial enterprises, banks and in certain occupations, such as legal, medical and engineering professions, and journalism to 20% of the total number. This law defined Jews on the basis of their religion, so those who converted before the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, as well as those who fought in World War I, and their widows and orphans were exempted from the law. The second Jewish law introduced further restrictions, limiting the number of Jews in the above fields to 6%, prohibiting the employment of Jews completely in certain professions such as high school and university teaching, civil and municipal services, etc. It also forbade Jews to buy or sell land and so forth. This law already defined Jews on more racial grounds in that it regarded baptized children that had at least one non-converted Jewish parent as Jewish. The third Jewish law prohibited intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, and defined anyone who had at least one

Jewish grandparent as Jewish.

[10] Hashomer Hatzair: ‘The Young Watchman’; A Zionist-socialist pioneering movement founded in Eastern Europe, Hashomer Hatzair trained youth for kibbutz life and set up kibbutzim in Palestine. During World War II, members were sent to Nazi-occupied areas and became leaders in Jewish resistance groups. After the war, Hashomer Hatzair was active in ‘illegal’ immigration to Palestine.

[11] KuK (Kaiserlich und Koeniglich) army: The name ‘Imperial and Royal’ was used for the army of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as for other state institutions of the Monarchy originated from the dual political system. Following the Compromise of 1867, which established the Dual Monarchy, Austrian emperor and Hungarian King Franz Joseph was the head of the state and also commander-in-chief of the army. Hence the name ‘Imperial and Royal’.

[12] Yellow star in Romania: On 8th July 1941, Hitler decided that all Jews from the age of 6 from the Eastern territories had to wear the Star of David, made of yellow cloth and sewed onto the left side of their clothes. The Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs introduced this ‘law’ on 10th September 1941. Strangely enough, Marshal Antonescu made a decision on that very day ordering Jews not to wear the yellow star. Because of these contradicting orders, this ‘law’ was only implemented in a few counties in Bukovina and Bessarabia, and Jews there were forced to wear the yellow star.

[13] Arrow Cross Party: The most extreme of the Hungarian fascist movements in the mid-1930s. The party consisted of several groups, though the name is now commonly associated with the faction organized by Ferenc Szalasi and Kalman Hubay in 1938. Following the Nazi pattern, the party promised not only the establishment of a fascist-type system including social reforms, but also the ‘solution of the Jewish question’. The party's uniform was consisted of a green shirt and a badge with a set of crossed arrows, a Hungarian version of the swastika, on it. On 15th October 1944, when Governor Horthy announced Hungary's withdrawal from the war, the Arrow Cross seized power with military help from the Germans. The Arrow Cross government ordered general mobilization and enforced a regime of terror which, though directed chiefly against the Jews, also inflicted heavy suffering upon the Hungarians. It was responsible for the deportation and death of tens of thousands of Jews. After the Soviet army liberated the whole of Hungary by early April 1945, Szalasi and his Arrow Cross ministers were brought to trial and executed.

[14] Terezin/Theresienstadt: A ghetto in the Czech Republic, run by the SS. Jews were transferred from there to various extermination camps. It was used to camouflage the extermination of European Jews by the Nazis, who presented Theresienstadt as a ‘model Jewish settlement’. Czech gendarmes served as ghetto guards, and with their help the Jews were able to maintain contact with the outside world. Although education was prohibited, regular classes were held, clandestinely. Thanks to the large number of artists, writers, and scholars in the ghetto, there was an intensive program of cultural activities. At the end of 1943, when word spread of what was happening in the Nazi camps, the Germans decided to allow an International Red Cross investigation committee to visit Theresienstadt. In preparation, more prisoners were deported to Auschwitz, in order to reduce congestion in the ghetto. Dummy stores, a cafe, a bank, kindergartens, a school, and flower gardens were put up to deceive the committee.

[15] Todt Organization: Named after its founder, Nazi minister for road construction Dr. Fritz Todt, this was an organization in Nazi Germany for large-scale construction work, especially the construction of strategic roads and defenses for the military. By 1944, it employed almost 1.4 million workers including thousands of concentration camp inmates and criminals.

[16] Peter-Pal villa: House in Kolozsvar/Cluj, where the Gestapo set up its headquarters in April 1944 during the German occupation of the city. The house was later nationalized by the communists. After 1989 the villa was transformed into an apartment building.

[17] Voitec-law: named after communist minister of education Stefan Voitec, and adopted in 1946. According to this law all those (regardless of their nationality) who had to interrupt their studies during World War II could take exams and apply for high-school or university following an accelerated procedure.

[18] Uj Ut (New Way): Hungarian weekly published by the Jewish Democratic League between 1949-1953.

[19] Bajor, Andor (1927-1991): Writer, publicist and literary translator known for his satiric works and humorous sketches. He was a professor of philosophy at the Babes-Bolyai University and worked as an editor for the National Literature and Art Publishing House. He was a member of the editorial board of the only officially allowed children's paper for native Hungarians in socialist Romania. Bajor was a prominent personality of the Transylvanian Hungarian community.

[20] Toth, Sandor (b. 1919): Transylvanian Hungarian philosopher. He was professor of philosophy at the Babes-Bolyai University of Kolozsvar/Cluj from 1949 to 1985 and he was an editor of Korunk, the most important Hungarian periodical published in Transylvania under the communist regime, in 1957-1958. He was an eminent member of the intellectual circles of Kolozsvar. His main area of research was the problems of the intellectual and political life of the minorities in interwar Romania and the theoretical questions of nationhood. He emigrated to Budapest in 1988 and has been teaching at the Budapest University.

[21] Benko, Samu (b. 1928): Research fellow in history and president of the Transylvanian Museum Society, the former 'Academy of Science' for native Hungarians in Romania. He was a professor at the Babes-Bolyai University between 1949-1952, and, from 1953 a researcher at the Institute of History of the Romanian Academy of Sciences in Cluj. Benko was editor of Korunk, the most important Hungarian periodical published in Transylvania under the communist regime, from 1957-1958. Since 1990 he has been a full-time researcher at the Transylvanian Museum Society.

[22] Gall, Erno (1917-2000): Writer and philosopher. He was professor of philosophy at the Bolyai University (later Babes-Bolyai University) of Cluj from 1949 and its rector from 1952 to 1956. Between 1957 and 1989 he was editor of Korunk, the most important Hungarian periodical published in Transylvania under the communist regime. Gall's interest in the issues of nationalism, national identity, minorities, ethnicity and the intellectual elites of ethnic minorities led to several studies of great interest.

[23] Khrushchev, Nikita (1894-1971): Soviet communist leader. After Stalin's death in 1953, he became first secretary of the Central Committee, in effect the head of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1956, during the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev took an unprecedented step and

denounced Stalin and his methods. He was deposed as premier and party head in October 1964. In 1966 he was dropped from the Party's Central Committee.

[24] Orban, Viktor: Politician, president of the Young Democrats' Alliance since 1993 (Fidesz; called FIDESZ - Hungarian Civic Union since 2003). He was Prime Minister of Hungary from 1998 to 2002, leading a government of alliance of center-right parties (Young Democrats-Hungarian Civic Party, Independent Smallholders' Party, Hungarian Democratic Forum). After the 2002 general elections, his party has been in parliamentary opposition.

[25] Romanian Revolution of 1989: In December 1989, a revolt in Romania deposed the communist dictator Ceausescu. Anti-government violence started in Timisoara and spread to other cities. When army units joined the uprising, Ceausescu fled, but he was captured and executed on 25th December along with his wife. A provisional government was established, with Ion Iliescu, a former Communist Party official, as president. In the elections of May 1990 Iliescu won the presidency and his party, the Democratic National Salvation Front, obtained an overwhelming majority in the legislature.