

# Jenő Dick

J.D.

Budapest

Hungary

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This grey, elderly man keeps his wooden cane beside him even when sitting. As he says, his daily walk keeps him somewhat agile. In the same way, he insists upon his old-fashioned grayish suit, and his gold engraved signet ring, made by his long-dead father-in-law. In general, he speaks of the past in a merry way, but when speaking of poverty, the work service and his dead wife, his gaze will cloud from time to time behind his wire-frame glasses.

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## Growing up

I know practically nothing about my grandparents, I never met one of them. As a matter of fact, I don't even recall their names. What I do remember from conversations of my parents, that my mother's father was a rabbi in Goncruszka, but since there were no job opportunities for him after 1922, he emigrated to New York. My paternal grandparents were quite religious. My uncle was a butcher who dealt with koser meat products, and earned quite a good income. The profits from his fifteen hold [one hold=0.52 hectares, or 1.42 english acres] of vineyards in Tolcsva, covered the money necessary to take care of our family.

My father, Samuel, was born in Tolcsva in 1870. My mother, Rebeka was born in Goncruszka in 1875. Poverty brought both of them to Satoraljaujhely in their youth, where they tried to find happiness. My mother was taken in by her Aunt, and raised her. My mother had a sister, whose name was Roza. She had two sons and two daughters, who were all very religious. They lived in a religious place, in the orthodox Felvidek [Upper Lands], in Beregszasz.

My mother and father spoke Hungarian and Tot, and of course, Yiddish, mainly, so that us kids wouldn't understand them. When they got married, my father worked as a market merchant. He took bolts and bolts of canvas, 'angin' [thick woven cotton canvas, which was used to may pillowcases and down comforters.] and textiles to the village markets. He rented a dray wagon, and he went with it nearly every day to different markets, and tried to support his family that way. My father had a greying beard, if he had to, he just shaved with Razol [a corrosive liquid which was used instead of shaving - rubbed on a beard, the whiskers could be wiped off with a towel. It was used by those orthodox Jews who wished to rid themselves of their beard, yet would not break the



traditional ban against touching a man's face with a blade or razor.] My mother went to in 'sajtli' [Yiddish: 'sheytl' for wig]. She had to shave her head to wear the sheytl. She finished only four years of grammar school, she couldn't have done more anyway, since there was only one school in Goncruszka. They probably met through my uncle, their marriage came together from mutual sympathy.

Both of them were of medium build, they were fair-skinned. My mother had to have her teeth done quite early. She went to Satoraljaujhely to the best dentists. Despite the great poverty, they dressed very properly, they were always well-groomed and clean. When my father went to market, he dressed differently. He had a special fur coat and boots that he went to market in.

We lived so bitterly that when my father couldn't finish the markets by himself, he took our mother with him. At these times, they left the children with the cleaning woman, who looked after us. Aunt Mari, our Christian maid got board like a family member, she didn't work for money.

My father died in Szarvas in the spring of 1945. After hiding in Budapest, liberated, we went to the countryside for a few weeks to avoid starvation. He'd had a lung infection for weeks by that time, he looked like a living skeleton. He got penicillin and streptomycin also, which was harder for them to get for him [Mass-production of penicillin started in the United States in 1940, but streptomycin was not used in pharmacology at that time.] Sadly, he couldn't be saved, and he died at the age of seventy-five. My mother died at home, in the Budapest apartment on August 12, 1949. She got an infected appendicitis, and though she got better with daily visits to the doctor and from the effects of treatment, at the age of seventy-one, her heart couldn't take it anymore. Each in different cities, but we buried both our parents with full funeral rites in orthodox cemeteries.

There were twelve of us siblings, five sons and seven daughters. As I heard from my parents, my oldest sibling was called Pirike, I believe she was born around 1898. She died young from consumption. She was followed by Imre in 1900, who was the only one of us who graduated. He became a bank clerk, a good job in Satoraljaujhely, but he got sick. He had diphtheria or some similar disease, the poor guy passed away in the hospital at the age of twenty-four. They brought his corpse home because according to Jewish tradition his relatives have to take him for burial from his home. I was running around as a child, and remember that they took him from the house.

My next sibling was Rozsika. If I recall correctly, she was born in 1902. She didn't work. She had two children. She raised them at home. Then came Ilonka in 1904. She became a bookkeeper, she married a teacher from Kispest [now a suburb of south Budapest]. They always played with me at their house, in their apartment. She died in childbirth, I don't know the date. After her, came my older brother Zoltan in 1906, Miklos in 1910, Lili in 1917 and Lajcsika [from Lajos] around 1918. In the years between, my older sisters Sari [from Sarolta, in 1915], Bozsi [from Erzsebet = Elizabeth, in 1913] and Anci [from Anna, in 1908] were born, then after them, I came on April 24, 1919, the last living sibling of the many children.

My sisters Bozsi and Sari made aliya in 1934 or 1935. Before that, they'd learned all kinds of agricultural work in a Zionist organisation on the Enying waste [Hakhsarah] [1](#). There they met their husbands. They came back to Hungary in 1938, because they didn't find what they'd counted on there, they couldn't make a living. They were here for a year and a half or two years, until they were sent ship's passage from America, from Montevideo [Capitol of Uruguay]. Later Lili also

followed them with her husband and her child, Judit. In the end, they ended up in Israel anyway, many years later. Bozsi didn't have children, she went to Israel eventually, where she died in the 1990s. Sari was probably lost to cancer in Montevideo. One of her sons is still living, somewhere in Karmiel, in Israel. Lili's and Sari's children keep in touch, there are grandchildren everywhere.

My older brothers Miklos and Zoli [from Zoltan] stayed here in Hungary. Zoli was deported to Mauthausen. When he came back, he married, and continued working in his trade. He was a furniture maker, he did very fine woodwork. He really respected the Social Democratic party at the time, and he was an activist. He never had children. My other older brother, Miklos was a textile merchant. He studied the fashion trade later, and then taught himself to become a window dresser. He could stand exhausting work, because he'd been a work serviceman in Arkhangelsk [According to estimates, the number of Jewish work servicemen who fell prisoner to the Soviets (including those who deserted their units to escape inhumane treatment, or the majority, who were captured after the Red Army broke through at Voronezh in 1943) ranged between 20-30 thousand people.] [Forced labor] [2](#). He ended up there, froze for five years, and got used to the worst conditions. On returning home, he also got married, but I don't know much about his daughter. He lived very long, he also probably had cancer, or died of old age.

One of my older sisters, Anci sewed the prettiest. She never had children. She probably kept the religion the best. She lived on Szechenyi Street in Budapest, and died at the age of eighty-seven. After her husband's death, I was her guardian, I got her into the Jewish hospital. She laid there for a couple months because she had an accident, she broke her hip joint. Unfortunately, she never recovered from it.

When we were kids in Satoraljaujhely, the total population was about 11 thousand, more than 5000 of them were Jews. [According to the 1910 census, the total population of Satoraljaujhely was 20,000 with 5730 Jews among them.] They didn't live altogether, like at 6 Grof Somogyi Ilona Street, in our street, there weren't any other Jews there besides us. But the Jewish shops were all together expressly in one area. The Jews didn't go to the outer areas to live anyway, they mainly lived downtown. At the time, there weren't really any buses or other transportation. They took care of things with dray wagons, but not every family could allow themselves this.

There was a big Neolog [Neolog Jewry] [3](#) community, an Orthodox community and a Hassid one. There were three big temples: the Neolog temple, not far away was an Orthodox one and on the other side of the city was where the Sephardic Jews went in white stockings, kaftans, and in 'shtreyml' [Hasidim]. There were prayer-houses as well. I mainly went to one of them to pray. The rich leather merchant family who lived nearby, the Schonfelds, had their own prayer house, with the Tora. They prayed everyday. We belonged to the Orthodox religious community.

Elementary was a Jewish school with Jewish teachers. In fact, the Civil school [4](#), where I went later [in Miskolc, there was a Jewish Civil Boys School] was a Jewish school as well, we only had Jewish teachers. Once Kuno Klebelsberg, the Cultural Minister at the time came for a visit [Kuno Klebelsberg (1875-1932): the religion and education minister in the Bethlen government from 1922-1931. He developed a wide range of educational reforms.] He visited the orthodox school, and the teacher called me up to write on the blackboard, 'Lajos Kossuth'. He was curious about my orthography, my cursive writing. I jumped right up, walked over bravely, and like an old writing expert, I completed the task the the minister gentleman had asked of me. I remember he had the

striped, standard minister lustrine pants on, with a simple black coat.

On the river bank all the children got a little area, which they fenced in for themselves. We raised lettuce, radishes, onions and they sold them. This way they could raise a lot of money for the school. There was discipline, but everything was so friendly, like in a big family.

From the age of four I had to study in the cheder. I learned Hebrew a lot sooner than Hungarian. They didn't want to start me on reading Hungarian, they said, because they didn't want me to get ahead of the rest of the school. I had a religious brother-in-law as my first teacher. First I studied the Gemara, after that we did a few words of the Rashi and Rambam. We learned the weekly sidra every week, and the perek in the summer [That is the 'Ethics of the Fathers', (sometimes called the Pirke Avot)]. In our family, we held all of the Jewish holidays. At Passover we ate matzah, we needed thirty kilos [66 lbs.] for our large family. We got this free, however, from the religious community. On Saturday afternoons we had such gatherings where we sang.

My father had a permanent seat in the synagogue, and I had my place next to him at every prayer service every day, but every Saturday and on holidays, too. I was raised in this kind of family, I couldn't have imagined that any other kind of family existed. Independent of this, in one of the buildings where we lived, there weren't only Jews. We made friends there, also, because in Satoraljaujhely, the Jews then were highly-esteemed people. Everything seemed so natural. Like at Purim, the whole city dressed in carnival clothing. They went up and down the streets in wagons, and danced, too. If I took 'slachmones' [food present given to friends and relatives on Purim] to the relatives, I got such a good tip, that I was really happy because of it. I was already collecting my crowns, when I was a child. There were still crowns[korona] then, but then they changed them to pengo. I distinctly remember they gave you one pengo for 500 korona, which was big money then. [From January 1, 1927 the korona was changed to the pengo, at a rate of 12,500 paper korona to one pengo.]

The mikveh was far, but you could go with the pans to the Rongyva creek to 'tajvliz' them. [from Yiddish: new pans were dipped in natural rainwater, rivers or wells which was a kind of blessing.] My brother-in-law who was very religious, never bathed at home. We just went out to the Rongyva. It was quite deep, and he took me with him, and bathed a number of times each summer when we went to bathe in river water. For the Passover holiday, we took out a completely different set of dishes, than usual. We cleaned the apartment all day. My father always collected the crumbs, and I went with him to help.

My bar mitzvah was very elegant. The instructors prepared us, the Jewish teachers. I got a beautiful present with my name on it: a book, with a Hungarian translation and a small gold ring, too. It was very thin, but it made me happy because it was so pretty, and I showed it proudly to everyone. It's such a beautiful experience to think back on my Jewish past like this, that I can't imagine something more beautiful.

The characteristic Jewish occupation was merchant. Aside from shoe and textile merchants, greengrocers, they opened pastry shops. There was a great kosher pastry shop – they sent one of my sisters there to live and work, because there were a lot of us at home. A master pastry chef came from the Schwarcz family shop in Budapest, who taught my older sister [how to make] the most specialized cakes. When they later emigrated to Montevideo, and earned a lot with a pastry shop she opened there.

Every morning I went into grammar school, my sister was along the way. I went in to the pastry shop, and she gave me a 'kremes' [creme pastry] every morning, the delicious end pieces. It was truly delicious, I took them for snacktime, and some of the other kids even got some. I could give some to my friends, too. These memories seem insignificant, but to a child for whom it was a luxury just to get one egg at home...

At our house, we only had 'rantott' [roux] soup for breakfast. Now and again, there was butter for bread. We got meat quite often, because my godfather (sic?) strove to give us these kinds of food. He sent over nice pieces of meat, ground meat, which my mother soaked according to kosher tradition before she cooked it. There were delicious meat soups, and whipped potatoes, bean soup, but we ate cornmeal a lot. Sometimes we bought a goose, and we ate every morsel of it. We put crackling bits on the top of the cornmeal, that would be lunch. When my mother sliced up the liver, she'd put the little pieces on top of the meal, that would also be a lunch. On Saturdays, after temple, my father and I brought home the chulent from the baker's that my mother had prepared on Friday. They kept it warm there. We took it straight home from the oven. Until lunch was served, we stayed tucked it into bed, and it stayed deliciously warm. So we weren't unsatisfied with lunch, we were satisfied with what we got.

My father had distant relatives, the Szekacs's. They took on the management post in Nyirbaja. Szekacs, who was the overseer of a 3000 acre estate, married a girl relative. They built their own temple in Nyirbaja. This uncle Szekacs also supported the area Jews in Nyirbaja, in fact, at the age of ninety-three he took on the money collection for the congregation. Mrs Szekacs came to visit us for many years. Every year they sent us poor Jewish relatives a sack of flour and a sack of potatoes. They sent delicious Nyirbaja Gulbaba potatoes, and that was a very big help.

We had a sidewalk on our street. It was a so-called 'representative' street, because the parochial was there, the Catholic church's office, and it was a developed section which led to the so-called 'Magashegy' [Hungarian: high mountain]. A lot of people went to Magashegy, the peak was called, 'Hecske'. Occasionally they harassed the payes Jews there, but just the bad kids did. They never did anything, just chased them a little as a prank.

The house we lived in was a three-room house. The owner lived in one part, we got two rooms. We had electricity and running water. In our big kitchen, we had a drain too, and next to the drain was a lead-coated bathtub, seperated by a curtain. Well, you could bath quite often, they heated up water, there was a stove, and a 'sparhelt' [pot-bellied stove], of course. My parents warmed up the water in big tin pans. Occasionally, two or three of the girls would bath one after another, with the appropriate kosher soap.

There was an earthenware oven in the kitchen that you could bake bread with. We had two large rooms, and the kitchen, of course. Somebody slept in every room. I slept with my mother for a long time, head to toe. They were still copper beds, not the modern ones of today. The heater was an iron stove, we generally heated with wood and stumps. Later we warmed the two rooms with a more modern Zafir stove. We had a whole little courtyard, and there were windows on the street and the courtyard. The room's furnishings old-fashioned, poor furniture pieces. In the courtyard, there was a cement storage place, the owner, Weber, was a building materials merchant.

The American relative sent packages one or two times every year, worn out clothes and things they didn't use anymore. We had to apply for customs exemption for the package at the customs office.

Three of my siblings could sew – they sewed things for themselves from the packages, and pants for me and a little vest. So we had these kind of clothing opportunities, because poverty didn't allow them to buy us any other clothing items.

The girls worked day and night. They took on hemming of aprons, first by hand, then they got together enough for a Singer machine, and the machine clanked night and day. They paid 20 filler [100 filler=1 pengó] for working one apron. My father and mother could do very little work by the end, they were so sick and old. Possibilities of making a living were tight. I had altogether one pair of shoes, and if my soles were ragged, then that night I went to the shoemaker, he was called Jenó Laufer, and I waited in his little workshop while he re-soled my shoes. I could only by myself shoes once, a pair of sandals, when I was already an apprentice. That was really hard for me to convince myself about, because my feet were always sore.

We knew well that many times my father was unable to pay. At such times, he would get stock on consignment so he could go to the markets, because he couldn't pay for the stock from his own money. Occasionally, he took me with him. I didn't go to school that day, and if he felt bad, I even accompanied him to the market. We went by horse-drawn wagon, we put up a tent in Forroencs, Cigand, Putnok.[small towns] Our textile stock was covered in sacks in the back of the wagon. We had to be careful, because the Romanian gypsies [Roma] climbed up under the wagon on the way and wanted to cut off the sacks. I remember one time they even wanted to attack us, but I scared them off with a big stick. These are the kind of little episodes, that you can't forget about. I was about ten or eleven, then.

My mother had the kind of books that I really liked, like 'The Two Prisoners' [novel by Lajos Zilahy]. My godfather and godmother (sic) came over to our house every evening to have us read to them. They were illiterate, they couldn't read. I sat in my mother's lap, and listened to every word. Then there was the trial of Captain Dreyfus [Dreyfus case: In French espionage fears of 1894, Alfred Dreyfus, an officer of Jewish descent was accused of espionage on anti-semitic grounds and was sentenced to life imprisonment. There were immediate doubts in connection with the evidence. Zola called for the revision of the case in an open letter, which the right-wing nationalist Catholic and military circles officially rejected on the grounds of state interest and the protection of the prestige of the army. In the end, Dreyfus was rehabilitated in 1906, got a military honor and finished his career as a lieutenant colonel.]

We got [a subscription to] the 'Nepszava' [Hungarian: 'Word of the People'] until it was banned because of the article by Arpad Szakasits in the 1942 Christmas issue. We got the article from somewhere, one Jew gladly filled in the other about what he read that wasn't approved of. I get the 'Nepszava' to this day. [Published since 1880, as the successor to the Munkas-Heti Kronika (Worker's Weekly Chronicle). It was the organ of the Hungarian worker's movement, the MSZDP (Hungarian Social Democratic Party) paper. At the time of the Second World War, under the direction of Arpad Szakasits, it became an anti-fascist forum and was banned during the German occupation. There were two famous Christmas issues: one published on December 26, 1941 titled 'Merleg' ('Balance'), in which the writings in the spirit of solidarity against fascism of respected civil politicians, writers and artists (Gyula Szekfu, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinsky, Zsigmond Moricz, Marcell Benedek... etc.) were printed beside the writings of leftwing social democrats and Communists. The second came out on December 25, 1942 titled 'A holnap Magyarorszaga fele' ('Towards Tomorrow's Hungary') and contained writings of Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinsky, Zsigmond Moricz, Albert

Szent-Gyorgyi, Gyula Szekfu, Miklos Krenner (Spectator), Arpad Szakasits among others.]

In Satoraljaujhely, we mostly made friends with other kids in school. The son of Majdhelsz the tailor didn't live far from us. He and I and a little girl played tag together and all kinds of ball games. Boske Schonfeld was her name, they said she was my betrothed. The Schwartz family was still there in Satoraljaujhely, as well as the Schach family and the Habermann family, who were very rich exotic fruit merchants. The Gross family, who were tailors also lived nearby. One of their boys married one of my sisters. We didn't just get along with the Jews. Later, when we'd already moved to Miskolc, we lived next to a brushmaker, who wasn't Jewish. He had a son the same age as me. Many times I went with him to their vineyard. We played football, and later we rode our bikes on Buza Square.

The political atmosphere in Satoraljaujhely was still quiet between 1925 and 1930, there was nothing special to be heard. I know my father knew all the local soldiers because he was a red soldier. He completed his duty in the train station in the city. Since he had so many children, they didn't send him anywhere else. He had eleven children by that time, and everybody in command treated him with very much respect, they strove to place him advantageously. Just as one example, when there was a ban on alcohol, on the occasion of my circumcision, the soldiers at command allowed us to offer alcohol to our guests. When I was conscripted into the work service in 1940, and I was sick during work service, I had bronchitis, I asked to be pensioned off [medically discharged], or that they exempt me from work service. The colonel there, he was the head of the committee and he recognized my name and me, too. This colonel was well over seventy years old in 1940. Before [I came to] him they'd kicked me out, they didn't want to pension me off. I went the second time, and I was scared that they'd kick me out again, and they won't discharge me. Then this colonel says, 'Are you the son of Mister D. from Satoraljaujhely?' I said, yes, that's me. He told me to relax, he'd discharge me. He saved my life, because the others were sent out to the Ukraine [This event must have occurred in 1941 or later]. That was an eternally memorable event. It can be explicitly called a holy miracle.

In 1930, the whole family moved to Miskolc because of the poverty. They hoped that from there, my father could earn more, market better, and this way making a living would be easier. We were able to stay in our first apartment for only six months, we couldn't pay the rent once in six months. During the six months, we just put it off, and put it off, and in the end, they let us go on the whole thing. Then we went to a much cheaper apartment. That also had two rooms, and there was veranda, the girls worked there. There was a proper courtyard, where the children could play, and we held get-togethers. Once my parents were cooking jam and we stirred the jam all night long. We held every holiday longer, and we went to the Kazinczy Street orthodox synagogue there.

I often went with my siblings to the Avas peak, and we walked over to Gorombolytapolca, which is now known by everybody as Miskolctapolca. It was a beautiful spa then as well, though it wasn't as well-developed. On Saturday or Sunday many of my siblings and I relaxed there. We sat in the ice-cream shop in Gorombolytapolca where the bus went out at that time, too. The printer's union had two billiard rooms, and we could go in there easily anytime. It was really good, we played for a candy bar or something like that. I went to the cinema a lot, and saw every film and every play in the theater.

## **During the war**

Hitler's rise to power touched me in Miskolc. I already felt the troubled times in Miskolc. The 'turulmadaras'[The Turul Comrade Society formed in fall of 1919. One of the most popular and most powerful university comrade associations, it's members were law, medicine and humanities students. In reprisal for the abolition of the numerus clausus in 1927 which had banned Jews from university studies, they organized beatings of Jews on campuses (then effected the introduction of the 'numerus nullus' in 1941.) men were already in Miskolc. Later, during the time of the Gombos government, the anti-semitism became quite big. Then the politicians came in a row during the ministerial period of Imredy, then in the time of Daranyi, also. Minister Kallay was the most friendly [Bela Imredy was financial minister from 1932-1935, and prime minister from 1938-1939. Kalman Daranyi was prime minister from 1936-1938. Miklos Kallay was prime minister from 1942-1944.]

There was great alarm when Hitler was elected, and the winds of Fascism were blowing. We heard the German soldiers marching on the radio, since there was no television yet. And later in the cinema, you could see those German events. In 1938, they brought in the really big Jewish laws [Anti-Jewish laws in Hungary] [5](#).

I was working as a free young assistant then, first in the shop of a Jewish couple named Salgo, then for the Quitt Lipot textile company. My father didn't have enough money to teach me a trade. I most would have liked to be an automechanic or dental technician, I looked into these two trades for myself. In the end, I went off to be a men's wear student in Miskolc [commerce schools], at one of the most elegant shops, where you could really learn intelligent commercial services. You had to respect the customers then, and really handle them. I was there until I finished my student years. Then I got a letter of freedom from my boss, in which he allowed me to finish earlier than the required three years. He said that I could easily start my career, and he'd gladly hire me if I stayed with him. Later, I did something else anyway. I had a really small position, I had to invoice the stock from the so-called heavy boys, I did the money collecting. It was the kind of position that I didn't do for the salary, but just for the little extra I got after I invoiced for the Quitt company in Miskolc. Later, in Pest I worked with textiles from my own energy, whatever I could, they called this 'honalj-kereskedelem' [Hungarian: 'armpit merchandising']. I sold bolts of textiles directly to sewing workshops and stores. I somehow got an industrial license out of that in 1942.

In May of 1936, the whole family had moved up to Budapest, to Paulay Ede Street to a rented apartment. My brother and my sister also came up to Pest, and settled here. The girls were seamstresses, my brother was a commerce assistant [Most likely this was his youngest older brother, Miklos]. They were the predecessors, and that's how I got from Miskolc to Pest also. In Pest, we continued to attend synagogue, we belonged to the one in Vasvari Pal Street.

In 1941-1942, word spread to Pest that they executed Polish Jews in Poland. We heard that they made them dig ditches and shot them into them. I went in a social circle where textile people and goldsmiths got together, and there were a lot of Polish Jews there. Not to mention, that I worked with Polish prisoners during work service. The Poles knew Hungarian already. They'd been here for a long time at a manor estate next to Vac where they did farm work. They had to bend over all day long, pruning plants, then afterwards they clobbered cabbages with a machine. Twelve-hour shifts a day, sometime by day, sometimes by night.

When they collected the Poles [Kamenetz-Podolsk Massacre] [6](#), my father was taken in by the authorities as a Polish Jew. Somebody reported his address to them, perhaps a neighbor or

somehow they got his address. Because of that, I had to make a lot of arrangements to get a birth certificate approved by the rabbis for my father, and proof that he was a Hungarian citizen. Then we went back and forth to the KEOKH [National Central Alien Control Office] [7](#) until everything got settled. The KEOKH then was in the present day Economics university building. I had very big help in Budapest from Dr. Ferenc Godmar, who was the Budapest Vice-chief of Police. That's how come they didn't take my father away.

In Pest, as well as Miskolc, I always got out to the cinema. I could buy a reduced ticket for the 10 o'clock evening show, and a discount lunch in the shops. For 3 filler, you got a salted crescent roll, full of salami. You could get into the theater cheaply, when the play had already started. There were really famous actors playing in Miskolc, who later came to Pest. I don't want to list them all, but like Maria Mezey and Laszlo Misoga. When we wandered around the foyer, we peeked in and grabbed the director, "Please let us in, somebody has to clap, too!" I saw almost all the plays like this. I personally remember one explicitly Jewish themed show, about a Jew who is about to get married, but he's terribly scared of girls, poor guy.

I was a workserviceman two times. In 1939, they called me in to be a real soldier, but the Jewish laws at that time said I wasn't allowed to be. They deployed me in Szentendre [15 miles north of Budapest]. Then they put us out in a village called Izbeg, a few kilometers from Szentendre. We stayed around there for a short while, then they took us down to Pomaz, where we had training. They made us do various light physical exercises, like they were holding a military training or other training. They gave us injections, inoculations against measles, and took us away from there. Our first trip was to Szinervaralja, the Romanian name is Regensheine [sic - the Romanian name then and now is Seini]. We slept on the floor of a mountainside wine-pressing building. We didn't have straw, but a kind of hay. At night the bedbugs jump over our heads in our quarters, but we could take that because they didn't put us in a luxury hotel. We stayed there for a long time, took us out everyday to work. We had the kind of tasks which were truly life-threatening. The Romanians built a so-called 'Karolyi line.]. They were steel-reinforced bunkers, and they were blown up when the transylvanian part was re-annexed to Hungary [Second Vienna Decision] [8](#).

They employed us in the blowing up of these bunkers. The exploded materials had to be carried out to the road. They were making road slabs out of these reinforced concrete [pieces] and filling them with necessary materials. The Szamos [-river; a branch of the Tisza] flowed by there. They built roads leading to the river and we carried the foundation slabs over there. We were there for a couple weeks or months in that place. Those who came later were put in traincars after the road was finished. They took us on all the way down to Beszterce. We didn't live in Beszterce but in a place called Sajomagyarasi[Sajomagyaros], and there we did ballasting work on the railway. Well it was comfortable work, but it was still the work service. It wasn't a luxury place. Here we were quartered in the peasant houses, the people gave us places in their front room or big room. They ordered us away from there. Christmas came. Those who weren't obligated to serve in the army, but worked with us were discharged in the end of 1940, around December 10. We got marching orders that since we were really soldiers, and had to fulfill our service, they sent us to Hodmezovasarhely. During the work service I corresponded with my family. The mail came. In Hungary, at the time, it came properly once everyweek.

I kind of turned of during the march to Hodmezovasarhely, or rather, I went home. Though I didn't have permission, I allowed myself to take off for a week's leave, and afterwards I went to report in.

They reprimanded me that I wasn't allowed to do that. There were about six hundred of us in Hodmezovasarhely. Every evening and night, they sent us up to do exercises. They dressed us in warm clothes, we put on everything we had. We had to put on boots and all our clothes. We had to do these drills on the icy square or in the soccer field next to us, very often into the hours of the night. Because there they didn't differentiate between night and day. When an unexpected alarm drill was ordered, you had to jump up and go.

Unfortunately, I got sick during it, and asked to be put in the sick room. There were two or three of us in the sick room who had bronchial colds. I got really bad bronchitis, and they tried to treat me for weeks. They sent me into the Szeged hospital, where they said that I should rest and I would recover. I still felt sick. I was tired, and finally after a lengthy illness, I got them to send me to a higher examination. I knew that outside the hospital I would be standing in front of a committee. I went home, discharged and around April they called me in to Kecskemet for an examination. My certificate, which I'd gotten from there, wasn't enough, and they said they were going to call me in for another super-examination which actually happened a month later. They temporarily discharged me until they would call me in again. Well, I went back to my parents, where I lived, I went back to my job, and continued working. I worked in the textile merchandising as a commercial agent, I collected money.

I did some work, and lived with my parents. I couldn't do anything else, because I was at work day after day, I went to 16-20 places one after the other. I went by bicycle, to make it easier, because there weren't many buses then. I did my work in the Pest area and outlying regions. Every filler was needed to maintain the family, because my parents were elderly, and they lived truly quite grievously. I gave my parents almost all my entire pay, except for a little pocket money, My other siblings and I had decided this. I had two older brothers and two older sisters who did the same thing. Everybody gave my parents an amount, and then my poor mother could keep her religious kosher household for the upkeep of the family. My father couldn't work, he was old, often sick. If he ever went to a market, he took me with him.

There were quite a lot of base people, a lot of reports were made, when the Germans invaded, supposedly a million people in the country reported [turned someone in]. Our family went into hiding a lot, when we could no longer stay in the apartment. When I arrived at 16 Paulay Ede Street, the neighbors were not too happy, because they were pretty fascist oriented.

I met my wife in Budapest. She was thirteen years old, when I would tease her on her way to school with a big bag on her back. We lived in the same house in Budapest, 16 Paulay Ede Street. They lived on the third floor, we lived on the first floor. I flew up the steps everyday just to ask her what she's doing. She was studying to be a seamstress. She accepted me when she had to take a dress home before it got dark: You're walking me home, right? These are the kind of memories, I can't forget. We lived a peaceful life for sixty years.

My wife, Eva was born on March 27, 1924 in Karcag. She grew up in a very poor family, as an only child. The family were Neolog Jews, so less religious than my parents, but it was agreeable because they likewise, had come to Budapest for financial reasons. Her father was a watchmaker and jeweller, he'd learned his trade somewhat. Her mother was at home at first, then during the war my mother-in-law also went into hiding, but somewhere else, than my parents. Her husband never came back from Auschwitz, we soon found out that they'd killed my father-in-law. After the

liberation, her father's step-brother, who lived in Gyula, came back from being deported to somewhere. His wife had been taken away and didn't come back, so he took my mother-in-law to Gyula with him to run his household. She helped out there, and we even went down for summer vacation with them in Gyula with the children. Later, she was in a co-op, she separated machine cleaning rags. And they sewed them together, and the co-op sold them. She worked until she retired.

Our civil marriage was on February 10, 1943 on a simple workday. I called my boss to be a witness, the other witness was his father-in-law. I got a really respectable, pretty gifts, for example, I got a truly serious music machine [phonograph] with a stand and records. Later they transformed it into an automatic machine with a permanent needle. When the record was over, the gramophone turned itself off. That was a really new thing at the time. I've still got the chandelier that I got from my other boss for my wedding.

A few days later we went to the Hosok Temple next to the Dohany temple [synagogue]. They said, the same thing as at the Dohany Temple only more elegantly. The synagogue was packed full for our wedding. Rabbi Hevesi married us. They played the organ and the most famous, baritone cantor sang. It was wonderful. They performed everything according to proper Jewish tradition in the Neolog Dohany [Street] temple. After the wedding, at my parents apartment, there was a little lunch, there were about thirty of us there. We didn't stay long, we went to a hotel and then went on our honeymoon from there to Matrahaza. We stayed there for about a week, in the local hotel. We started our life together as a young married couple in my in-law's apartment in Paulay Ede Street.

On November 17, 1943, my daughter Zsuzsanna was born. I gave her a Jewish name according to the Jewish ceremony. During the war, it was very difficult to get food for here, and my wife breast fed her for a long time. She graduated from an economics technical school, then at her company they required her to get a college degree. My other daughter, Katalin, was born on March 5, 1949. She also got a Jewish name, in the Vasvari Pal temple. She was accepted the second time [she applied] to university, and became a doctor. She works as a general practitioner in Kispest.

Once during the war, two people came out of the house and approached me. They whispered something to a gun-toting Arrow Cross [Arrow Cross Party] [9](#), who was making a raid on the street. This happened on January 8, 1945 at about ten in the morning. They came straight over to me, that I'm surely a Jew, and what am I doing there. I begged their pardon. I said, I'm not a Jewish, and I took out my papers, which said I was Jenő Dioszegi, born in Debrecen. I'd bought the papers from an acquaintance for a fortune, who mostly sold them to Slovak Jewish refugees. The identification was in order with all the official stamps. They didn't accept it anyway, and took me away by car. I was forced to obey the two men armed with machine pistols. They shoved me in the cellar, and interrogated me until five in the evening. I said that I was a Protestant, and a soldier. I had a fake letter that said I came out of the hospital from the military. We came up out of the cellar at exactly five in the evening, five or six of us, so we could go to the toilet, for the first time since the morning. When they took us up, we went through a dark basement space, where I slipped into a really hidden corner. When they went past me, and went to the back of the courtyard to the toilet, then I snuck away. I got out with the password 'Long live, Szalasi'. I put my hands up, and these terrifying guards let me out. That's how I escaped, and I quickly disappeared from there. Then afterwards, I got myself together, and I went to the place that I'd hidden my parents in previously.

They were in 41 Lonyay Street, with my wife and child. I rented the apartment with fake papers. My parents had been in the ghetto [Budapest Ghetto] [10](#) for a while, in some downtown street, probably Akacfa Street or in Suto [Street]. After a short time, I secretly got them out of there, and took them over to Lonyay Street [dressed] in peasant clothes.

Karoly Ersok was one of my helpers. My parents used his dead parents' birth certificates. The years weren't right, but they could go into hiding with them. I really ran out of money, it cost me a lot to get all the papers and an apartment. But I was happy because all the money was worth the fact that my parents were alive and didn't have to go to the ghetto. Later my wife and daughter also went over there.

If I hadn't have escaped then they would have taken me over to the Danube for a nice walk and dinner. [Executions on the Danube Banks] [11](#) Because what they did with those who were there, they tied their hands nicely and took them out to the promenade on the Danube bank, as it's been heard here before, I also heard it. I didn't dare go out even to the area. I spoke with one of those who accidentally escaped from there. He said that there were a lot of them, they shot them in a line, and threw the executed bodies into the Danube. And he floated down two stops and that's how he escaped. Let's just say, that wouldn't have been convient for me to try such an experiment, because it's not sure that I could have escaped that way. I was successful like that, I was lucky, that the Lord God [sic] was with me.

I fled to the apartment in Lonyay Street, rented with fake papers, when I escaped from the Arrow Cross cellar. We stayed there exactly until the Soviet army arrive around noon on January 15, 1945. We saw the German soldiers fleeing from our window, and then the Russian soldiers came. The Russians had already captured the area around our house, and I even went out to greet them. They were very nice, I coaxed them into see my parents who lived there on the first floor. They could speak Tot with my parents a little.

## Post-war

After the Liberation [of Budapest] [12](#) people were very flexible. We often had to trade our little gold jewelry for food, during the war and directly after it. I had green coffee which I could trade. When the Russians came, I could swap it to get food for my parents and family. I ate horsemeat once. In Lonyay Street, one of the Russian soldiers shot a horse in the head. One of my sisters sat on the horses back, and cut off the meat. She cut off five or six kilos [12-15 lbs.] of meat and we made bean stew with it.

When the situation normalized a tiny bit, the ghetto was also liberated. We were anticipating that in Lonyay Street. On January 18th, I packed up my parents and we wandered home on foot. We had a pretty tough time, but the child had a sled. We bundled everything into a shawl and in the driving snow and cold, we reclaimed our apartment. I don't need to say that the windows were broken. During the war, a few shots had hit us, and they took apart the chandelier. We tried to glue up the windows with paper, so the place would be somewhat closed. We had a stove, which we lit with shoe soles and various rubbish. I brought this stuff up and we heated with it. I warmed the place up and we could make tea.

They'd totally pillaged our apartment anyway. There were uniformed soldiers in it, but I don't know whether the Christians had rented it to them. They hauled off six Epeda [brand] spring mattresses,

carpets and silver objects.

A man from around Pest, from Pesterzsebet, and his family were living in my elderly parents's apartment. I heard he'd had a really pretty house in Pesterzsebet. We had two rooms, a bigger one and a smaller one. When we could finally go home, I said on behalf of my parents that they should kindly vacate the apartment because we came home. That little man with his mustache looked like a little Hitler, and his attitude was the same. He didn't want to leave. During the war, he'd thrown all the prayer books into the courtyard, and burned them there. All my father's books were burned. I didn't have to do any more than just grab him by the collar, his neck, and lift him up a bit. We lived on the first floor [above the ground floor], and I lifted him by his collar: "My boy, if you don't get out of here in less than an hour, I'm going to throw you out of this apartment to hell!" So I got rid of them quickly.

We lived up on the third floor, there a family occupied the apartment, who handed over the keys without a word. The custodian's wife's son-in-law had moved in to our place. The custodian's wife was very decent, she'd hid Jews there, and she was always decent to me, and her son was, too. He was a firebrigade commander, he accompanied me in his uniform when I got my disguised parents out of the ghetto into hiding. He helped a lot when we arrived. Nothing was missing from there. True, I hadn't left much. They'd taken a whole lot of everything from my parents' apartment. They'd hauled off carpets, mattresses and pictures, but whatever they couldn't haul off was still there.

After the war, like in 1949, I would have left to go abroad, but I couldn't have left neither my wife, nor my mother here. Later I would have had an opportunity, I was in Vienna many times, my friends invited me. In 1962 I was in Vienna at a match, and then an acquaintance said that there I would get reparations, they'd compensate me for what was taken, everything, and they'd put me on a pension. I couldn't do it, I had two children in 1962. I couldn't have left my wife either. I invited her [to go abroad] in 1956 [1956] [13](#) but she couldn't leave her mother. Although in 1956, the truck was waiting by the gate, and I was ready to go, I'd already packed, and only because of them, I didn't leave. One of my sisters and my brother in law got themselves together, and left forever for Montevideo.

In the 1940s, I was a so-called 'light' socialist party believer with the Social Democrats. My older brother quite active politically and later together with Sandor Ronai [Ronai, Sandor (1892-1965) – was head of various ministries from 1945-1950, then became Presidential Counsel from 1950-1952, from 1952-1962 he was the national congress president.] My brother was one of the party secretaries for the Social Democratic Party in the woodworking factory, Ronai was the representative there. After the liberation, Ronai came to Pest and first was commerce minister, then worked as president of the republic. After the fusion happened between the Social Democrats and the Socialists [MDP] [14](#), then I gave up politics, and never went near them again. At the end of 1949, I was no longer a member of anything, and I insisted that they not put me in some state company on the basis of my party membership. If I would have joined the Communist Party then, or worked more actively for them, then I would have gotten the directorship of a textile shop downtown. They asked me if I was a member of the party or not. I said I'm not a party member, and I won't be. That was my party line. I was raised in the democratic spirit, in a poor proli [proletariat] family.

In the 1950s, I had a textile business until 1952. I had a textile business in partmnership in Anker close. In 1952, I found a position at Zoldert. So immediately after they closed my business, I had to hand in my industrial [license], and in a very crafty way they gave my business premises to the Vasedeny Enterprise. They informed me that I had thirty days to leave the premises, and I should make an offer of my stock to the state textile company. [Nationalization of retail trade] [15](#)

But by then I had only such ragged, old stock that the commercial textile industry didn't accept it. They told me to take it home, sell the linens, silks, nightgowns and crinolin aprons at home. I took them home, transferred the empty place to them, which stayed empty for forty years after that. That was nationalization.

I took on the management of a greengrocer shop. I took over the management of the shop on Dimitrov Square, and I had two or three salespeople. I was there for three months altogether as the manager, and then they called me into the commercial center and made me stock distribution director. The greengrocer company board came out to visit me, and talked to me until they seduced me into working at the center. Each director there got fifteen or more shops. We looked after the shops' financial viability. The personnel, the stock, the inventory - we did all this. I worked in this field for twelve years. I did inventory at night, and I had various duties, then after that they gave me a better position, stock distribution regional branch director in December of 1960. Then I was organising the christmas tree sales at Christmas in the Budapest region, we had to rent out huge sales areas.

I didn't feel like the years of socialism were so hard. I was probably lucky, because I was satisfied with what I was doing. Not everybody had such an independent kind of work, where they had unregulated working hours until they retired. I was there until I retired, in April of 1979. So that was from 1952 to 1979. In the meantime, I was in the sanitarium, in the hospital a number of times for two heart attacks.

My wife finished four Civils [Civil school], then she went to a sewing workshop and worked there. She took knitting work on at home, when the child was born. After that she didn't go right back to work, just after 1956, she worked as a waitress at the snack area of the Uttoro Department Store. Later, she was in the fashion department, all the way to October of 1976. In 1976, she quit and applied for her pension. They pensioned her. Except for a few little illnesses, her nerves were shot, because she could never accept her deported father's death.

I couldn't really do anything in that system. I waited for something else to happen, I waited for a liberation, that Socialism would stop, while only those close to the fire got warm. I lived, my family lived, I strove to give them everything. Socialism was better than Fascism. But in Communism, Rakosi [Rakosi] [16](#) was terrifying. They got enough tongue-lashing from the West, to put it gently. But it never made much difference to them. So there were certain, new initiatives, relaxed laws, which people were really waiting for.

During Communism you had to hide that you were Jewish, too. The religious community announced that Jews get money as money restitution. At the time it was a big sum, it would have been a hundred thousand forints. They planned that 40 thousand Jews would apply. But not many applied, only about 18-19 thousand people. They were afraid to apply, so they were left out of their restitution. When they came to their senses, it was too late. They were too smart for their own good, there were a lot of them like this. I knew a lot of these people.

Many only went to synagogue incognito. They didn't want their workplace to know they went to a Jewish temple. I signed my daughter up to learn Hebrew so she could learn to read the prayer books in Jewish (sic). A day later, they called my wife into the school and threatened trouble if we raise our daughter religiously. There was an interior minister named Piros, who was a Fascist, his brother was the principal [Piros, Laszlo (1917-?) - from 1945, he held various union and party positions, until he was named as the head of the AVH after Gabor Peter in 1953. From 1953- 1954 he was vice interior minister, and from 1954-1956, he was interior minister.] Afterwards, she didn't go to Hebrew anymore, which I'd say, I'm quite sorry about. I always admitted I was Jewish, and I am Jewish. I was never ashamed then either to say it, at a time when really a lot of people hid their origins. On the high holidays we went to Dohany Street [synagogue] and to the rabbi school, we go there today, too. We celebrate Rosh Hashana in the Neolog way, and Yom Kippur and Channukah, also. We lit candles when we had to, and prepared holiday meals.

I didn't really take part in the work of Socialism. It's possible that I was a so-called 'nepnevelo' [roughly: 'educator of the masses' - In the 1950s, in the period of the 'growing classwar', on non-work days, 'educators' went around the country with various propaganda tasks: to propagate the agricultural cooperatives, anti-religious propaganda after Sunday mass in front of the church, peace bonds, agitation for wool production...etc.] The idea was to inform the small industry people that they wouldn't be nationalized, if their business didn't have more than ten people in it. I went to the very first one. We went in pairs, and they told us right away that they had been nationalized. You couldn't argue with that, they'd been nationalized.

It was pretty bad in the 1950s. The Rakosi era was on. The politicians were villainous. They ran down Imre Nagy [Nagy, Imre (1896-1958) [17](#). Then there was Laszlo Rajk [Rajk, Laszlo (1909-1949)] [18](#) the interior minister, they caught him because he was aligning with the different oppositions, and they hung him. There certainly were a lot who suffered during the Rakosi era.

I had a nephew who was the chief rabbi in Ujpest, he's a retired chief rabbi now in Israel. President Tildy was there at his initiation [Tildy, Zoltan (1889-1961) - Protestant minister, smallholder party politician (President of the Independent Smallholder Party from 1930-1941, prime minister from 1945-1946; President of the republic from 1946-1948. In 1956, the Imre Nagy government condemned him to six years imprisonment, in 1959 he was freed, in 1989, he was rehabilitated.]. At the start of 1949, when he knew they were coming for him in the next two hours, because he was a central organizer for the Zionist organisation in the surrounding countries, Slovakia, Romania, the Czech Republic, [sic: Czechoslovakia, at the time] he got himself together and left for Israel. So it wasn't a really comfortable situation in the Rakosi regime here.

It started to get a little better in the 1960s. In 1961, there was no more Rakosi. We could kind of travel. I first went to Vienna in 1962. That was the first time, right when you could go. After that, I only made it to national resorts. While I could, I went to different places with my union passes, because I didn't have money for anything else. But my wife and I went with the union passes, many times we had a suite with a bathroom in Sopron, and more than once we vacationed in Hajduszoboszlo, Miskolctapolca, Heviz, Siófok and Matrafured. Later, we went on summer vacation with the kids and grandkids to Balatonfoldvar, where my daughter has a little apartment in a communal resort hotel. We went down there, and my wife and I were there for two or three months.

In Socialism, we had quite a bearable apartment. We traded our old apartment. It was on Paulay Ede Street, and we lived there from 1938-1970. It was getting hard for me to go up to the third floor in that old building. I couldn't make it with my heart. I went into the Capitol Council, took a request form. I offered the apartment with the condition that I want to trade the two bedroom for a three bedroom, since my daughter was already going to the medical university, and we disturbed her when she studied. Because, until then, my mother-in-law lived in one room, who was still alive then, and we lived in the other room. They came out within a week to look at the apartment, and accepted the trade, and I got a beautiful apartment, my present one in place of the old one. I consider this a good trade, in the kind of a house which the engineering department originally built for themselves. They built it for themselves, and there was about twenty garages, storage for vehicles. At the time, I needed a garage, because I got a car from my sister who was abroad, a little car, a Fiat 850, which was good to keep in the garage.

We went to the cinema a lot. To this day, I know what we saw. Like the film 'Ben Hur' I saw with my wife. We had passes to the Opera. The Capitol Operetta Theatre, the old City Theatre was working then, and is today [The City Theatre, which became the Erkel Theatre in 1951, belonged to the Operahouse.]. My wife and I bought a yearly pass, for many years. There were ten performances with the pass, and we went to plays, almost all of them were interesting to us. We saw the 'Tavern Queen', 'Fiddler on the Roof', 'Ball in the Savoy', and 'One Kiss and Nothing Else'. The 'Gypsy Baron' was also very melodious. We loved all of Johann Strauss, Imre Kalman and the Lehar plays. My wife went, poor thing, while she was alive, but in her last years, I couldn't go with her, because she didn't feel well the last three or four years.

My children in the family saw the Friday night candle-lighting the most. My wife didn't cook on Saturdays nor holidays, when you're not allowed to cook. She didn't even straighten up the house at these times, she kept the religion with candle-lighting, prayers, and cooking traditional foods. Sometimes we went to temple. My wife more rarely came, however I go to temple to pray even now, on every high holiday. We didn't celebrate Christmas or Easter. On holidays, we made 'bejgli' [hungarian rolled cake] for example on Christmans, not because it was a holiday, but because we liked the cake.

My family members, my mother and the previously mentioned sister Anci are buried in Budapest in the Orthodox cemetery. One of my brothers, Zoli is resting in the Neolog Jewish cemetery on Kozma Street. My other brother, Miklos, who was in Arhangelsk because of the military as a Soviet prisoner of war, was buried by his comrades in the Farkasreti cemetery. Two of my sisters, Lili and Bozsi are buried in Israel with my brothers-in-law. My siblings always kept in touch.

I always watch the news. We listened to Radio Free Europe [19](#) and the English radio [BBC started a Hungarian language program in 1939], when we could. The Voice of America [20](#) came in as if it was [broadcast] from Pest. The Germans always interfered with all the stations, but we could still get them, mainly England, and that was during the war. We learned a lot from the Hungarian news also, they informed us quite often about the war. In the time of Socialism we could get Free Europe, that's how we got informed about the world. I kept in touch regularly with the relatives abroad, and after it was allowed, somebody came [to visit] almost every year.

It turned out that one of my daughters, Zsuzsanna started out in business and learned typing, short-hand and other administrative tasks, and it wasn't a big deal for her to take time to go to

school. Then later, when she'd gotten her smarts, then she graduated, indeed she finished at the academy, when her company required her to. She, my oldest daughter is now working as a secretary for a school principal.

My other daughter said she was sure she would be a doctor from the age of four. With a speech impediment, when she could barely talk, she wanted to be a doctor. Once when we were vacationing in the summer in Siofok, she saw a dead frog, and wanted to bring it home to dissect it. She was an exceptional student, never got a 'B'. She graduated that way, and went on to finish medical school. She worked for six years as an intern at the Szent Istvan Hospital. There she got her accreditation. Indeed, she went to the hospital, and got a job helping in the ambulances while she was still in university.

My oldest daughter has three sons: one whose thirty-six, and a pair of twins who are twenty-six. She lives with her husband, one street over from where we live. My other daughter likewise lives in this building where I live. She's got a daughter who got a year scholarship to Texas at the age of sixteen. She lived there with a Jewish family, and she really learned a lot about Judaism from them. When she came home, she enrolled in the law university.

Well, I see things rather sadly, that they couldn't create a peaceful, calm Israeli state. I thought that if they got that independent part from the English then they would do it, so there would be a definite part for the state of Israel and on the other side would be a part for Palestine [Foundation of the state of Israel]. But that didn't happen, which was a tragedy. I remember the two Israeli wars [He's probably referring first: to the Six Day War [21](#), which happened between June 5-10, 1967. and second: to the 1973 Yom Kippur War [1973 Arab-Israeli War] [22](#) I heard every step, every act. Later, I read everything about it when I got the original book about the Seven Day War [sic?]. I literally read the whole thing twice. Radio Free Europe and english radio and the Voice of America reported every word, and we were so glad, when we got good news. The Hungarians were dirty at that time, they couldn't befriend a Jewish state. They even severed diplomatic relations with the Hungarians in those days. [Hungary had no diplomatic relations with Israel from 1967-1989]. Now I worry for Israel. Even though my sister's have passed away, I've still got a nephew there with his family.

In the end, I never emigrated, not even to Israel. In those days, when the children were babies, I thought about it but there were always some obstacles, because of which I couldn't make it happen. I couldn't take my mother out, my wife couldn't have taken her mother out either. In any case, I wouldn't have known what to do with two mothers, two families [sic-children], I couldn't have gotten us started anywhere else.

First in 1992 or 1993, I was abroad with my sister Anci. I wanted to go with my wife, we had everything, flight, rooms, hotel, the plan was beautiful. On the last day before we were to leave, my wife broke her leg a three in the afternoon. It was really serious. She fell down at the market, called home and I rushed off that moment in a taxi to take her to the emergency room. My poor sister, in her last year thought that maybe she'd get to Israel one last time, and she didn't want to go alone. She paid for both our trips, everything in the world there and back. The other thing was, my sister living there reserved a hotel and food for my wife. We looked at everything from Eilat to Karmiel, we went to everything for five hundred kilometers, the Negev desert... in a word, amazing places.

We regularly kept in touch with our relatives in the west, because they came here, somebody visited almost every year. We wrote letters, and they came, and besides that there weren't any open secrets. They wrote everything. In the paper here called, 'Uj Elet' [Hungarian: 'New Life' - the fortnightly Hungarian Israelite Community paper] they wrote so much about the fate of the Jews.

After 1989, my task was to try somehow to get compensation for what they confiscated from me. To this day still - it's now sixty years - I haven't got a penny for my pillaged apartment and the brand new motorcycle they stole from me.

I read 'Uj Elet' every chance I get, strictly every week. It comes out twice a month, on the 15th and the first. Every month I pay ninety forints a really small sum. I'm not saying that I regret it, because they write quite a lot of useful information about Jewish themes. I just told my grandson that it's worth reading, there is really pretty writing in it. I'm very glad that Jewish life here at home is getting lively again. I was there at the fifty year jubilee of the Jewish state on Erzebet square in 1998. They had dance performances, and passed out flags, I took one home, there are two in my apartment.

Unfortunately, my wife Eva died of cancer in 2002. She was just seventy-eight. We almost made it to our 60th wedding anniversary. I visit her grave in the Neolog cemetery on Kozma Street.

I'll tell you honestly, that I really respect the Jewish foundations, financially as well. I'm disabled, and have osteoporosis, I have to take truly quite expensive medicines. It doesn't matter that I get a discount, I get drugs free from the local council, but now the community sends me a taxi check also. Those pharmaceuticals that are really expensive, I bought them there and they worked. It's really not cheap compared to my little pension, that really worked out for me. I hope they'll continue to give them to me. I'm trudging through my 86th year, the situation is that I couldn't really count off too many people as old, who are still living.

As far as life here at home, I can't tell which side democracy is on. Now they say the right-wing is democratic, or is it the left-wing? To tell you the truth, they're probably halfway down the road. I hope, but I really hope, that while I'm alive things will keep getting better, and I hope that they can give support to the Jews who are in tight circumstances. They obviously give to the poor who are really in tight circumstances, many people bring suits and everything in to the Jewish community. The situation is that if somebody goes in there, they don't have to worry that they would be left to walk around in rags. I don't believe there are Jewish beggars in Hungary now. But there shouldn't be.

I'm also hoping the everything will go better, and that here in Hungary there is a future for Judaism. I've got four grandchildren and many great-grandchildren, if only they could live freely as Jews in Hungary.

## Glossary

### **1 Hakhsarah**

Training camps organized by the Zionists, in which Jewish youth in the Diaspora received intellectual and physical training, especially in agricultural work, in preparation for settling in Palestine.

## **2 Forced Labor**

Under the 1939 II. Law 230, those deemed unfit for military service were required to complete 'public interest work service'. After the implementation of the second anti-Jewish Law within the military, the military arranged 'special work battalions' for those Jews, who were not called up for armed service. With the entry into northern Transylvania (August 1940), those of Jewish origin who had begun, and were now finishing, their military service were directed to the work battalions. The 2870/1941 HM order unified the arrangement, saying that the Jews are to fulfill military obligations in the support units of the national guard. In the summer of 1942, thousands of Jews were recruited to labor battalions with the Hungarian troops going to the Soviet front. Some 50,000 in labor battalions went with the Second Hungarian Army to the Eastern Front – of these, only 6-7000 returned.

## **3 Neolog Jewry**

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

## **4 Civil school**

(Sometimes called middle school) This type of school was created in 1868. Originally it was intended to be a secondary school, but in its finally established format, it did not provide a secondary level education with graduation (maturity examination). Pupils attended it for four years after finishing elementary school. As opposed to classical secondary school, the emphasis in the civil school was on modern and practical subjects (e.g. modern languages, accounting, economics). While the secondary school prepared children to enter university, the civil 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.

## **5 [ Jewish Laws in Hungary**

The first of these anti-Jewish laws was passed in 1938, restricting the number of Jews in liberal professions, administration, and in commercial and industrial enterprises to 20 percent. The second anti-Jewish Law, passed in 1939, defined the term "Jew" on racial grounds, and came to include some 100,000 Christians (apostates or their children). It also reduced the number of Jews in economic activity, fixing it at 6 percent. Jews were not allowed to be editors, chief-editors, theater-directors, artistic leaders or stage directors. The Numerus Clausus was introduced again, prohibiting Jews from public jobs and restricting their political rights. As a result of these laws, 250,000 Hungarian Jews were locked out of their sources of livelihood. The third anti-Jewish Law, passed in 1941, defined the term "Jew" on more radical racial principles. Based on the Nuremberg laws, it prohibited inter-racial marriage. In 1941, the Anti-Jewish Laws were extended to North-Transylvania. A year later, the Israelite religion was deleted from the official religions subsidized by the state. After the German occupation in 1944, a series of decrees was passed: all Jews were

required to relinquish any telephone or radio in their possession to the authorities; all Jews were required to wear a yellow star; and non-Jews could not be employed in Jewish households. From April 1944 Jewish property was confiscated, Jews were barred from all intellectual jobs and employment by any financial institutions, and Jewish shops were closed down.

## **6 Kamenetz-Podolsk Massacre**

In 1941, the KEOKH handed approximately 18,000 Jewish people over to the German army. On August 27-28 SS-units gathered Jews brought from elsewhere to Kamenetz-Podolsk and shot them with machine-guns. The number of victims is difficult to determine. The SS district commander reported 23,600 dead, with the number of those transported from Hungary possibly exceeding 16,000. Some survivors returned to Hungary. Influenced by their evidence, Minister of the Interior Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, who did not know about the mass murders, had the transports headed for Subcarpathia stopped immediately

## **7 KEOKH (National Central Alien Control Office)**

Originally established with the primary aim of registering Jewish fugitives in Hungary and Jewish people in transit through Hungary from the middle of the 1930s. Its importance heightened during WWII when the number of Jews fleeing to Hungary increased dramatically. According to KEOKH plans, these Jews would have been resettled in the newly reoccupied territories. Therefore, many thousands of Jews were gathered and handed over to the German troops, which in turn massacred them near Kamenetz-Podolsk.

## **8 Second Vienna Decision**

The Romanian and Hungarian governments carried on negotiations about the territorial partition of Transylvania in August 1940. Due to their conflict of interests, the negotiations turned out to be fruitless. In order to avoid violent conflict a German-Italian court of arbitration was set up, following Hitler's directives, which was also accepted by the parties. The verdict was pronounced on 30th August 1940 in Vienna: Hungary got back a territory of 43,000 km<sup>2</sup> with 2,5 million inhabitants. This territory (Northern Transylvania, Seklerland) was populated mainly by Hungarians (52 percent according to the Hungarian census and 38 percent according to the Romanian one) but at the same time more than 1 million Romanians got under the authority of Hungary. Although Romania had 19 days for capitulation, the Hungarian troops entered Transylvania on 5th September. The verdict was disapproved by several Western European countries and the US; the UK considered it a forced dictate and refused to recognize its validity.

## **9 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 consisted of a green shirt and a badge with a set of crossed arrows, a Hungarian version of the swastika, on it. On October 15, 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 on 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.

## **10 Budapest Ghetto**

The order issued on Nov. 29, 1944 required all Jews living in Budapest to move into the ghetto by December 5, 1944. The last ghetto in Europe, it consisted of 162 buildings in the central district of Pest (East side of Danube). Some 75,000 people were crowded into the area with an average of 14 people per room. The area of the city was fenced in with wooden planks and had four entrances, although those living inside were forbidden to come out, while others were forbidden to go in. There was also a curfew from 4 pm. Its head administrator was Miksa Domonkos, a reservist captain, and leader of the Jewish Council (Judenrat). Dressed in uniform, he was able to prevail against the Nazis and the police many times through his commanding presence. By the time the ghetto was liberated on January 18, 1945, approx. 5,000 people had died there due to cold weather, starvation, bombing and the intrusion of Arrow Cross commandos.

## **11 Executions on the Danube Banks**

In the winter of 1944/45, after the Arrow-Cross, the militia of the Hungarian fascist party, came to power, Arrow Cross militiamen combed through the 'safe houses' of Ujlipotvaros, a bourgeois part of Budapest, collected the Jews, brought them to the bank of the Danube and shot them into the river.

## **12 Liberation of Budapest**

By the Christmas of 1944, Soviet troops closed the blockade around the Hungarian capital, which had been transformed into a fortress (Budapest Festung) with approx. 45,000 German and 50,000 Hungarian soldiers stationed inside. After a 14-week siege the city fell to the Soviets. Both parts of the capital (Buda on the West and Pest on the East), especially areas near the banks of the Danube, were heavily damaged or destroyed. The retreating Germans blew up every bridge spanning the Danube, as well as Buda Castle.

## **13 1956**

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

## **14 MDP**

Hungarian Workers' Party (Magyar Dolgozok Partja), the ruling Communist Party formed in 1948 with the merger of the communists and social democrats. Renamed MSZMP in 1956.

## **15 Nationalization of retail trade**

In February of 1948, the HCP published its principles on "further socialist development" of the country with the aim of the "total purge of plutocrats from the economy". Subsequent measures in the first round targeted wholesale merchants. Since there was no definite distinction between wholesale and retail trade, as there is between large- and small-scale industry for example, the nationalization process was characterized by high a level of chance. Parallel to the elimination of private trade, state trading companies were founded. From 1950 private wholesale trading was even be punishable by law. In the autumn of 1952, all retail businesses still existing were nationalized through by revoking all licenses for market vending, catering and the food trade.

## **16 Rakosi regime**

Matyas Rakosi was a Stalinist Hungarian leader of Jewish origin between 1948-1956. He introduced a complete communist terror, established a Stalinist type cult for himself and was responsible for the show trials of the early 1950s. After the Revolution of 1956, he went to the Soviet Union, where he died in 1971.

## **17 Nagy, Imre (1896-1958)**

As member of the communist party from 1920, he lived in exile in Vienna between 1928 and 1930, then in Moscow until 1944. He was a member of Parliament from 1944 to 1955, and the Minister of Agriculture from 1944 to 1945, at which time he carried out land reforms. He became Minister of the Interior from 1945 to 1946. After Stalin's death, during the period of 'thaw', he was elected Prime Minister from 1953 to 1955. He promoted his "New Course" which terminated internment, police courts and the relocation of the population, and began a review of the show trials while slowing down the forced industrialization at the same time bringing the standard of living up. He became PM again after the outbreak of the revolution on October 24, 1956 and maintained this post until his arrest by the Russians on November 22, 1956, after which he was kept in custody in Romania. He was then returned to Budapest and executed on June 16, 1958, with other prominent participants of the Revolution, after a secret trial.

## **18 Rajk, Laszlo (1909-1949)**

Hungarian communist politician, Minister of the Interior from 1946 to 1948 and Foreign Minister from 1948 to 1949. During his period as Minister of the Interior many religious, national and democratic institutions and organizations labeled as fascist and reactionary groups were banned or dissolved. He took an active part in launching the first show trials and he pitilessly fought against all alleged and real anti-Stalinist forces, but finally became a victim of his own machinery. He was arrested on false charges in 1949 during the purges initiated by Stalin's anti-Tito campaign. He was accused of crime against the state and treason, more precisely of having been a secret agent in

the 1930s. He was sentenced to death and executed in 1949. His show trial was given much publicity throughout the Soviet block. In March 1956 Rajk was officially rehabilitated.

## **19 Radio Free Europe**

The radio station was set up by the National Committee for a Free Europe, an American organization, funded by Congress through the CIA, in 1950 with headquarters in West Germany. The radio broadcast uncensored news and features from Munich to countries behind the Iron Curtain. The programs were produced by Central and Eastern European emigrant editors, journalists and moderators. The radio station was jammed behind the Iron Curtain, team members were constantly harassed and several people were killed in terrorist attacks by the KGB. Radio Free Europe played a role in supporting dissident groups, inner resistance and will of freedom in communist countries behind the Iron Curtain and thus it contributed to the downfall of the totalitarian regimes of Central and Eastern Europe.

## **20 Voice of America**

Radio organization under the control of the US Secretary of Foreign Affairs, began broad-casting in German in 1942. Later news, reports and entertaining programs were broadcast in various languages, among them Hungarian.

## **21 Six-Day-War**

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on June 5, 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

## **22 Arab-Israeli War of 1973**

or Yom Kippur War, or also known as the Ramadan War, was the fourth major military confrontation between Israel and Arab states. In May of 1967, Egypt blockaded the inlet to Akabai bay which led to Israel. Israel launched a surprise attack against Egypt, destroying the entire Egyptian air force still on the ground, then occupied the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, and opened the bay. It then occupied East Jerusalem and the entire Transjordan region, and invaded the Syrian Golan Heights. The war started on October 6, 1973, ending on the Syrian front on October 22, and on the Egyptian front on October 26.