

Erzsebet Bato At Orphanage



This is my mother, Erzsebet, in the orphanage she opened in Budapest after World War II. As far back as I can remember, my mother went to synagogue every Friday. She couldn't read Hebrew, but was a very good Jew. My mother was the director of a hospice for old women. It was established when millionaire women, all Buda Jews, made up their minds to buy a villa, which my mother had renovated to create a hospice. In 1945, she opened the orphanage instead of reopening the home for the elderly. There were masses of Jewish orphans. Those girls all learned a trade. Those who were school-age went to school; those who were too young went to kindergarten. She also turned a private flat into a synagogue. In 1950, the wave of nationalization reached the villa. When the Jewish orphanage was kicked out of the building, it got another site. And my mother arranged everything there, started all over again. The whole group of them, including Mother, moved there. In 1944, the Germans occupied the Jewish hospital and turned it into a war hospital. They insisted I stay as an interpreter, help them acquire supplies and work in the lab. I did not do it. My mother transformed another site into an emergency hospital. I worked there, until my Aunt Margit came to hide me in her home. She was spared because of her Christian husband. Immediately after the war, I went back to work at the Jewish charity hospital. I have been married three times. I quit working when I was 80. I have no family, but I am not alone.