

Istvan Domonkos's Swiss Safe-Conduct



This is my Swiss safe-conduct, issued in Budapest in 1944. They established that certain clothes-collecting company at that time. There were only a few young forced laborers in it beside me, the majority were elderly, wealthy civil Jews from Pest. I got to the kitchen, but I did many things. I was young, so I was the one they always asked to run here and there, do this and that. I didn't really take part in collecting clothes; I mainly did jobs for which I needed to use outside connections. Since I had a uniform, I could move around safely. The uniform was my poor brother's, because when he left with the 2nd Hungarian army in 1942 he had to go in civilian clothes. He left a worn military uniform at home and I put that on and I wore it until the end. Under the cloak I wore a drab summer uniform, it was quite worn out. The cloak was also quite shabby, which was good because the Arrow Cross men didn't check soldiers like this, they weren't interested. They thought the ones like this were probably coming from the front. They were more interested in those who

were dressed well. So I was never checked by any Arrow Cross men. And that was good, because I didn't have the appropriate paper. The Swedish and Swiss safe conduct didn't go with the worn uniform. I had an old mercenary book, which I had got as a forced laborer, but there was a ZS on it. [Editor's note: On the mercenary book they wrote a ZS (The Hungarian term for a Jew is zsidó, hence the letters ZS) with big red capitals, so that they would know at once who the person was.] If anyone had looked at it carefully, I could have been caught.