Gyorgyike Hasko

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Gyorgyike Hasko lives in Budapest. She has retired but she still works for the Jewish community. She speaks about her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren with love and there are pictures of them everywhere in the room.

My family background

I am Gyorgyike Hasko. I was born in Budapest on the 9th February 1932. When I was born I already had a brother, but my father had expected to have a second son. So, he said that the child would be called Gyuri regardless of the gender. At that time the name Gyorgyi was still a rarity, and the registrar asked my father what kind of name Gyorgyi was. Perhaps it was Gyorgyike! That's why I became Gyorgyike.

My father was born in Bekes in 1890. He died on the 23rd September 1979, four days after his 89th birthday. My father was a wonderful man. He spoke German and French and was a member of the generation that came of age at the beginning of the 20th century: incredibly erudite people, who spoke many languages and had had a lot of life experiences, and who also excelled in their chosen profession.

My father was a chemical engineer. He graduated from the Polytechnic University in 1912 and took part in the 1919 revolution. [see Hungarian Soviet Republic]1 He was Gyula Hevesi's class-fellow, who later immigrated to the Soviet Union. [Editor's note: Gyula Hevesi (1890–1970) – chemical engineer, academician, he was the vice president of the Hungarian Scientific Academy from 1960 until 1967. During the Hungarian Soviet Republic he was the commissar of social production, he emigrated from the White Terror.] My father also had to leave when the White Terror started. He started to work as a young engineer at the Flora Soap Factory, which was owned by a branch of the Manfred Weiss family. [Editor's note: The Flora First Hungarian Composite Candle and Soap Co. was founded in 1896] They also had a factory in Nagyvarad [today Oradea, Romania] or Kolozsvar

[today Cluj-Napoca, Romania], and my father first emigrated there. He got to Germany from there as a refugee. In Germany, he studied the analysis of precious metals and became a lapidarist. He wasn't a soldier during World War I, only a reservist, because the Flora Soap Factory was a defense plant.

He returned from emigration in 1923, but he was excluded from the Chamber of Engineers, and he couldn't work as an engineer. Then, his brother-in-law, who was a goldsmith, employed him. There was a small room in his workshop, and my father started chemical laboratory there, and started to work for the goldsmiths. In the meantime, he took the goldsmith master exam. The goldsmiths break the goods if the amalgam they choose to use is not the right mixture. For example, if they make a bracelet or a ring, they can only get a hallmark in it if the amalgam is exactly right. My father analyzed these amalgams. There were three or four individual engineers in Budapest who specialized in different aspects of this particular branch of goldsmith work. So if someone wanted a precious metal analysis done by someone who dealt with mineral oil, he sent him to my father, or if someone came to my father and asked for another kind of expertise, my father sent him to the one who dealt with that. People said that his brother-in-law was a lazy man, and so my father ran the workshop. Many excellent goldsmiths grew up under his hand that looked him up and respected him all his life!

My paternal grandmother was a very strict tiny little lady. Her father was a corn merchant in Bratislava [today Slovakia]. She didn't speak Hungarian well. They weren't religious, at least my grandmother wasn't. She wore a Gretchen haircut, she braided her hair and rolled up the braid on the top of her head, and she wore long black dresses with small pattern. She was 82 or 83 years old when in 1942, right at the beginning of the war, she fell ill of pneumonia, and as lucky as she was, it killed her. She didn't have to live through what came afterwards.

My grandmother had two brothers. They lived in Vienna [today Austria] and dealt with coins and antiquities. They lost everything, Needless to say, after the Anschluss 2. One of the uncles married a Swiss woman, who took him to Switzerland. He survived the war, but in poverty. He sometimes came home before the war, and I remember that he brought chocolate and oranges from Vienna, and bananas too. I was small at that time. We last heard news from him in the 1950s, he wanted to move back home, but he didn't live to see that. He must have been older than 80 at that time, but he still wrote a Hungarian letter with flawless spelling, though he had never lived in Hungary, he wrote a letter to my parents with beautiful italics. He died sometime around 1959 in Switzerland. The other brother died at a death camp.

My grandfather lived in Bekes, he was a stock wholesaler, a butcher. At that time they drove the herd to Vienna [today Austria] or Bratislava [today Slovakia], and sold their goods there. Perhaps this is how he met my grandmother. My father wasn't at school yet when they moved to Pest, and they had a butcher's shop where my grandmother sat all day long. I didn't know my grandfather. He died in 1927; my father nursed him for a year before that. As my father told me he was a very nice, Bohemian man.

My father had a sister, Margit, who was two years older. My grandfather didn't let her study, but they married her off to a jeweler, a goldsmith master, whose workshop was in Marocco Court. That house isn't there any longer. [Editor's note: The Marocco Court with two courtyards was the second largest apartment house of Pest: its rooms and first floor shops were small, most of the apartments

didn’t have any modern conveniences.] This uncle was a ring maker I think, because the goldsmiths divided up the job among each other: not all of them made necklaces, not all of them made caskets, etc. He was a ring maker and worked with a few apprentices. I liked to go there very much as a child, because in the first room, there were about three to four rooms in this workshop, there was a long counter, and behind the counter there was a drawer system, a big cupboard, and in all of the drawers there was a different kind of stone. These weren’t precious stones, but semi-precious stones, and one could play with them. Aunt Margit had a son who disappeared in the Don bend during the war.

My father traveled to Abbazia [today, Opatija, Croatia] by train in the early spring of 1928. Abbazia was the resort of the Hungarian middle-class of that time, and among other things it was famous because they were known for performing operations on deviated nasal septums. My father had that problem so he went there to take care of it. In the meantime, my maternal grandfather decided to take my mother, who was 22 years old, to Abbazi. She met my father on the train, and in May they already got married. My mother told me that my father looked like a university student even though he was already 38 years old.

My mother was born in 1906 in Miskolc. She completed four classes of middle school. After that she studied all kinds of things, as permitted by her father. She learned French and German; she learned to make hats, to sew, to sing, to play the piano and to dance; she used to go to balls, just like any decent middle-class girl, and when she was a teenager, she ran the administration of my grandfather’s workshop. My mother died at the age of 82 in May 1988.

My maternal grandfather was a coppersmith. He was born in Satoraljaujhely in 1879. He, as my mother told me, got a slap in the face from his father or mother at the age of fourteen, which he considered unfair, and because of this he left home. He worked all over Europe as a coppersmith, he traveled near and far, he was a wanderer. And though he was a coppersmith originally, he later became the first plumber handicraftsman in Miskolc. He plumbed the Miskolctapolca bathing establishment, he had the water laid on and installed heating in the surrounding castles. It is also relevant to mention in this story that there was economic depression several times. My grandparents lived in their own house one time, and there was a time when they didn’t have anything, because they had lost everything. My grandfather was a very cultured man; they were social democrats. [see MSZDP (Hungarian Social Democrat Party)]3 My grandmother told me, that in 1917, when there was the revolution they demonstrated in Miskolc and sang the International. [Editor’s note: The march of the international labor movement]. He died at the age of 54 in 1933.

My grandfather must have had a big family, but I don’t know how many siblings he had, because at the time of the big economic depression [see 1929 World Financial Crisis]4 in the 1930s, his relatives from Satoraljaujhely immigrated to America. First a boy emigrated, then he helped the other siblings and the parents emigrate, too.

My maternal grandmother was born in Sajoszentpeter sometime around 1884. He was only a little bit older than my father. My grandmother had several siblings. Their father was an innkeeper in Sajoszentpeter. My mother told me that her grandmother was a tiny little woman, but every day at dawn, by the time the inn opened, she had kneaded and baked fresh bread to serve to the guests. She worked very hard.

I don’t know where my grandmother and grandfather met, just that they got married and in 1906 my mother was born. But they had a baby boy, too, before, who bled to death when he was circumcised. My mother’s younger brother was born in 1908. He died in Buchenwald [today Germany]. Her other brother was seven years younger than my mother. Her older brother, when grandfather died in 1933, adopted my grandfather’s trade. To avoid competing with each other, my other uncle moved to Nyiregyhaza with his wife and became a handicraftsman there. Their child was ten months old when the Germans deported them to Auschwitz [today Poland] and burned them. My uncle had been a forced laborer for a long time then, and a prisoner of war. He had been at a prisoner of war camp, had petechial typhus and other diseases, and came home from the Russian captivity in 1947. He remarried and had three children, but after this he lived in Budapest until his death.

My grandmother always lived in Miskolc, and my older uncle, too. He only moved when he got married. But when he divorced he came back to my grandmother’s. I spent the summer at my grandmother’s in Miskolc many times. While my brother and I were very small, kindergartners, my mother took us to Grandma’s and we took many trips to the Bukk Mountains. At that time it took seven hours to get to Miskolc by passenger train. My parents would put me on the train at the Keleti [Railway Station] because the ticket was expensive. Transportation was expensive in general, so we traveled to many places on foot. A child had to know how to walk at that time. But, anyways, the train was seven hours long. My uncle came to pick me up. I remember him. This was during the war. There wasn’t rubber/elastic for panties anymore, but the panties had to be tied with shoe laces, or the shoes didn’t have leather sole anymore, but we had sandals with wooden soles and canvas uppers, I remember that I got them from my uncle. He took me everywhere; he was very nice to me.

My grandmother lived in a single story, three-bedroom-apartment. There was another apartment, too, in the house with an inner courtyard. Perhaps Grandma’s children supported her, as she was a housewife for her entire life. I don’t know if she was religious or not, but she managed a kosher household. I remember when my uncle mixed up the knife for the meat and for the milk, my grandmother stuck it in the ground to make it kosher again – and she used to go to the mikveh [ritual bath], too. I went to the shochet [kosher butcher] with her, too. He would cut the chicken; there was a round stone in a dark room, and the chicken hung on a hanger so that it would bleed out –as far as I remember, at least. And my grandmother bargained at the market place. We used to go shopping to the Buza Square market, and as a child from Pest I was ashamed, because the countrywoman sold the corn for four or ten fillers and my grandmother still bargained. I was very embarrassed.

Growing up

My parents got married in 1928 in Miskolc, in the courtyard, under a chupah, despite the fact that my paternal grandfather couldn’t give a big dowry. Because at that time, if someone married an officer, or an engineer, or a doctor, it was told how much the dowry should be. So that a doctor, for example, could open a doctor’s office. So the girl had to bring nice big money into the marriage. My grandfather couldn’t afford this, but my father was a gentleman, and anyway, he didn’t care. My mother brought bedroom furniture, which consisted of two beds, a wardrobe with hangers and one with shelves and two nightstands, and perhaps the kitchen furniture, too, and the dishes and

bedding, which she had sewed and embroidered, there was a monogram on everything at that time. And these were all taken to Pest, because my mother got married in Pest, where my father lived with my paternal grandmother in a three-bedroom apartment with all of the modern conveniences.

My brother was born in 1929, and three years later I was born. We lived on Kertesz Street 39. I don't know when my parents moved there, they didn't tell me. Anyhow, when I was born, they already lived on Kertesz Street in a middle class apartment, where there was a maid, too, of course. It was as absolutely normal thing for a middle class family to have a maid. These were girls from the country, they lived in a maid's room, they had a night out once a week, then they went to the funfair, and in the meantime they learned to cook, to clean the house. As a young woman I also had a maid for a long time.

We lived on Kertesz Street until I was three years old, but I don't remember anything. We lived together with my grandmother, and my mother made two wonderful Gobelin tapestries during her two pregnancies. One of them, which was on the dining table later, is still used by my daughter. The other one was a wonderful piano cover, and my mother gave that to one of our good friends when she didn't have a piano anymore. She could sew very well. My mother knew everything, she even sewed everything for my daughter and my son, coat, fur coat, everything. Mom was unbelievably creative. She learned to sing, to play the piano—she was a real enlightened young woman. But my paternal grandmother was a very strange creature and gave my mom a dog's life. My father got married so late because his mother didn't let him.

Both my brother and I were born at the Siesta, which is now the Oncological Institute. The Siesta was a private sanatorium, and since my father got married quite late, and my mother was much younger, my father thought that we had to be born at the best place, and this was that place. My mom was in a separate room there and very comfortable. I know that when my mother was pregnant with my brother, my father took her there two or three times because they always thought that she was going to go into labor. For me, she had already had the experience and knew when she was actually going into labor. She went in in the morning, and in an hour or an hour and I half I was born. At that time they made one stay at the hospital for eight days because they taught her how to nurse, and she rested a little bit.

None of them went to nursery school; it wasn't common at that time. I saw a day nursery somewhere on Izabella Street. The sister of one of our maids was a nurse there, and somehow we visited this nurse. All I remember is that I was a little girl and that the babies were in a room full of steam, among very bad circumstances. We can't even imagine such bad circumstances today.

In 1935 my father bought laboratory equipment and we moved to Paulay Street 12, but Grandma didn't come with us there. I lived there until the house was knocked down. Our apartment was a four-bedroom-apartment with a hall; it must have been about 160-170 square meters. There was a big room in it with a loggia and the big room, which they called the elegant room. The instruments and the chemical balances, which were delicate and couldn't be in acid steam, sat on a long marble table because that didn't wobble. There was also my father's desk, a big reference library, his instruments in a cabinet, but the piano, a table with armchairs and chairs were also there, so it was a very big room. We used the hall as a dining room. We held the Seder was there, as well as every other holiday. Two small hallways opened from there, the bathroom, the toilet and the pantry

opened from one of them, the kitchen and the maid’s room from the other one, and in the front there was the children's room and the bedroom. The children’s room was beautiful: up on the wall, where usually there are stripes, many dancing girls and boys in national costumes were painted in a wide stripe all around the room. I didn’t know how it got there, my mother told me later that her uncle, the poor thing who was also killed, was an artist, but he made a living as a painter and painted these kinds of figures on the walls of many castles in the environs of Miskolc, so the uncle must have been a known artist. When my mother repainted the children’s room, she always left this pattern around the wall. The outermost room was the chemical laboratory and my parents worked there. And there was a big pantry, where there was a tier stand for my mom’s jams and another shelf for my father’s stuff. In the children’s room and in the big room there was a tile stove, wood stove, in the laboratory and in the bedroom there wasn’t any heating.

We were raised in a Neolog, and not expressly religious family. We always had a Christmas tree with candles; it once lit on fire. There was a big scandal: my father threw a carpet or something else on it I think. I don’t remember whether we exchanged gifts, perhaps we gave some, since our maids were always Christian girls.

On Friday evenings Mom lit candles. We celebrated Chanukkah, which is also a very nice holiday, and we sang „Maoz tzur” and such songs. Purim is also very nice. We also observed Pesach. We observed it strictly, properly, as it is prescribed. My father made beautiful Seder nights! When we celebrated the holiday together, the first night was at our place, the second night at my father’s sister. The table was set beautifully, and there were matzah balls and the Seder plate. My brother read from the Hagadah, they lit candles, Dad put on his hat, and the children also got a sip of wine.

Several Jewish families lived in the house, all of which were religious to a different extent. But everyone observed Yom Kippur. In my opinion, there wasn’t anybody who could live without traditions and not fast on Yom Kippur and go to synagogue. I remember that we were very proud when they allowed us to fast for half a day, because it wasn’t obligatory for children. And when we were older and fasted a whole day, that was a big thing! There was a family in the house who put up a Sukkah on Sukkot in the end of the outside corridor, they decorated it and we sang Hebrew songs. I remember that we played with the spinning top, too, I don’t know on which holiday [Editor’s note: at Chanukkah], but I remember that we played for peanuts.

My father had very many books at home, and he told us a story every evening. I don’t know where he knew the stories from, but I know that I always asked for ‘The gray horse’. Daddy adored us, I was his lovey-dovey and Georgina. But my brother and I still call each other by nicknames: my brother is Pacsi, and I am Prucsi. We obviously got these names when we were little, and it is strange at this age, but we still use them.

We had a maid on Paulay [Street], too, with whom my mother went to the Hold Street market hall once a week. Sometimes I went along, too. Mom put on a hat, a pair of gloves. She didn’t just go out on the street, a woman couldn’t smoke and eat on the street, and nobody ate on the street as now. They did the shopping, carried the food home, and the maid cooked; my mother taught her to cook. And Mom baked bread every week. There was leaven put away, and there was rye flour and wheat flour in the pantry, and she kneaded a long and a round loaf of bread every week. She always put potatoes in it, too, it was very good bread, we ate it all week long. On the corner of Kaldy Street and Kiraly Street there was the baker, Kohn, they took it there to have it baked, and

they took the cholent there, too. My mother made it the traditional way, but nobody could make it as delicious as her mother. If Mom ate cholent at my grandmother's she couldn't eat for a week. And she told me that my father didn't know any other food but potatoes and beef. And my mother had a modern kitchen, so she made all kinds of vegetable dishes anyways, and miraculously, my father got used to them.

They preserved a lot of tomatoes and jams. They made everything themselves. Mom bought 100 kilograms of tomatoes and they cooked them in big pots, it sputtered, it burned their hand by the time they got done. Mom bought a goose every week, collected the fat in big cans, they cooked with goose-grease. The goose liver was a luxury, but there were cracklings, bread and dripping, bread and butter and bread and jam. At that time it was a miracle to be able to buy a roll! On Erzsebet Square they sold cocoa and milk in two-decilitre bottles, it had a paper top, they punched it and one could drink it with a straw; to get that with a croissant was a miracle! We took the snack to school in a snack bag: it was either bread and butter, or bread and drippings, or bread and jam. I don't remember pork or sausage. There wasn't any lard at all, that's why mom collected the goose fat. And after the war if there wasn't fat, they cooked with oil.

The washwoman came once a month I think. She went up to the laundry, where there was a cauldron, a wash basin, soap and scrubbing brush, and she could rinse the clothing in big bowls. Next to the washroom there was a room for ironing, and the attic was divided up among the apartments, just like the cellar was for the fire wood. She could lay out the clothes there. This division of the attic ended when the bombings and air raids came, and we couldn't lay out the clothes there anymore since there couldn't be anything flammable in the attics. Otherwise there was an drying rack in the kitchen or in the bathroom, I don't remember exactly. And when in a couple days the clothes dried, the washwoman came and ironed them. They put a blanket on the kitchen table. In the beginning, she ironed with a charcoal-iron. Later, she ironed with a gas iron. The distributor could be taken off the gas, and the iron could be put in its place; its end was open, and the gas heated it through. There were two irons, and they used them alternately. They first sprinkled water on the clothes, as it should be done, and they ironed the bigger pieces. In our bathroom the bathtub stood on posts and there was a gas boiler that was the property of the Gas Company. There was gas both in the bathroom and the kitchen.

We had a sewing machine. The seamstress came once or twice a year and she sewed everything up—housedresses, aprons and sheets. At that time sheets were still sewed at home. And they didn't throw anything away, but they sewed up what was torn or had a hole. They fixed the worn neck-band so that they cut off a piece from the bottom of the shirt in the back, they sewed the new neck-band out of that, and they replaced the cut piece with another piece of material. The washwoman and the seamstress always ate at the family where they worked. The tinker also showed up once or twice a year, with a big wooden box on his back. He was a Slovak and he wandered, went about the country. He shouted into the courtyard: 'here is the tinker', and he mended the pans and pots right away. Sometimes beggars and street performers also came into town; at those times the women wrapped the coins in newspaper and threw them down from the outside balcony. I remember that my parents bought melons so that the melon vendor stood in front of the house with a flat wagon drawn by horses, and people could buy from him there. And the Paulay Street was called 'leather' street, because it was full with tanneries, all the tan-yards had a spot there.

My mother had a friend from her maidenhood, a man from Miskolc, who was an excellent dressmaker, and he had a big apartment with a salon on Deak Ferenc Street. He was a very expensive dressmaker, but he sewed for my mother at a discount price because it was an old friendship. I was there with my mother when I was a little girl. I enjoyed it very much, because he had an escritoire, in which there were some pillars if one opened it, and that intrigued me. There weren't dolls in it, I imagined them there, and that absorbed me until my mom's dress fitting was finished.

My mom used to go a hairdresser's, Bandel, which was at the beginning of Andrassy Avenue. This was a hairdressing salon and there was a dryer and curler. My mother had an updo for a while, not a bun, but her hair was simply put up and there were some curls on the top; she was stylish, of course. She had a ticket for combing, she went to Bandel every morning and they combed her, and when mom took me along they cut my hair, too. I had short hair and there was a ribbon in it. This Bandel opened the shop after the war, too. I remember it was spring, nice weather, and I went there to have my hair washed, and I sat on the sidewalk, they put a chair in front of the shop, and my hair dried there, because there wasn't gas or electricity yet. Next to the hairdresser's there was Malvin Gelb's flower shop. Malvin Gelb ordered exotic flowers, too, and she got poisoned from one of the flowers and she died.

My mother also used to go to balls. There were many goldsmiths and they had a serious social life, and there was a goblet ball every year. The goldsmiths' club and a big ballroom were in the big corner house across from the Dohany Street synagogue. They held the goblet dinner there every year. In fact, the first ball of my life was a goblet ball right after the war. I don't know who sewed my dress, perhaps my mother did, it was a checked gored skirt, with checked waistcoat, and with a short sleeved red silk blouse. I remember that it had heavy glass buttons. That kind could be found. But my mom had beautiful evening dresses, and my father had a tuxedo. And when they got dressed for an occasion like this, we children liked it very much, because the tuxedo shirt is firm in the front, we called it 'drumbelly', and my father wore a cat-tie [bow-tie] with it. My parents had a busy social life, as my father had many friends.

I don't remember whether they used to go to the theatre or not, but it's probable that they did. In the meantime my father experimented with oil-nut and castor-oil in the laboratory. He worked for the goldsmiths, but his original profession was working with vegetable fats and oils, and he kept doing research in that field. He designed oil-presses. I remember that he designed one in Beregszasz [today Ukraine], too. At one of his experiments he got poisoned, and since there wasn't a good medicine for that at that time, he became deaf. So he lost music, but my mother used to go to concerts at the Vigado. And when they didn't allow the Jewish artists to work, the OMIKE, the National Hungarian Jewish Cultural Association, was founded. The theatre was in the Goldmark Room, these were sceneryless performances, like a concert, and we went to these, we had a subscription. My mom took us regularly, that's how I saw Fidelio [Beethoven], or heard it, to be more exact, so that's how my mother got us used to classical music.

Besides that we went to hike to the Buda Mountains, to Pilis or to Borzsony every Sunday. We didn't care if it rained or if it was windy, we went to hike in boots and warm stockings. We went with the family, and we went in groups, too. At that time there was an active tourist life, the goldsmiths also had a sports club, and we went every Sunday, 50-60 of us, or even more. I think everyone was Jewish, and I'm sure there were others, too. I don't know, but there were many of us.

There were many children, too, and we got along vert well. The restaurant in Budakeszi, where we ate bean soup or stock many times, and which was called Mocsnek at that time, I don’t know what it is called today, still exists. There were hostels, the Kevelynyereg hostel, for example, which I liked very much, unfortunately that doesn’t exist anymore. The hostels were made by tourists carrying the bricks up with their own hands and building them. The administrator of the Nagykevely lived there, so when Northern Hungary [First Vienna Dictate]5 was reannexed, my mom went with that group, the administrator was the guide, and they toured the part of the Carpathian Mountains, which is Subcarpathia now. It is difficult to imagine that generation, the many things they had the time for and the many things they did. My father used to go to hike in the Tatras, he also skied, and he taught us to ski when we were still very young. We skated and skied. There was a rink at Sziget Street, where there was a tennis court in the summer, and in the winter we skated there.

My parents didn’t used to go abroad before World War II, only my father went to Vienna [today Austria] every now and then, if he needed some pot or chemicals for the laboratory.

We, the children, used to go on holiday in the summer. Dad didn’t, because he worked, and my mother worked, too, because when Dad equipped the lab, he taught my mother and she worked with the chemical balance. But, when we were young, Mom took us to my grandmother’s in Miskolc. She didn’t take us to the Balaton. We weren't allowed to go there because she said it was the hotbed of polio. I learned to swim at the bath of the Electric Works in Miskolc. My brother also learned to swim in Miskolc, but he learned on Varoshaz Square in a swimming bath. He learned to swim so that there was a pole, there was a rope on it, and on the rope there was a strap, they put the child in it and shouted at him to swim. I didn’t learn this way because I learned somewhat later and in a somewhat more modern time. They taught us so that the coach threw a lot of teaspoons into the water, and we had to get them out. That way, he made us get used to swimming with open eyes, and then somehow we learned to swim. Later we went swimming many times. One time, I think when I was eight years old, when the Tungsram swimming-pool was brand new, I got terrible sunstroke there. I had a fever and they even had to take me to the hospital.

When we were older we spent the summer in Romhany. Our maid was from Romhany, and my mother sent us there with her. Her father didn’t live, but her mother did, and they had a house on the main street of Romhany. It was a farmhouse with big trashing-floor and stacks. They were farmers; she had several siblings, so it was a nice big family. We didn’t go barefoot, our sole didn’t endure it, but we wore sandals, though everyone else in the village went barefoot, except when they went to church on Sundays. But after a while we could also go barefoot on the stubble. It was strictly forbidden to play in the stacks, because it was dangerous, but we still ran up and down between the stacks. Our maid wore many skirts, everyone in the village wore skirts, they had a very nice national dress. On Sundays the girls, who had braids with a long ribbon at the end, walked along the street arm-in-arm, singing, and the boys walked behind them in boots and black trousers. When my mother was also there she wore national costume from there, and we did, too. I had a national costume Romhany, I also had an aigrette, and when I was a little girl at the end of the school year, on the 15th March we wore national costumes. We spent three or four summers in Romhany, but then the maid got married and we didn’t go anymore. The maids always got married after working for us.

On the 20th August my parents took my brother and I home so that we would get accustomed to town life again and forget that rural accent, because we did learn this and that, what wasn't appropriate. So we got to Zugliget, to my father's sister and grandmother for two weeks. We didn't like this grandmother of ours, this tiny little hideous woman, and we didn't like being there at all, but we had to stay there, we had no choice. When we got used to the town again, we went to school.

This villa was owned by my father's sister and her husband. It had a beautiful, neat garden. All along the path there were beautiful roses. There were a lot of fruit trees in the garden, and my aunt, who was a very good housewife, preserved the compote by adding sugar, putting it in closed jars, and leaving it in the kitchen, so that it would get sun.Nothing she made ever went bad.

When we were older we spent a couple summers with my mother in Nagymaros, because Dad sent Mom on vacation from the lab, and we rented a room there. My mom cooked there, and we hiked in Borzsony and Pilis, we always went on trips with my mom, sometimes there was even a guest child with us. We used to go to the Danube, to the beach, and sometimes my father came there for the weekend. Later I spent the summer at my grandmother's in Miskolc, but my brother didn't come anymore, because he was a big boy already, and he went to Fodor. Fodor had a sports school on the Svab Hills, where the boys also lived in and fenced there, and did all kinds of sports you can imagine. And my brother often spent the summer there, until he became a member of the Vorosmarty Scout Troop, which took up all his free time.

My brother and I completed the four classes of elementary school on Szent Istvan Square. I hated the teacher very much, she even beat us. She got angry with one of the girls, and she hit her so hard that her nose started bleeding. We also went to Jewish religion classes, everyone had religion class. After elementary school both of us went to high school. My brother went to Kolcsei High School, which was a boys' high school, girls couldn't go there. They made a Jewish class of 30-40 people, and there was a separate Christian class.

When I started high school, I could only enroll in the Jewish high school on Abonyi Street. But there was so many of us there that the Jewish community rented a space fora private girls' school from a woman called Piroska Lazar. There was a corner house on the corner of Szemelynok Street. Now there is a park in front of it. At that time, it was closed off space. In the summer we could play tennis there, and in the winter we could skate. This Piroska Lazar rented I don't know how many apartments on the first floor and she also lived there. I don't know how old she might have been. I was once in her apartment. She had cats and all kinds of soft furniture. I went to that school for two years. There were quite sad schoolrooms, as far as I remember. The floor was gray, I think, because these were separate rooms each with a separate entrance, and they made a gym out of one of these rooms. But we had teachers like Rozsa Peter, who had been a university professor, but she couldn't teach because she was Jewish, and Klara Feuer, who taught geography, so there were quite excellent teachers there. [Editor's note: Klara Fejer (Feuer) (1911–1958): teacher, historian. She did valuable work as a textbook writer]

At that time uniforms had to be worn strictly at every school. Every school had its own uniform, and we couldn't go in normal clothes. We got a beating even already in the first grade, at the age of eleven, if we didn't have a uniform. It was a navy blue pleated skirt, there were buttons on the blouse, and the skirt had to be buttoned as well. Tights didn't exist at that time, and when the

weather was nice we wore knee socks, and when it wasn't, we wore ribbed stockings, with garter, we had to clip them on. We hated it so much! And if we wore holes in them at the knee, they darned them. We wore high shoes, and our hairdo couldn't be whatever we wanted either; it had to be either pigtails or normal short hair. At elementary school there wasn't a uniform yet, but we had to wear an apron. We had luster aprons, usually navy blue, and they were decorated with red and white dots. It was pull-on, and tie-belt in the back. It was obligatory even in high school.

For the boys it was obligatory to wear a cap, otherwise they wore knee-breeches in the winter and shorts in the summer. We had a navy blue barrette, and there was a shield shaped badge on it, on white base ILG, Israelite Girl's High School, I don't remember exactly, but the letters were navy blue perhaps. We had a light striped blouse, with navy blue cuffs and collar, and it was specified what kind of white cordon had to be on it. Every school had a different cordon, and every girls' school had different cuffs and collar.

We went to the synagogue every Saturday morning. We went to the big synagogue on Dohany Street. [see Dohany Street synagogue]6. We also used to go there during elementary school. The high school boys went to the Rumbach. [Editor's note: The Rumbach Street synagogue was midway between the strict Orthodoxy and the Neolog conception.]. We had a young rabbi, I don't know his real name, we only called him Lobele. He married one of the girls who graduated at that time, which intrigued us, as little girls, very much. He taught Ivrit [modern Hebrew]. We also knew biblical Hebrew, so we could translate the prayers.

At home we had separate German classe. First our teacher was a tante [German for aunt], then a fräulein [German for young woman]. The tante wasn't very young anymore and she didn't speak Hungarian. She was at our place every day and spoke German with us. I was still a kindergartner, and I learned German before I could read. She brought story books with illustrations, she pointed at the illustrations, and that's how I learned the words. And when the tante left a girl came, I don't remember her name anymore, only that we called her fräulein, 'Frajli'. She was a young Austrian woman, she was at our place for one or two years, and like every child, we were quite cheeky with her, because we answered her in Hungarian. She didn't speak any Hungarian either, but we still learned German well. My mother didn't play the piano often at home anymore, but they wanted us to learn to play the piano. Needless to say, we didn't practice as we should have. But as the situation turned for the worse, all the normal things slowly ceased. The excursions, too. In the beginning we still went to the Buda mountains, but there were Arrow-Cross men 7 there, too, and then we didn't dare to go there anymore.

During the war

When they first bombed Budapest [The bombing of Budapest]8, they wanted to bomb the Nyugati [Railway station], but the first bomb fell on one of the houses on Podmaniczky Street, Lajos Zilahy's villa on the Rozsadomb. This was a big sensation at that time, so all the people from Budapest went up to see what the bombed Zilahy villa looked like. My parent's bedroom was right next to the children's room. That night I woke up because of the noises and went over to tell them that there were bombings. My parents told me to go back to bed because they weren't bombing. But they did. That was the first, and after that we had to go to the cellar more and more often, and I was very frightened.

When they started bombing Budapest regularly my parents sent me to my father's sister to Zugliget for a while because I was very frightened. I was there for one or two weeks. But there was a large car garage in the area and they wanted to bomb that, too, so then it was just the same, so they brought me home.

The high school's air-raid shelter wasn't big enough for all the children, so those who lived nearby ran home. They always alerted us ahead of time. When they announced it in the radio 'Achtung, Achtung, Lichtspiele, Krokodil gross', it meant that there was going to be an air-raid alarm. [Editor's note: The 'Lichtspiele', 'Krokodil gross' etc. were the codes of the German aerial defense. Only the initiate army knew what these words meant. The alarm applied to the army and military planes, but they didn't announce air raid alarm. They announced understandingly what applied to the population.] There were several kinds of sirens. When they signaled that there was going to be an air-raid alarm, it had a screaming sound, and when they called the air-raid alarm off it was a more calm blast. Regardless of this the caretakers had a piece of rail hung up in the courtyard, and they beat this so that the inhabitants of the house would hear that there was an air-raid alarm, and then they had to go down into the cellar. Because I didn't live there, they had to provide me some kind of an air-raid shelter nearby.

On Hollan Street 3, where we later lived in a yellow star house, a good friend of my father's had an underground home on the street side. They lived on the 5th floor, he was also a chemist and one time, he was fumigating his apartment of bedbugs. At that time, the apartments in Budapest were full with bedbugs, which were impossible to get rid of. People had their apartment fumigated every year, but there still were bedbugs. Fumigating meant that they had to leave the apartment, which was hermetically closed, they let cyanogen into it, they aired it after 24 or 48 hours, and then they could clean and go back into the apartment. Even so, my mother worked very hard to get rid of the bedbugs: she took all the beds in pieces with the maid every week, because these old beds were dismountable. She sprinkled them with kerosene, cleaned all the gaps with a piece of wire, took off all the pictures, so it was a terrible work, and the bedbugs were still there. They couldn't get rid of them until the end of the war. That underground dwelling on Hollan Street was the workshop and storage of my father's friend, and during air-raid alarm I had to run over there from school. It wasn't very far, but I can't even tell you how frightened I was!

I didn't even go for two full years to that school, because in the second year, on the 19th March, the Germans marched in. [see German invasion of Hungary [19th March 1944]]9. We were at school on Sunday morning -- we went in two shifts, because there wasn't enough room for all of us at the same time: one week we went in the morning, and the other week in the afternoon. On Friday afternoon we couldn't go to school because the Sabbath started, so we made it up on Sunday morning. I was on duty in the class that week. The children left the room during the recess, I opened the window overlooking the Danube. I looked out, and I don't know how I knew, but I knew that the Germans were marching in and I knew that I had to hate them. I was watching how the Germans marched on the lower embankment, and I knew definitively that there was trouble.

The news that the Germans came in started to spread among the teachers in seconds, and they quickly sent us home. When they marched in, a serious army made its entry into the city, scouting airplanes flew up in the air in order to frighten or to protect the army. They were black as far as I remember. They flew close to the ground. It was so horrible that by the time I got home I was shaking! All along the Basilica to the Paulay Ede Street on foot, I can't even describe that fear! My

father was deaf, he sat at his desk, and the phone was next to him, but he didn't hear the doorbell. I went home and stood at the entrance in the outside corridor, these airplanes above me, and I rang in vain. It is relevant to mention in this story that that morning my mother, the maid, and my brother got on a train and went to Kiskunfelegyhaza to take things to the relatives - to save I don't know what kind of things from the bombing.

They left from the Keleti [Railway Station], as far as I remember, and they came back on the same day by train, but the identity checks had already started, they started collecting people. But somehow they got away somehow and made it home. But during the day they weren't at home. I went down to the first floor where a family from Transylvania lived. At that time it was customary that a widow rented a big house and made a living by renting the rooms. I went there in despair and they called my father on the phone, because he could hear the phone. That's how he let me in.

I told Dad that the Germans had marched in. Then he called one of his friends and he also told my father that they had really marched in. Then we worried until the evening, until my mother, brother and the maid came home. Then the events happened as quickly as lightning: they disconnected the phones in the Jewish apartments, we had to surrender our radios, and before long we had to go to a yellow star house. Paulay 12 didn't become a yellow star house, so we had to move. They quickly issued the second grade report card at school, because this was an incomplete year, and there was no school afterwards. I remember that when it really started to be an awful world, my father took his gun, he had a gun as it turned out, and some communist books, he packed them in a small package, and we went and threw it in the Danube at the Chain Bridge.

We lived in a yellow star house at my father's friend on Hollan Street 3 in a room on the 5th floor. Another couple also lived there in the bedroom, who had been assigned there just like us. Besides having to wear a yellow star, we could also only go out on the streets at certain times. [Editor's note: from the end of June 1944 it was allowed to leave these houses only between determined hours]. Nobody could work so everyone lived off his provisions. And we, the children, played with the other children in the house. Since we couldn't go on the street we always played indoors. And once they take my parents from there. The Gestapo took them sometime in August. I was going upstairs, and two men, in hat and raincoat, as they show it in the movies, were taking my parents out. I tried to stop them. The two men didn't hurt me, they just swept me away. And then, as it is in the movies, they took my parents up to the Majestic.

The Majestic and the Mirable are still there on Svab-hegy, after the Szechenyi-hegy stop to the left. These were two condominiums, and under them there was a big valley. There were two houses next to each other, this was their name, and they were condominiums, with their own flatlets, where settled men occasionally went up. One of our acquaintances owned a flatlet there. The Germans drove everyone away and occupied the house. One of our acquaintances, a lawyer, also owned a flatlet there. Well, the Gestapo occupied it and drove the habitants away. They took prisoners there. They collected them, put them in empty rooms, and interrogated them. I think the women were in one house, and in the other one the men, as my parents told me. My brother, who is three years older than me, was a skinny child at that time. One couldn't tell that he was fifteen, and he went up there. I don't know what he packed up and took to my parents, since they hadn't taken anything with them. Since that was a hill, one could enter these houses on a small concrete bridge, and he went up there, and I don't know what he did, but he managed to see them. Because

he left me at home, saying that he wouldn't take me along, because I was only twelve years old.

My parents were there for a while, and then they phoned us that they were at the Pauler Street police station for a night because they were going to be transferred to an internment camp, which was where the Rabbinical Seminary is now. [Editor's note: The German army took several members of the Jewish social and financial elite from Pest to the prison in the building of the Rabbinical Seminary, from where they were taken to the Kistarcsa internment camp after 1-2 months.][see Kistarcsa internment camp]10. Some policeman phoned us or sent us word, I don't remember. Then we packed some things my parents had asked for in a fiber trunk. We stayed at those friends, but they didn't really care for us. But we weren't so helpless, lost children, because we were very athletic, and we weren't the kind who couldn't do anything on their own -- especially my brother wasn't.

At that time half of the Marguerite Bridge still existed, or the entire bridge, I don't remember, but we somehow went over to Buda. [Editor's note: The undermined Marguerite Bridge exploded on the 4th November 1944 because of an accident.] There were still open platforms on the streetcar, and as the streetcar turned at the Deli [Railway Station], our trunk fell off the streetcar. We were very upset, but someone picked it up and brought it back to us. We went to the police station. It had quite a desolate courtyard, and my parents were allowed to come out to the courtyard, we gave them the trunk, and then the next day they were taken to the Rock Szilard, to the present Rabbinical Seminary.

They were there for a couple days, I don't know for how long, but it wasn't a long time. I think their imprisonment was over within a month, and they were going to be taken to Kistarcsa where they would have been put on trains. But before they were transported Wallenberg turned up, and gave all of them -- all the prisoners, I don't know how many of them were there, but quite a lot, as I saw it -- a Swedish Schutzpass [protection]. And my parents came home one day.

Why did the Gestapo take my parents? My parents hid part of their valuables in the villa of one of my father's friends, an architect. This villa was located on Svab hegy, which was an Arrow Cross neighborhood. When they were bombing Budapest, an American pilot jumped out of his crashing plane and got stuck on a tree in the villa's garden. When the inhabitants of the neighborhood wanted to harm this pilot, the architect's wife stood up for him. As a result, their house was searched and my parents' valuables were found. The architect's wife got frightened and she told them that she had hidden my father's laboratory appliances and my mother's jewelry. That's why the Gestapo took them. The American pilot survived and the architect's wife was decorated after the war.

My parents came home with the Swedish Schutzpass, and from somewhere they got hold of a Swiss Schutzpass, too. The Swiss one was was fake, of course, and then a short time passed until the proclamation in October. [see Horthy's proclamation]11 At the news of the proclamation there was enormous happiness, we took off the yellow stars from the coats and threw them down from upstairs.Bbut in the afternoon we could already see -- from the 5th floor of Hollan Street 3 we could see the Szent Istvan Boulevard very well, the long lines of people being driven by Arrow Cross men. And the Arrow Cross men came to the house, too, and they took all the men and women to the race track [see Tattersal]12, where there was some kind of a concentration place. They took my parents and my brother, too, and other teenage boys from the house, but they

believed that my brother wasn't fourteen yet, because he was a skinny child, so he came home. At the same time there was a very cute boy in the house, who was one year younger than my brother -- or maybe he was just fourteen, I don't remember -- but he was a well-grown, muscular kid, and they didn't believe that he was fourteen, so neither him nor his mother came home. But my brother came home, and so I wasn't alone. Perhaps I wouldn't have survivied if he hadn't come home.

Then they deported my parents, the women and men separately from the Tattersal. My father told me, and my mother did too, that they put some blanket on the ground, and everyone had to put there his watch, ring, necklace or anything he had. The Arrow Cross men took everything from them. Arrow Cross men guarded them, as far as I remember. I don't know where they took my mother, perhaps to Szentendre island, where they made them dig roadblocks, so if the Russians came they wouldn't be able to go through. My father dug in Pocsmegyer. Needless to say, they were wearing their own clothes, and I don't know what they ate, or what they were given to eat.

My brother and I stayed at Hollan Street 3. One day the Arrow Cross men came again, and they made the children and the old people line up under the gate. It might have been November or December, I don't know, but we were wearing winter coats. We were lining up there when my father arrived. Because they accepted one of his Schutzpasses 13 and let him come home. Otherwise he was too old to be a normal soldier, that why he wasn't a forced laborer either. [see Forced labor]14. Then he looked that they were taking us and he couldn't do anything. They took the little children, too, and as far as I know they took them somewhere on Kossuth Lajos Square, then all of them died of hunger. [Editor's note: According to Laszlo Karsai this is probably not true, because several reminiscences testify that during liquidations, Arrow Cross men let the women with babies and small children leave the Obuda brick factory, and even the death marches.] They took a little child from the house, too, that's how I know. And they took us to one of the brick factories in Obuda, somewhere on Becsi Avenue. The rain came pouring down, there was a lot of mud, and they drove us up to one of the Hoffman annular kilns, where they burn the bricks. We spent the night up there. They let us down to the courtyard once or twice, we could relieve ourselves on the ground. We were there for two days. They didn't give us any food -- nothing at all.

There were many of us there, I don't know how many, old people and children. My brother and I sat on the ground. I have to add that because we were tourists and scouts we had our scout outfit in our backpacks, and we wore hiking boots and winter coats. Children wore Bocskai coats at that time -- we wore that, the yellow star, and a cap. [Editor's note: Textile coat with black frogging, fashionable in the 1930s, which was mostly characteristic of the Hungarian middle class, and it signified the success of the Jewish assimilation.] The cap was warm because it covered the ears. I had just baked a bread before they took us. My maternal grandmother had taught me how to knead with leaven when I spent the summer at her place in Miskloc. It was quite doughy, but it was still bread. We took this with us and my brother and I calculated for how many days would that be enough, so we ate very little of that so that it would last longer.

On the second or the third day they took us to the brick factory across the street, at the Becsi Avenue, where there was a big courtyard and where people stood in long queues for hours. One couldn't fall out of line. We just kept standing, and in the evening they forced us into the brick factory. We were lucky, because we got into a burning room, and it never got so cool so that it would be cold there. In the morning they took us out again in the courtyard. The weather was very

nice that day, and we just stood there in a long line, three or four in a row, in compact rows, round and round, and needless to say, it was forbidden to lose one's spot. It was morning already when my brother noticed that a group of the elderly and of children were gathering at the gate. He told me that we should go to that gate. I told him that he was stupid, that they would shoot us if we fell out of line. But he said that he was still going to go there. He did, in fact, leave the line, and I followed him like a dog. A police officer stopped him and asked where he was going. He said that he was going where the elderly and the children were. And he just waved his hand, and he didn’t even care about me, because I was a little girl, and I also went there with my brother. We kept standing there. There were 100 of us at the most. They then left a policeman in charge of the group the group and this policeman escorted us. But we didn’t know in which direction he was going to go, outward on Becsi Avenue or towards the city. And to our surprise, we set off towards the city.

I have just heard it after so many years, that this rescue was organized by the police superintendent of the 8th district. I didn’t even know that it wasn’t an accident. A policeman took us to Pest across Margit Bridge, and he told us to tell him where to escort us. At the beginning of Pozsonyi Avenue, at the bridge head, an Arrow Cross kid in a cloak and with a machine-gun stopped us and started to get annoyed. He was annoyed because there was an Arrow Cross house on Szent Istvan Boulevard and they tormented and killed many people there. But this policeman told him to go to hell, because he had to escort this company and he should leave him alone. He let us go, and the policeman started to see us home. And there were fewer and fewer of us as people went into the houses.

We arrived at Hollan Street 3 and we went up to the 5th floor. My father was just boiling potatoes. He was very happy to see us, needless to say, and we each got a plateful of potatoes. It was dry, and we got such cramps from it, because we hadn’t eaten for practically three days- that I will never forget! We had such terrible cramps because of that little potato.

My mother had not come home when the Arrow Cross man appeared and told us that the house was going to be a Swiss protected house, and those who didn’t have a Swiss Schutzpass had to leave. My father showed them our Swiss Schutzpass, but they said that it was fake and tore it. I have to add that when my father had seen the Arrow Cross take us a couple of days earlier, he had hurried off to the Swedish embassy, or wherever they issued the Swedish Schutzpasses, so that there would be a Schutzpass on our name, too, not only theirs.

But then we had to leave. We stood there with my brother on Katona Jozsef Street in front of some shop window blinds which were down. We had packs and there was a duvet or a comforter in them, and waited for my father to come and tell us where to go. It was quite unpleasant to stand there. Then he came for us and we went to Katona Jozsef Street 10/a, which became a Swedish protected house. We got a bedroom on the 4th floor, in the apartment of a lawyer. People lived in the other rooms. In this house there were beautiful luxurious apartments, real middle-class apartments, and this apartment was also very nice. The kitchen door and the outdoor balcony overlooked the Vig Theater, and their big dining room and the living rooms partly overlooked Katona Jozsef Street. The lawyer and his family were on telakh. They were hiding with fake papers and we never met them. Their personal belongings were jammed into the dining room. And to our luck, the pantry was full with jam, with orange jam for example, because they were wealthy people. It was also a novelty for me that one could go into the bedroom through the bathroom, too, and the entrance of the

bathroom wasn’t divided with a curtain, but with a sliding door.

The daughter of a goldsmith lived on the ground floor in a flatlet, her husband was a forced laborer, and she also remained there with her ten-month-old daughter. One could enter that apartment from the courtyard, which was like a garden, the window overlooked the courtyard. If there was an air-raid alarm, we didn’t go to the cellar, because that was packed, but to this apartment. The house had a balcony on the top. We knew the family that lived there and us children played there.

During that time there it was Christmas. My father had a very decent customer, who lived in the house where the baker Glasner lived, at the corner of Hollan Street and Szent Istvan Boulevard. Glasner baked throughout, during the assault, too. It was a big deal because there wasn’t any food! My father’s customer was so nice that he followed our status, and at Christmas he showed up with cocoa and a milk loaf. I can’t tell what that meant at that time!

We had been there for quite a while, when one day my mother turned up. They were being driven outwards on Becsi Avenue. My mother was a very cool, athletic woman. She was 38 years old, and as they drove them outwards [see Death marches to Hegyeshalom]15, mom wanted to flee already at Almasfuzito. She exchanged her boots for a pair of high heel shoes, or I don’t know what, and she wanted to run away, but she was caught. They didn’t shoot her, because they usually shot those who fell out of line or couldn’t walk, but they drove her back, and she walked for another couple kilometers. They arrived at a watchman’s house. Unfortunately I don’t know the name of the woman, so I can’t recommend her to Yad Vashem [to be named a Righteous Among the Nations]. I think she was called Mariska. She was a young woman, her husband was a railwayman, and she saw when my mom and two others fell out of line. And this Mariska hid them from sight as quick as lightning. She took them down to a cellar. Her husband didn’t even know that she was hiding three people. When her husband went to work she brought them food and I don’t know what else. They were there for two or three weeks, I don’t know for how long, when Mariska collected some clothes and papers from her relatives in the surrounding Swabian villages. And Mariska stopped a German truck, and my mother and the other two came home to Pest on the back of that truck. They didn’t get caught. They arrived to Pest, my mother went to Hollan Street. She was told we weren't there, and that were on where she was told Katona Jozsef Street. Mom came there, and I never saw my father cry before or after that, but he cried when mom turned up. I must add, that this Mariska used to come to our place to Pest for years, and my mom gave her everything she could. They were simple, honest people. I only know about them that they lived in a watchman’s house at [Almas] Fuzito. I don’t know anything else.

From then on it was the four of us. And we were in the Swedish protected house. Well, Wallenberg was a great organizer. He brought food in our house, food! I saw frozen food for the first time in my life; we didn’t even know until then that frozen food existed. Frozen peas: that was a wonder, peas in the winter, that’s why I remember. And the pantry was full with jam. There was no sugar, so we could use that instead of sugar. In the meantime the weather turned so cold that there was an ice plug in the toilet, since there wasn’t any heating. And on the 24th the assault started, they blockaded Budapest. They didn’t shoot the international ghetto, they didn’t bomb it. If it was hit , it wasn’t on purpose, and during the night there was an announcement with a loud speaker in Hungarian from the Russian troops. [Editor’s note: The protected houses into which they moved the Jews who had Schutzpasses issued at the embassies of the neutral countries were in the international ghetto. They officially allowed about 15000 Jews to move to protected houses, but in

reality several 10000 people lived in this ghetto, many of them with fake safe-conducts.] We could hear it clearly in the airshaft, people stood there and listened where the Russians were. We slept on a double bed in the bedroom. There was a wall behind us, and one day all the plastering fell on the bed because of a shot. But we we weren't in it because it was during the day. But my parents got frightened and we moved to the first floor. At that time everyone lived in cellars, but we went to the apartment of one of our acquaintances. Our window, overlooked the courtyard. But, it was stuffed with mattresses, because there was a mandatory blackout. There was also no heating and the windows had broken. I don't know how we got light, with candles or lanterns, but I learned at that time that if wax fell on something it could be removed with hot iron and blotter.

Wallenberg and his group also had us vaccinated. There was a doctor in the house, too, a young man. We got a vaccine in the breastbone against typhus and I don't know what disease, which we could have got because of the starvation and dirt.

The Germans had an arsenal in the cellar of a house somewhere around Szemere Street, and that exploded one night. There was a tremendous detonation. The mattresses fell out of the window, the coats from the hall flew into the room, then out in the courtyard, and it seemed as if a big flame had hit our building. Everyone jumped up. There was another big explosion when the Vig Theater was hit. When this happened I was just upstairs in the kitchen, which overlooked the theatre, and I only remember that my hair stood on its end and I ran into the hall because of the blast.

Then there was no gas, no electricity. My mother put two bricks on the stove, and I don't remember what she burned so that she could cook a soup or something. Sometime in the middle of January the Soviet troops liberated the international ghetto. I have just read that there was a Swedish [protected] house, from where they took the people to the banks of the Danube. At that time, I thought that all the Swedish houses survivied. We knew that there was a Swiss house [Editor's note: The activity of the Swiss diplomats to save Jews was organized around the embassy. The Swiss consul in Budapest was Carl Lutz in 1944-1945. The Schutzbrief, the safe conduct for the Jewish refugees from Budapest was his idea. He saved 10000 Jewish children, whom they sent to Palestine, with these safe-conducts. He issued more than 50000 safe-conducts without a permission. Besides this he played a role in establishing the 76 so called protected houses in Budapest. Jewish refugee agencies estimate the number of Jews saved by him at 50000. Consul Lutz's temporary agent in Budapest, dr. Peter Zurcher prevented the SS from exterminating the 70000 inhabitants of the ghetto before the Soviet occupation.], and Spanish house from where they took the people to the banks of the Danube and shot them into the Danube, but they didn't take us. [Editor's note: Angel Sans Briz, who was a Spanish ambassador in Budapest in 1944 issued 500-700 safe-conducts and approved the establishing of several dozens of Spanish houses in Budapest. By the end of the war more than 3000 Jews escaped with the papers of the Spanish embassy.] We escaped. We were liberated.

One day a Russian soldier brought a beautiful, young, injured horse into the courtyard. He gave it to us and shot it. My father, who didn't know how to do it, but whose father was a butcher, and another man, who was really a butcher, butchered the horse, so everyone got some meat this way. Nobody had eaten horse until then, needless to say, we didn't even know what it was like. My mom cooked some soup out of it, I remember that the meat tasted sweetish. Things like this saved us.

After the war

On the 18th January [Editor's note: Pest was liberated on that day.] my father borrowed a four-wheel handbarrow from somewhere, we put our stuff on it and went to Hollan Street 3 to get our things from there. By that time many things had disappeared from the apartment. We pulled the barrow home on Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Avenue and went home. I was very cold on the way. I had a pair of Halina boots, that's a feltlike, grey thick material, it was fashionable at that time. They are warm boots in principle, but my heels froze and they only healed years later. It was a very cold winter, Budapest got by without any epidemics.

When we went back to Paulay Ede Street we put the Swedish flag first on the entrance door! In the blocked part of our apartment a family from Turkeve lived. They were hiding from the Russians. They could enter the apartment from the kitchen side, through the outside balcony. One of the window glasses was still there in our apartment because my father had taken off one of the casements everywhere when we ran away from the bombings, and he put those back, so we had one window. Since he also had experience in design, he had a big wide tracing-paper, and he replaced the other window glass with that, and that was our window for quite a long while. It was frosty in the apartment and the bedroom could not be heated. The bedroom wasn't big. My parents had never heated it, because they said that heat wasn't needed for sleeping. In the evening we got dressed, we put on all the clothes we had, they boiled some water in the kitchen, and they put warm water in glasses to our feet, and everything you can imagine, comforters, and all our clothes were put on, so that we wouldn't shiver.

The lab part of the apartment could be used immediately because my father's laboratory assistant had a registered company. Its name was written on the door, that's what they had agreed with my father. And quite a lot of things had been piled up in the salon from the other parts of the apartment. We went in and just looked at what had happened there, because everything was broken. We looked up and there was a hole in the ceiling. A bomb had fallen into the room, but it didn't explode, only the steel shell had fallen apart, and the entire apartment was full with some very fine, powder-like brown and gray dust. My father had a huge drawing-board, he went up the third floor and he covered the hole. And the caretaker and someone else took the bomb in the courtyard, and put some kind of sign on it that it was dangerous, and the bomb-disposal squad took it after a while. But my smart brother found the igniter and was about to take it apart, but they took it from him and the danger was over. My mother still found some of this powder-like dust in the apartment years later when she cleaned.

We had lost a lot of weight and we were in a very bad shape. We were skin and bones. And we didn't have anything. These people from Turkeve had some food, and they gave us some. If my brother and I managed to sneak in to their pantry, we stole honey from their can and we licked the wooden spoon, which was in the dish with the honey. Otherwise there was an Aryan's spouse in the house, and they had wheat in a sack. And we had hand-mill in the lab, and my father milled and he got wheat. Then a couple men went to the mill on Soroksar Avenue with the handbarrow. The bombs had also been hit by proof shots and bombs, some of them burned with big flames -- we had seen it in the summer. There was a lot of burnt wheat in one of the grain elevators. They brought home I don't know how many sacks of this wheat, and the entire family hand-sorted it. My father milled what wasn't burned. There was a tap in our courtyard, and fortunately there was

water in it. The entire neighborhood used to go there because there was no water in the houses and apartments in the neighborhood. Mom mixed the water and the wheat, put it on the cooktop, and some kind of food came out of it. And one day my mother and I went to Zuglo on foot, hoping that we would find something at the Bulgarian gardens [Editor's note: The Bulgarian truck farmers occupied a significant position in vegetable growing all across Europe]. We wandered a big piece of muddy land, but we didn't find any beets. Then Dad collected all the watches the family had, I don't know how many of them, but I know that he took mine, too. I don't know where he took them, but he got lard and flour from the Russians in exchange for them, it was the 'davaj csaszi' period. [Editor's note: 'Davaj csaszi' –' give me your watch'. The Soviet soldiers who arrived to Budapest took everyone's watch they could, and they usually put all the watches they collected on their arm. Many eye-witnesses related that the soldiers' arms were covered with watches] We starved. We were so skinny that my father went up to my mother one day, breathed on her and asked if his breath was already sour.

Budapest starved, literally. These were very difficult times. I remember that one of my brother's friends -- he was a developed, manly boy, he lived with his mother, I don't know where his father was, first got the "Ukrainian" – the "Ukrainian" was a diarrheic disease and very many died of it. Then he fell ill with typhus, I think, and then I never saw him anymore, my brother told me that he had died. We couldn't help him, we couldn't feed him.

Once my mother and I were walking on Hollo Street, where there was a public bath. We were just walking back to Paulay Street, when my mother told me 'Don't look there!' She always covered my face when she didn't want me to see something. But it was too late. The gate of this bath on Hollo Street was open, it had a big courtyard, and that was full with bodies. I didn't see it for a long time, because my mother pulled me away from there, but I saw it. At that time People's Courts judged, and they sentenced two cruel officers to death, and they executed the sentence on the Oktogon [square in the center of Budapest], and that was the only case like that, they hanged them on lamp post and they just hung there. We were walking on the Oktogon, and my mother told me not to look there, but by the time she said it I had already seen them hanging there. It wasn't possible not to see them. Or when we were pulling the barrow home with our goods, as we were walking on the street, the Bajcsy [Zsilinszky Street] was full with the remainder of horse carcasses, because people had already cut off them everything that was edible.

Then these people from Turkeve went home one day, and the world slowly came back to normal. Zoltan Vas was appointed the head of Budapest. He was responsible for putting things in order. They started bringing food from somewher, and life became better. The entire boulevard was a stock-market or a bazaar, I don't remember what we called it. They put a small table out there, and one sold boot sole, the other one table cloth and cornflour pudding, so people tried to sell everything. And the black market started very soon, too. People went to the country for food, they exchanged all their valuables with the peasants. Because despite being robbed, they still had food. There were trains already, and very many people traveled. When there wasn't enough room in the trains, people traveled even on top of the trains. They went to the country, they took their coat and everything that was movable, and exchanged it for food, because the farmers in the country didn't have clothing, everything was a treasure there. I think the streetcar no. 6 set off on the 1st May and there was a procession that day. The bleacher was in the middle of Hosok Square and as far as I remember they took all the children to the zoo and we got pilaf there for free. That was a very big

deal! There were all kinds of decorations at the procession. One thing I remember is that the bakers brought a big croissant. There was a big procession already at that time, and every year from then on.

When there was electricity again the goldsmiths started to work. The smeltery on Hollo Street, where the amalgam for the goldsmiths was made, didn't work yet. So then Dad made a furnace in the bathroom, or he got hold of it, in which he could melt the gold in bigger skillets, and he started to alloy. At that time people shopped with raw gold because there was inflation. Money wasn't worth anything, it lost value every day, and people only exchanged enough to buy their train ticket, because the money was worth even less the next day. The goldsmiths brought the raw gold, Dad melted it, alloyed it, and checked how many carats it was. Then as my brother and I were older we could help more and more in the lab. I was still a little girl when I started working regularly.

Then, when Gyula Hevesi came home from the Soviet Union, he employed Dad at the Patent Office in 1948, and dad got away from the penalty that he couldn't be an employee as the member of the Chamber of Engineers. In 1949 he gave the entire lab to the state. They took it and in exchange they gave him enough money so that the partition of the apartment didn't cost us. Because we didn't need such a big apartment. We still had 110 square meters.

My brother and I went to school. My brother went back to the Kolcsey and he graduated high school there in 1947. Piroska Lazar's school didn't exist anymore, and one of the high schools from Buda moved to Veres Palne Street, where there was also a school. My parents enrolled me there at first, but then the Maria Terezia Girls' High School was opened on Andrassy Avenue, and my mom transferred me there, because that was much closer. From March 1945 there was a three-month school year, because when the Germans marched in that year counted as an incomplete school year, and during this three-month school year I already went to school on Andrassy Avenue. We were in a classroom on the 2nd floor, which overlooked Andrassy Street 60. We had a little blond Hungarian teacher, she was quite a rightist. During one recess we were watching as Szalasi was taken to that building, this woman saw us and made a big scandal because we were watching. Maria Krudy taught history, she was one of Gyula Krudy's daughters. She was a very elegant, thin woman. She apparently used to be a ballerina when she was younger. She was a very cultured woman, and I liked history very much at that time. There was no heating in the class room, of course, we sat in our winter coats. One day I started scratching. It turned out that I had lice and I was very embarrassed. But it turned out that the entire class had lice. My mother bought something at the pharmacy and slowly I got better.

I failed Latin class. Latin and German were obligatory at high school. There was German for the girls from the 1st grade, and Latin from the 3rd, for the boys there was Latin from the 1st grade, German from the 3rd, and from the 5th grade they started another language. My brother hated Latin, and he explained it to me so many times that I didn't learn even a word and I failed. So I spent all the summer learning Latin. I went up to Bela Kiraly Avenue to a kind of colony of artists, and a young woman gave me Latin lessons. She taught me Latin so well, that I went to high school for two years after that, but I lived off what I had learned from her. And I took the make-up exam smoothly, so I didn't have to repeat the year.

Religion class was obligatory at school, and everyone went to the religion class of her denomination. There were mostly Catholics in a class, and when they had religion class the

Calvinists, the Lutherans and we sat in the benches in the back. We couldn’t loaf around, but we had to busy ourselves and keep quiet. I remember that the Catholics always went to church on Ash Wednesday, and when they came back there was a little ash on their forehead.

At that time they called the Bat Mitzvah for Jewish girls a Confirmation. Ours was so that on the first floor of the Dohany Street synagogue there were a lot of girls of my age, we had our Bat Mitzvah together, and the synagogue was decorated. For this festive occasion I got a golden bracelet from my father. My brother naturally had a Bar Mitzvah during the war, also at the Dohany Street synagogue.

I became a scout after the war. I was thirteen years old already, my brother had started scouting at the age of ten already. Most of the children started even earlier, because there were ‘cubs’ from the 1st grade of elementary school. [Editor’s note: The scouts between 8-12 years old were called cubs.] We went on a trip every week, we tested different skills - making fire, pitching, and other things, and when we took the test we got different badges on our shirt. I was a leader for a long time, too. Discipline was important in the scouting movement and scout life was a very good thing. Our troop was a Jewish troop, called ‘Vorosmarty 311.' It was a member of the Scouting Association. I was a scout until the movement ended, until the winter of 1948.

Later I was a member of the Student Association. The laborers had their own association, the university students did, too, and also every group had its association, and later these joined together in the DISZ, which later became KISZ [Editor’s note: DISZ (Association of Working Youth) (1950-1957 was a massive youth organization modeled after the Soviet Komsomol. Members were recruited from among college and university students primarily, and young factory workers secondly. In October 1956 DISZ disintegrated after students of various universities announced their secession one after the other. KISZ (Communist Youth League) (1957-1989) was a youth organization created by the Hungarian Communist Party in place of the DISZ. It aimed to represent the whole country's youth, sought to politically educate young people and supervise political as well as some social activities for them. Membership was common, if rather pro forma, among university students (96 %) but lower among young people already working (31 %). In 1989 the organization's national congress changed the name to Democratic Youth Federation and declared it a voluntary league of independent youth organizations that would not accept direction from any single party.] I was already a high school student, I was an elder girl, when there was a torchlight procession on the 7th November or 15th March, and we went to demonstrate, but first there was a practice march. We marched in close formation, and absolutely orderly. We also had a uniform at the Student Association. I still took part on the 1st May processions and other processions when I already worked. In all my life. These were very nice. My little son, was raised in Vienna [today Austria], and there was a muster parade when he was at home, he was very happy that I took him to the muster parade.

I went to the Maria Terezia Girls’ High School until the 5th grade, I completed the 5th grade there, but I didn’t want to graduate at a high school. I applied to a commercial school and to the chemistry technical school. 500 of us applied to the technical school, they enrolled 90, and 29 of us graduated in 1951. But it wasn’t easy to find a job at that time either. At that time they still directed us, they knew it from somewhere that this and this company needed such and such a worker, and they directed us. They filled out our service certificate at school, and they wrote in mine Plastic Industry Research Institute. I went there, and they asked me why I went. I told them

that that's what they wrote in my service certificate. They said 'no, thanks'. Then my father, who was known in the trade, talked with someone at the Ministry of Heavy Industry, where the chemical industry belonged, and that's how I got to the Conserve, Meat, Refrigerating Industry Research Institute after graduation as a young technician, to the experimental station.

In the meantime I got married in July. I met my husband in the scout troop. I wasn't sixteen yet, and he was nineteen. We got married in July 1951. The wedding was in the 6th district town hall. My mother got hold of two kinds of material from somewhere, one was pink with white squares or something like that in it, the other one was navy blue with some floral pattern. There was an excellent seamstress in the house, and elderly woman, who worked very slowly but beautifully, and she sewed both dresses, and I got married in the pink one. I didn't have white sandals so we went to Csepel, because the Weiss Manfred [Editor's note: At that time it was called Rakosi Matyas Works after the first secretary of the party.] was there, the working class was there, and because of this they stocked the shops there better, and there I could buy a pair of white sandals. After all, it was summer and hot and I couldn't go barefoot to the wedding.

We didn't want to get married at a synagogue because we weren't religious. When I went to the technical school religion class was still compulsory, but there wasn't a regular religion class. Instead, we went to liturgy class [Editor's note: Religious education at schools became optional from 1949. In 1950 80% of the high school children attended religion classes at school, in 1955 only 40%, and in 1960 25%.]. On the corner of Andrassy Avenue and Sziv or Rozsa Street there was a famous cafe. Writers used to go there, but at that time it was already empty and we had to go there. We didn't pray, but we sang, we knew a lot of joyous Hebrew songs. I liked to sing very much. In the next years religion class wasn't obligatory anymore, and then the entire class ended religion classes for good, and after that we had nothing to do with religion. After the war most of the Jews joined the communist party. We did, too. My father was a communist originally, my mother was a social democrat, because her father was also a social democrat. We knew the International already in our childhood, even though it was forbidden. So my mother was specifically a leftist, and my father was a 1919 communist, that's why he had had to emigrate at the time. I was a member of the communist party already at the age of sixteen. I am not ashamed of it. My husband was also a communist.

My husband's parents lived in Hajdunanas, and my mother-in-law had a fiance before World War I who didn't return. She kept waiting for him, years went by, and then her sister brought her to Pest during the ball season, sometime when she was in her twenties. She met a man at a ball and married him. My husband's father was a strange man. He had been everything in his life, from unterman to rich jewelry merchant, and when he got married he was already around forty. They lived on Dohany Street, and my mother-in-law told me, that when they spent the first New Years' Eve together and they took inventory, they decided for him to sell jewelry out of a suitcase. He didn't have a shop but he was always at the New York Cafe. He had so much jewelry; that kind of wealth is hard to imagine. But then he gambled everyhting away because later my husband's family had nothing.

My mother-in-law told me that her husband was a handsome man. They used to say things like this at that time. But he didn't care for his wife, and when she found that out, the father of my mother-in-law still lived in Hajdunanas and he said that he would take back his daughter. And they divorced. At that time it went like this. It was possible in 1932. And her father gave allowance for

my mother-in-law so that she would get by. My mother-in-law never worked. She could bake very good pie and cook stuffed cabbage, but she never had a job. Her father died in two or three years, and then she and her child were left without anything. They wanted to marry her off so that her life would be taken care of. She met a widower through a match-maker, who was raising a thirteen-year-old girl alone, and he married my mother-in-law. They lived on Terez Boulevard, but the new husband didn't want the new child, who went to all kinds of different schools from then on, to a college in Esztergom for example. He also went to a German imperial school for a while, then he got to some kind of a children's home, then he graduated the four classes of middle school on Kertesz Street. During the occupation he was in hiding with fake papers.

At the end of 1944 my future husband became a Red Cross courier. There was a military hospital in the cellar of a porcelain and crystal store in Pest, where they attended to the injured, and the doctor's family lived somewhere on the Gellert Hill in Buda. In January 1945 the doctor sent him to his wife on Berc Street with some package. He went across Erzsebet Bridge hand over hand, because it was guarded, but on the way back the Russians already bombed the side of Gellert Hill. He was coming down the Gellert Hill with two boys, on the footpath, but they were very frightened, and before they got to Hegyalja Street, a mine exploded next to them. One of the boys died, the other one lost one of his limbs, and he also got injured. He went unconscious. When the gun-fire calmed down the people hiding in the caves one the side of the mountain, came out, found him, put him on a stretcher, and took him to the cellar of Gellert Hotel, where there was a military hospital. They operated on him. There weren't narcotics at that time. And when the Russians got there all of the patients became prisoners of war.

After a while, the Russians put them in cars and took them somewhere. He didn't know where, but they didn't speak Hungarian as he heard the voices from the outside. And then he got back to Debrecen. The government had been formed in Debrecen, it organized a temporary army, and they drafted him. But since he was still bandaged, he got a leave-pass, with which he came home to Pest, and he never went back. When I met him in the Csikovaralja scout camp in 1945 he still had to get his hand rebandaged regularly.

We started to date in the fall of 1947 and that's how I got married. We partitioned off a one-bedroom apartment on Liszt Ferenc Square. It cost 15000 forint, my parents gave 5000 out of that I think, and my father-in-law lent us 10000. My husband was a trainee, and first he became a radio repairman. Somewhere on the Blaha [Blaha Lujza Square], there was a self-employed man, he was liberated there after the war. And in 1940 he got to the party center, he was the sound man when there were different events. They nationalized a villa on Szabo Jozsef Street at that time, among others, and its owner had a radio service-station. The owner lived in the villa, there were buildings in the back, too, there must have been his workshops. This was the predecessor of the Gelka. [Editor's note: Servicing network, which repaired electric household appliances and electroacoustic appliances.] My husband became very soon the foreman of the sound department. They did the sound at the muster parades, the 1st May events, and other similar events. In the meantime, already during our marriage, he graduated high school and the Polytechnic University. He became a weak current electrical engineer. Then they transferred him to the ministry, to the inspectorial authority, and he was a head of department there. It was in the building on Moszkva Square, that big post office.

I worked on Herman Otto Street for five years, our children were born at that time, a son in 1953, and a daughter in 1955. At that time, maternity leave was only three months. I wanted to quit but I didn't. In August 1956 I got to Kobanya, to the Ceramics Fire Resisting Material Factory, the quality control laboratory. This was on Sibrik Miklos Avenue, where there is a big housing establishment now. At that time that part was still full with mine lakes, there were several brick factories in the neighborhood. Opposite the factory there was a huge empty ground, and when I went to work on the Sibrik [Miklos Avenue], I went at 7 o'clock, I always looked at the sunrise. It was beautiful.

My mother took care of our children because I worked. Sometimes she came over in the morning and waited until one of us got home, or the children were at her place, and I went there and went home from there, but it wasn't good either way. Because either her or my household was neglected. At that time we didn't live on Liszt Ferenc Square anymore, because that was a very tiny apartment, but we managed to exchange it for a two-bedroom apartment with modern conveniences on Kertesz Street. Looking at it now, it was quite a badly equipped apartment, we struggled a lot, because we heated with coal, and there was a stove in the bathroom too, we had to heat there, too. First we washed in a tub, we scrubbed the diapers, then we cooked them and of course ironed them. I got my first washing machine when my daughter was born.

But by the time my daughter was born, my son fell ill with polio. His left leg was paralyzed. This was in September 1954; I was pregnant with my daughter then. Well, my husband was beside himself: we had a healthy child, he wanted him to be healed. He went everywhere, he tried everywhere so that they would help the child. At that time many children fell ill. There were some who got a job in China, because there were methods to cure the sick children. It's difficult to imagine how many things parents tried! My son got into the Movemenet Therapy Institute on Villanyi Avenue. There was a doctor there, a black spinster, she was a very coarse, cruel woman, and in that institute there was such order, that visiting was only allowed once a month, and they yelled at us then, too. My husband and I went in through the fence and we sneaked there and peeked in through the window to see the child. It was in the evening. And the miserable didn't lay in beds, but the something they were on was made of wood. We couldn't visit him, we couldn't call on the phone, and there was no result. Then after a while my mother had enough of it. My husband told her that we wouldn't take him home until he was healed, but my mom said that we were indeed going to take him home for the holidays. This was the Christmas of 1954. My mother talked with the doctor and we took the child home.

Later my mom took my son to Frankel Leo Street several times a week for after-care gymnastics. After the war, after dad handed down the lab in 1949, my mom got a job as an administrator. She didn't work for long, because there was a big lay-off in 1954, and they dismissed my mother, saying that she didn't need it as much as my father was in a leadership position at the Patent Office at that time. And after my son became sick she never tried to get a job again. She helped me and cared for the child. She learned how to do gymnastics with him, and the child got a walker, with which he could walk, but his leg that didn't develop properly became thinner and thinner. We left no stone unturned in order to do something, and that's how my husband and I ended up in Vienna.

They recommended us a miracle doctor in Vienna. They said that he does wonders with these sick children, so my husband decided to apply for a passport. This was before October 1956, my daughter was small, a baby, and I couldn't have gone. Only he could go, and he applied for a

passport in order to go to this doctor. There was a Hungarian-Austrian soccer game on the 19th or 20th October 1956, and I special train went from Budapest to Vienna for this event. My husband worked at the Post Office Department at that time, and they got tickets to this game, too. They knew it there that he wanted to go to the doctor, so he also got a ticket. At that time it functioned so that if one needed a fridge for example, and the company where he worked got three fridge tickets, they raffled them or just gave them away. Or the company got a couple tickets for a big wardrobe, then they gave them to someone and that person got the wardrobe. My husband went to Vienna, he sold his ticket there immediately, because he was never interested in soccer, and somehow he found that doctor. But it turned out that he was a charlatan. But my husband met some Hungarian people who lived there, and I don't know what happened there until this day. They were there for a night, I think it was the weekend and he arrived at night. But as if not he would have come back! I have never seen such a thing, and I don't understand it even after so many years.

He brought some plastic watches stuffed into his underwear. The plastic watch is a transparent watch, it was a big thing at that time, it functioned with batteries and it was worth about 300-500 forint. And he also brought windbreakers and things like that. And he knew what was going to happen. He knew it, they already knew it in Vienna, but here none of us knew. And on the 23rd October it came about. [see 1956] 16

They shot and robbed everything. They robbed everything - it's not true that they didn't rob. There was a man who could hardly walk because he had put so many coats on, I watched him from the window. But it is also true that a truck stopped at the corner with dead geese and they gave them away. But it wasn't as people now tell all kinds of things. There were decent, nice, good-intentioned people, and there was a lot of riff-raff. A boy with a civic guard armband came up to visit us, he had a gun, and asked us how we were doing, because he was my husband's colleague, but he wasn't a counter-revolutionist at all. But this didn't affect me, it didn't affect anyone in my family. What does a survivor and her husband do? The first thing was that we checked how much food we had at home, and for how many days that was enough. When there was a lot of shooting, we moved the two children to the cellar to sleep there, and we pulled our bed out in the hall, because that's safer, and we slept there, not in the room.

My husband had a tape recorder at home from his workplace, it was as big as a suitcase. We had a radio, and Orion, I think, it was a radio with a tuning eye, which picked up a lot of waves. We could hear the taxis on the radio, and if the machines of war transmitted on a band, we could hear that, too. My husband recorded the more interesting things on a tape, and he still has them. One time, when my husband wiggled the tuner we heard, a military plane was flying above Budapest, that the pilot, the voice of a young man, screamed: 'Oh my God, what do I see?' And he said in despair that they were throwing living people out of the window on Koztarsasag Square. Simply they threw them in the street. But they also murdered the regular soldiers on duty. [Editor's note: The attack against the Koztarsasag Square hall of the Hungarian Democrat Party on the 30th October 1956 is still one of the most controversial and partly unveiled events of the 1956 revolution. The revolters supposed that the building was the anti revolutionary center of the broken up AVH and the party apparatus. One of their groups tried to deliver the rebels caught by the AVH, and they opened fire at them from the building, when the rebels started to assault the building. Nobody controlled the assault, the insurgent groups fought with the AVH men and the armed party functionaries in a

spontaneous way. They occupied the building and the raging multitude lynched many defenders. (Gosztonyi Peter: *A Koztarsasag teri ostrom és a kazamatak mitosza*. „Budapesti Negyed", 1994. 5. sz.; Ripp Zoltán: *1956. Forradalom és szabadsagharc Magyarorszagon*. Budapest, 2002; Horvath Miklos: *1956 hadikronikaja*, Budapest, 2003).]

My parents got hold of a loaf of bread, I don't know from where, but and they came and brought it over. We fed the children, we were in the hall, the kitchen overlooked the courtyard, we heated it as much as we could. Combat cars patrolled the main roads, and if we went out we waited until the combat car left, and quickly crossed the street on the Korut. One time we really wanted to get some fresh air with the children. We had a motorcycle with a sidecar, and we went until the corner of Kertesz and Dohany Street, but there was a barricade there, so we came back. My husband went once to see what was going on on Ulloi Avenue, and he came back saying that Ulloi Avenue was in ruins, and the human remains were treaded in as the caterpillars went by. There was a combat car on the corner of Kertesz Street, it was there for quite a while. But there was one on the corner of the Korut and Jozsef Street, too, and when we already went to work, when life started again, but there were no streetcars or buses yet, a truck stood on the corner of the Korut and Jozsef Street, next to the gun-barrel of the combat car, we climbed on its plateau, and that's how they took us to work.

Then sometime in the middle of February my husband got his passport. It threw him into a frenzy and he immediately ran to the Austrian embassy to get a visa. They didn't want to believe him that he had a legal passport. Then he just became obsessed. He wanted to go, he wanted to go at once. He got the visa, he bought the train ticket, and on his 28th birthday on the 20th February he left with a train from the Keleti [Railway Station] at 10 in the evening. He left with the child. And I remained here. We saw him off, my father and my mother were also there, and my father said that we would never see this boy again. My father was already an old man at that time, he had seen much, and I just looked at him that how my father could say such a thing.

It was November when my husband confessed that he lost his passport in Vienna immediately. He didn't write me, but my parents. I corresponded with him throughout, but I didn't know this. He wrote my parents in November to tell me somehow that he wasn't going to return. I asked him to come home. He said that I would land him in prison, I told him that he would go to the prison for three months, then we would be together for ever! I would bring him bean soup, so he could come home with the child safely. Later he confessed me that the entire story shocked him, but he didn't come home.

I remained there in the apartment on Kertesz Street with my daughter, who was two years old, and whom my parents took to their place immediately. At that time I always slept at my mother's. But we were afraid, that someone would what to move into the apartment, because there were two rooms, and because of this in the summer of 1958 I exchanged my apartment with one above my mother's on the 3rd floor. [Editor's note: In 1957 it was disposed by order that every family with two members or every single person was entitled to one room. Those who had a bigger apartment, the housing authority could allocate part of that to a joint tenant.]

In the meantime the head of the laboratory at my workplace, a married man, noticed after a while that I was sad and wanted to pick me up. I went up to the personnel manager and quit my job. The personnel manager was nice, she said she wouldn't let me go until I brought her a letter from my

next work place – at that time such things were still important, so that one was in continuous employment. I brought him the letter, and so I got to the Metallurgical Research Institute in 1958, which belonged to a big trust with many factories. I got a job at the chemistry department as a technician, a compound analyst, and basically I spent there my entire life.

In 1960 I had about enough of it and I officially divorced my husband. I thought that life was ahead of me, and while I was married there was nothing to be said. The norms were different at that time, because nobody cares about anything today, about papers or anything, but at that time it didn't go like this. I started divorce proceedings, my father had a second cousin, a lawyer, and he handled it.

Of course there were men in my surroundings who were divorced, so they were independent, but somehow I always opened up to someone quite easily, and perhaps the fact that I was Jewish scared them off, though it wasn't a topic, but probably they knew it. On the other hand I loved my ex-husband so much, that I might have talked of him too much. They didn't feel that I was free. Not on paper, but it my soul. So I remained alone.

I next saw my son in 1964, after seven years, when the sister of my mother-in-law noticed that my son was depressed, and he charged my husband to send my son home because he needed his mother. When the child arrived he didn't recognize me! And my daughter was jealous. With the help of one of my friends I got a one week voucher to a summer resort of the factory at the Balaton, and I took the children there to get them used to each other by force. And I did it. I don't know how it could happen, because my son wasn't among Hungarians in Vienna, and he got there at the age of four, but after seven years he spoke fluent Hungarian. Then my father taught him very much, and in the end my son also became a cultured person. Because my father was a wonderful person, and he taught my son.

We went on holiday with vouchers as long as it was possible. We got vouchers at my workplace, and we went to Sopron, to the Balaton, to Matrahaza, Matrafured, and Galyateto. Usually I went alone, and my daughter regularly went with my parents. My father had a PhD – he was pensioned off at the age of 77, he was entitled to the summer resort of the academy, they always took my daughter along, and sometimes I also went with them. My mother liked Abbazia [at that time called Opatija already, Yugoslavia] very much, there was a Yugoslavian-Hungarian fraternity on Bajza Street after the war, from where they organized trips, and she did go once again from there.

My daughter went in Dunabogdany, too, once or twice a year. She told me when she was already an adult that she hated it so much, but I didn't know that at that time. And when she was about eight or nine years old, from then on we spent the holiday on a holiday resort in Tata. My son also came with us there every summer. My old scout friends and I joined together and we took our children down there for the summer. That holiday resort still exists. Apparently it became very cultured. At that time it was a meant for camping, very romantic, and had many lakes, but you couldn't swim in all of them. We moved down there, there were very simple wood-houses there, with some flickering light and a bunk-bed. We rented one of there, pitched tents around it and we were down there. There was a buffet inside, where we could eat, so we didn't cook. When we weren't on holiday, we went on trips at the weekends and during vacations, too. We took the children to the Bukk, to Borzsony, Pilis, Vertes, and everywhere.

I went abroad many times, with trade union holiday vouchers, too, and with 70 dollars too. I went on a trip with IBUSZ [Hungarian socialist travel agency] in the GDR, several times in Austria, in

German- speaking Switzerland, in Prague [today Czech Republic], in Krakow [today Poland]. I was in France, in the Federal Republic of Germany, in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Poland. When the Soviet Union and the trade unions voucher trips still existed I went across the Ural Mountain in Asia, in Leningrad [today St. Petersburg, Russia], several times in Moscow [today Russia], in Kiev [today Ukraine], in Minsk [today Belarus], Tallin [today Estonia], with different organizations. These weren't expensive trips, because I couldn't have afforded anything expensive, but they were good trips.

Since my father was deaf, he couldn't go to the theatre, because he didn't hear it. But my mother loved classical music and theatre, and in those years when I couldn't take my daughter because she was small, my mother and I had a subscription. For long years. I had opera subscription, concert subscription and theatre subscription, I went out three or four times a week in an evening dress. I had very nice evening dresses. Dinner gowns, full evening dresses, all kinds. And like a normal young woman, I had spike-heeled shoes, black, drab, brown, all kinds, and purses to go with them, bijou, jewelry, normal jewelry. I went out a lot. Richter was perhaps for the first time in Hungary when he had a solo concert at the Academy of Music, and somehow it happened that I was there, and I knew it at once that I was hearing an unparalleled musician. [Editor's note: Szvjatoszlav Richter (1915—1997): Russian pianist]

Besides work I always did social work, too. At that time it was natural, for me at least. I was in charge of holidays in the co-operative committee at the Metallurgical Research Institute. There were co-operative vouchers and company vouchers, and I was responsible for them, I was the organizer. But at that time it wasn't so that one left the institute with a leaving pass and ran his errands. One couldn't just leave. I thought about it 6 times whether to ask for a pass or not, because that wasn't usual. I did this social work for years, but I always discussed what I wanted with the headquarters on the phone. I've never been to their headquarters in person.

Then at the beginning of the 1970 the council of the 6th district came to my workplace. I don't know what happened exactly, but they nominated me as a councilor of the 6th district council. They elected me, and my area was the Kiraly Street, Anker Alley, Kaldy Gyula Street, two big blocks belonged to me inclusive the Bajcsy [Zsilinszky Street]. And through this work I got the free time I needed. For example if there was a council once a month, I could leave from work that day. We had a councilor card, but we didn't get any allotment. We got only one thing, a yearly pass, but we didn't get any money, any salary. That was really social work. I cared for the people in my district, with their daily problems, I took part in the work of the council, and there were also commissions that I worked for.

I did this until 1976, when they merged the Metallurgical Research Institute with the Aluminum Industry Designing Company. This way there were 1200 workers, and that called for an independent party secretary. The bosses recommended me - behind my back, of course. They convoked a meeting of members, and they elected me. I became a member of the co-operative of the chemical industry. At that time my income was quite small, and when they had to transfer me, our manager quickly gave me a raise, so that he wouldn't have to be embarassed. But they had no idea about how it was going to be, how I was going to take it. They told me that the designers would never accept me. But they accepted me indeed! My scouting past, and my intellectual background helped. I think I accomplished a very successful nine years because they elected me without the slightest hesitation the second time, too,.

I became a member of the trust committee, I was in the presidency next to the director, the party secretary, the trade union confidential secretary and the secretary of the Association of Communist Youth. So that was an advantaged situation. A huge change! You can imagine: a everyday woman from the lab just starts to go to the office of the director. I knew all the managers, all the party secretaries, all the trade union confidential secretaries. I got among very decent people, countryman, and people from Pest. And there was a lot to of besides the labor organization work, they also stressed the task of the co-operative to help the production. There was a meeting in the director's office every week, and we got the material. At first I didn't understand much from the economic part, but representation and holding a meeting never caused me any problems. I surprised my entourage very much with this, because I'm sure that they didn't suppose that I could stand in front of the 1200 employees of the institute and tell them what I wanted or what I had to say.

Then the world opened up to me. They took the trade union confidential secretaries and the co-operative secretaries on some kind of a trip, usually to one of the partner companies, with which we were in contact abroad, once a year. Either because we worked for them, or because the company was in a similar trade, and they took us to its summer resort. The trust had a bus, and our institute did, too, and there was a driver. We built a factory in Yugoslavia, and we went there by bus, and our trust was in connection with several big trusts in the GDR, too. I got to all kinds of places, and even though I went on my own, too, it was much different to be a member of a delegation than just a tourist. And it turned out on these trips that I spoke German. Even though there was always an interpreter with us, it happened that half of the company went somewhere else, and after a while I regularly interpreted.

Besides this there were trust committee meetings. So not always the people from the country came to Pest, but the companies in the country received us. So I got to many corners of the country. We had bauxite mines, and we held miner's days. The four of us went to with the director by a Mercedes to Tapolca, where there was a big mining company. The director general and my director had a Mercedes for a while at that time, but one day they were told that they couldn't have a Mercedes, a Lada 1500, nobody was going to have any better cars that that, so they had to hand down the Mercedes, but not the driver. They made a beautiful community center out of the synagogue, there was a speech there and the miners were decorated. After that there was a big reception either in one of the restaurants, or at the community center.

In the meantime the organized exchange holidays became of bigger and bigger proportions. The Germans loved to come to the Balaton. The trust had a luxury summer resort in [Balaton]Almadi, on the beach, it was a very nice resort. Our own workers designed it, they dug it and built it as social work, and the after the change of regime they made a hotel out of it, we can't even go there. We sold the off-peak period to the Germans, and we went to their place during peak season. There were such organized exchange holidays with the Czechs, too, in the Tatra, but we had the most connection with the GDR. First I went as a group leader with different groups, or I received groups, but then I took groups on my own. If the group was too large, an interpreter also came with us. We organized trips to the GDR, to Czechoslovakia [today Czech Republic], Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, so one could get to many places. It was an eventful life.

At this time I was already a grandmother, and I took my grandchildren, too, to [Balaton] Almadi. It happened that my son-in-law, my daughter and their children or my son, my daughter-in-law and

their two sons were with me. I got a SZOT room there, where I could take the entire family. The resort had big sailboats, power-boats, and the children went to help on the boat, and the Germans loved to sail, I don't know how many times a day the sailboat floated off. I took my grandchildren, one at a time, to the GDR, too. So they also saw many things and were at many places.

Then I retired. I told my friends in the co-operative 'listen up, I could stay, but back off, if I don't leave on my own at the age of 55, I don't want anyone to tell me that I am taking advantage of my situation.' At that time there was big lay-off, out number and the number of our depots had also dropped off, and from the fall of 1986 I only worked six hours a day. Because as school started I waited for my grandchildren to come home from school with lunch every day. So they didn't loaf around, they didn't go to the day-care center. I officially retired in February 1987, but I worked there as an organizer secretary for years, even after the change of regime for a while.

So my life was very busy. I helped my daughter's family while the children were small, I took them to and from the kindergarten, I took care of them if they were sick, and in the meantime I used to go to Vienna to help my son's family, too. I took lunch to my mother every day out of what I cooked, I lived on the 3rd floor and she lived on the 1st, I put it in the fridge and prepared his medication dose every day. My mother was in a very bad shape at that time, the poor thing, there were a lot of problems with her. Then we had to take her to the hospital, where she was very agile, active, she didn't have any physical complaints in fact, she helped the patients who couldn't get up, but not even two weeks passed when she once got sick, and she never came back again, she died in 1988.

When there was the change of regime, they told us that they were going to occupy the hall we had to leave, and they assigned us other places. They transferred the designers/architect. Then they broke up the trust and then they privatized it. Those who were there, the directors, first engineers all tried to keep the factory, and if they couldn't do better, they got private property. The co-operative committee existed for a little while, we had a lot of pensioners and I arranged their things while I could, while they let me. Sometime in the mid-1990s my job discontinued completely, and limited companies and I don't know what became out of the remains of the institute.

I had a dear colleague at my workplace, who now in the head of the tax department at the Jewish community, all the tax collectors of the Jewish communities in the country belong to her, and all the data of the tax-payers of the Hungarian Jewry come to her. We were on holiday in Sopron several times. She always asked me to go to work at the Jewish community. But I didn't want any kinds of obligations. There was my youngest grandchild who was small and could be sick any time. Then, this was about three years ago, she told me that they were looking for a Jewish community tax collector in three districts. I told her that I had never done such a thing in my life, but I would give it a try. This was sometime in February, and from the 1st March I started working in the 8th district, the Nagyfuvaros Street district. I have been doing it ever since, and I can say that they receive me with love everywhere.

My family is now so busy that, even though we speak on the phone, days, and sometimes even weeks go by without me seeing them. As a matter of fact I am also a lonely woman. So it feels good to work. I am in touch with very attractive, cultured people, with whom we have almost the same views, without having known each other from earlier times. And this is very satisfying. They also lovingly accept me at the Jewish community. I am among nice people there, too. Well, does

one need more in life? Doesn’t. All one really needs is health.

Glossary

1 Hungarian Soviet Republic

The Hungarian Soviet Republic was the political regime in Hungary from 21st March 1919 until the beginning of August of the same year. It was also the second Soviet government in history, the first one being the one in Russia in 1917. The communist government nationalized industrial and commercial enterprises, and socialized housing, transport, banking, medicine, cultural institutions, and large landholdings. In an effort to secure its rule the government used arbitrary violence. Almost 600 executions were ordered by revolutionary tribunals and the government also resorted to violence to expropriate grain from peasants. Only the Red Guard, commonly referred to as "Lenin-boys," was organized to support the power by means of terror. The Republic eliminated old institutions and the administration, but due to the lack of resources the new structure prevailed only on paper. Mounting external pressure, along with growing discontent and resistance of the people, resulted in a loss of communist power. Budapest was occupied by the Romanian army on 6th August, putting an end to the Hungarian Soviet Republic.

2 Anschluss

The annexation of Austria to Germany. The 1919 peace treaty of St. Germain prohibited the Anschluss, to prevent a resurgence of a strong Germany. On March 12,1938 Hitler occupied Austria, and with popular approval, annexed it as the province of Ostmark. In April 1945 Austria regained independence, which was legalized in the Austrian State Treaty in 1955.

3 MSZDP (Hungarian Social Democrat Party)

Established in 1890, it fought for general and secret suffrage and for the rights of the working class, as a non-parliamentary party during the dualistic era. In October 1918 it took part in the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the cabinets that followed. In March 1919 the unified MSZDP and HCP proclaimed the Hungarian Soviet Republic. After its failure, the party was reorganized. Its leaders entered into bargain with PM Bethlen in 1921, according to which the free operation of the party and that of the trade unions was assured, while the MNDSZ renounced the organization of state employees, railway and agricultural workers, political strikes and republican propaganda, among others. In the elections of 1922, the MSZDP became the second largest party of the opposition in Parliament, but later lost much of its support as a consequence of the welfare institutions initiated by the Hungarian governments in the 1930s. After the German occupation of Hungary the party was banned and its leaders arrested, forcing the party into illegitimacy. In the postwar elections it gathered the 2nd most votes. As member of the Left Bloc created by the communists it took part in dissolving the Smallholders' Party. At the same time the HCP tried to absorb the MSZDP as directed from Moscow, not without success: in 1948 the name of the two united party's became the Hungarian Workers' Party (MDP). After the instatement of a single-party dictatorship, social democrat leaders were removed. Under the leadership of Anna Kethly the party was renewed in 1956 and participated in the cabinet of Imre Nagy.

4 1929 World Financial Crisis

At the end of October 1929, there were worrying signs on the New York Stock Exchange in the securities market. On the 24th of October ('Black Thursday'), people began selling off stocks in a panic from the price drops of the previous days - the number of shares usually sold in a half year exchanged hands in one hour. The banks could not supply the amount of liquid assets required, so people didn't receive money from their sales. Five days later, on 'Black Tuesday', 16.4 million shares were put up for sale, prices dropped steeply, and the hoarded properties suddenly became worthless. The collapse of the Stock Exchange was followed by economic crisis. Banks called in their outstanding loans, causing immediate closings of factories and businesses, leading to higher unemployment, and a decline in the standard of living. By January of 1930, the American money market got back on it's feet, but during this year newer bank crises unfolded: in one month, 325 banks went under. Toward the end of 1930, the crisis spread to Europe: in May of 1931, the Viennese Creditanstalt collapsed (and with it's recall of outstanding loans, took Austrian heavy industry with it). In July, a bank crisis erupted in Germany, by September in England, as well. In Germany, in 1931, more than 19,000 firms closed down. Though in France the banking system withstood the confusion, industrial production and volume of exports tapered off seriously. The agricultural countries of Central Europe were primarily shaken up by the decrease of export revenues, which was followed by a serious agricultural crisis. Romanian export revenues dropped by 73 percent, Poland's by 56 percent. In 1933 in Hungary, debts in the agricultural sphere reached 2.2 billion Pengoes. Compared to the industrial production of 1929, it fell 76 percent in 1932 and 88 percent in 1933. Agricultural unemployment levels, already causing serious concerns, swelled immensely to levels, estimated at the time to be in the hundreds of thousands. In industry the scale of unemployment was 30 percent (about 250,000 people).

5 First Vienna Dictate

First Vienna Dictate: On 2nd November 1938 a German-Italian international committee in Vienna obliged Czechoslovakia to surrender much of the southern Slovakian territories that were inhabited mainly by Hungarians. The cities of Kassa (Kosice), Komarom (Komarno), Ersekujvar (Nove Zamky), Ungvar (Uzhorod) and Munkacs (Mukacevo), all in all 11.927 km2 of land, and a population of 1.6 million people became part of Hungary. According to the Hungarian census in 1941 84% of the people in the annexed lands were Hungarian-speaking.

6 Dohany Street Synagogue

Europe's largest and still functioning synagogue is a characteristic example of the Hungarian capital's Romantic style architecture and was always considered the main temple of Hungarian Jewry. The Jewish Community of Pest acquired the site in 1841 and the synagogue was built between 1854 and 1859, designed by Ludwig Foerster (who also designed the synagogue of Tempelgasse in Vienna, Austria). Using the biblical description of the Temple of Solomon as a model, he developed his peculiar orientalistic style while using the most modern contemporary techniques. The Hall of Heroes with the monument to Hungarian Jewish martyrs, set up in 1991, and the Jewish Heroes' Mausoleum built in 1929-1931 are next to the main building while the Jewish Museum is in an adjacent building.

7 Arrow Cross men

Extreme right-wing Hungarian group organized according to the Nazi model. Their symbol became a "Hungarianized" swastika (Teutonic cross), the Arrow Cross. With strong political rivalry between extreme right-wing groups in Hungary, they did not constitute a uniform organization. From the beginning of the 1930s the trend lead by Ferenc Szalasi rose above the others and formed the Party of the Nation's Will in 1935. Two years later Szalasi was arrested and Kalman Hubay took over the lead. In 1938 he established an organization permitted by the government under the name of Hungarian National-Socialist Party - Hungarist Movement, which later became an important, if not determinative, power in the Hungarian political arena.

8 The bombing of Budapest

The first bomb attack during World War II hit Budapest on the 4th-5th, then on the 9th-10th, of September 1942. The bombing was carried out by the Soviet long-range bombers that were launched from outside of Moscow.
The first bomb attack against Budapest was planned for the 2nd February 1944, but they postponed it because of bad weather, and so it only took place on the 3rd April. 450 bombers and 157 scouting airplanes of the American air-force, which took off in South-Italy attacked the Ferencvaros railway station and the airplane factory. Besides the bombings of the Americans during the day, the English air-arm carried out night attacks. On the 13th April 535 American planes attacked Budapest again, their target was the airplane factory and the airport.

From the end of August the Soviet and Romanian air force also bombed Hungary, they carried out intensive attacks against the railway stations and railway bridges in Budapest between the 1st and 21st September. The aim of the synchronized allied action was to bomb Hungary out of the war. After this only the Red Army bombed Budapest.

After the first attack on the 3rd April 1944 they ordered the evacuation of the endangered. There is no exact data available, but they estimate the number of those who left Budapest and its environs to 2-3000.

The bomb attacks aimed at the annihilation of the war infrastructure (airports, railroads, oil refineries), but besides this many civilians fell victims. Budapest was attacked 34 times, and the number of victims is about 3000. The defense against bomb attacks consisted of aerial defense and civil defense.

9 German Invasion of Hungary [19th March 1944]

Hungary was occupied by the German forces on this day. Nazi Germany decided to take this step because it considered the reluctance of the Hungarian government to carry out the 'final solution of the Jewish question' and deport the Jewish population of Hungary to concentration camps as evidence of Hungary's determination to join forces with the Western Allies. By the time of the German occupation, close to 63,000 Jews (8 percent of the Jewish population) had already fallen victim to the persecution. On the German side, special responsibility for Jewish affairs was assigned to Edmund Veesenmayer, the newly appointed minister and Reich plenipotentiary, and to Otto

Winkelmann, higher SS and police leader and Himmler's representative in Hungary.

10 Kistarcsa Internment Camp

This internment camp served as the place of imprisonment for those held for political reasons before the German occupation. After the occupation of Hungary by the German army on March 19th 1944, 1500-2000 Jews were transported here. Most of these Jews were then deported to Auschwitz.

11 Horthy’s proclamation

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12 Tattersal (Horse racetrack on Kerepesi Street)

After the arrow-cross takeover in October 1944, a systematic campaign against Jews began. Arrow-cross men and policemen together intruded into yellow-star houses and announced that men between the age of 16 and 60 were to leave within an hour. Later Jews selected by arrow-cross men and policemen were taken to the Tattersal or KISOK sports ground. Criteria and age limits specified by the authorities were often neglected and documents of exemption destroyed. The thousands of men who had been gathered were organized into labor companies and directed to dig trenches and to work on fortifications. Many died of starvation or exhaustion, as well as from torture by arrow-cross men, on the way to work.

13 Schutzpass (free-pass)

Document emitted by the diplomatic missions of neutral countries, which guaranteed its owner the protection of the given country. Theoretically this document exempted the Jews from several duties such as wearing the yellow star. Most of the free-passes were emitted by the Swiss and Swedish Consulates in Budapest. The Swiss consul Karl Lutz asked for 7,000 emigration permits in April 1944. The emission of the Swedish Schutzpass for Hungarian Jews started with Raoul Wallenberg's assignment as consul in Hungary. Free-passes used to be emitted also by Spain, Portugal and the Vatican. Although the number of free-passes was maximized to 15,600 in fall 1944, the real number of free-passes in circulation was much higher: 40-70,000 emitted by Switzerland, 7-10,000 by Sweden, 3,000 by Spain, not to mention the fake ones. Beginning in mid-November 1944 and citing as a reason the high number and the falsification of passes, Arrow Cross groups started to also carry off those people who had a pass. During raids of Jewish houses, Arrow Cross groups shot all the tenants into the Danube.

14 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. A decree in 1941 unified the arrangement, saying that the Jews were 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 6-7,000 returned.

15 Death marches to Hegyeshalom

After 15th October 1944 the German occupation of Hungary and the arrow-cross takeover, even Jewish women were ordered to work in fortifications around Budapest. In the beginning of November the Soviet troops initiated another offensive against the capital. In the changed situation the deportation plans 'had to be sped up' and many transports were directed on foot toward Hegyeshalom at the Austrian border. These marches were terribly cruel and resulted in an unprecedented high death rate. Until the Soviet occupation of Budapest (January 18, 1945), about 98,000 of the capital's Jews lost their lives in further marches and in train transports, as well as at the hands of arrow-cross extermination squads, from starvation and disease, and suicide. Some of the victims were simply shot and thrown into the Danube.

16 1956

Refers to the Revolution, which started on 23rd October 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 4th 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.