

# Ljudevit Blumenberg

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Subotica

Serbia

Interviewer: Nina Poljakovic

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## My family background

The only distant relative I remember is my maternal grandmother, Eszter Hubert, nee Klein. My grandmother was born in Subotica but I don't know when. By the time I was born she was already an old woman. She had ten children. When I was born two of my mother's brothers and three of her sisters were still alive. My grandmother's daughters were called Rozika, Juliska, Iren, Mariska and Klara and her sons Rudi, Laslo and Miklos. I don't remember the names of her other children.

My grandmother was a housewife and didn't work; however, she took care of an old man that lived nearby. She was a tall and big woman. She wore everyday clothes, long dresses, but not like those worn by Orthodox women. It was a very conservative milieu and women of all nationalities wore that type of dress. It was the custom at that time that the elderly and needy members of the Jewish community were taken care of by those who were in good physical condition and didn't have other jobs. The Jewish community collected money for the people who took care of the elderly. That's how my grandmother made some money. Hungarian was spoken at home and was her mother tongue.

My grandmother was Neolog [1](#) and went to the synagogue regularly on the high holidays. She often went with her daughter Mariska, who died of tuberculosis. I don't remember what my grandfather did for a living because he was already dead when I was born. My grandmother wasn't politically aware. However, during World War I, at the beginning of communism in Russia, and in Hungary after World War I, her son Miklos participated actively in political events and they executed him in 1919 when Horthy [2](#) took over.

My grandmother lived in a rather poor part of Subotica, near the forest. The house where she lived belonged to her daughter Rozika Donat. Her daughter was very rich and had three other houses apart from this one. It was a typical village house with a big yard. Since Rozika dealt in old iron, a special trade among Jews at the time, the yard had to be big enough to store the iron. My grandmother raised chickens in the garden and she had a wonderful dog named Citrom [Lemon]. The dog was named that since it was yellow all over. I was my grandmother's favorite and often went to stay with her. There were no special occasions when I went; it was rather when my parents

allowed me to. I was very happy when I was there because there was a big yard and a dog for me to play with. Her neighbors weren't Jews, but she had good relations with them.

I don't know anything about my paternal grandmother and grandfather because I never met them.

Everyone in my family was Neolog. My father, Herman Blumenberg, was killed on the front while he was doing his army service, in 1914, the year I was born. Unfortunately, he never saw me. My mother married again, a man named Mojsija Trilnik, who had two sons from his first marriage.

My father was born in Kosice, in current day Slovakia, around 1890. He got work in Subotica as an assistant cantor and shochet. After they married he and my mother went to Kanjiza where he was a cantor. I never met him and only remember his face from pictures. He was tall and everyone tells me I look like him. In those days the profession of a cantor was multi-faceted: he was a rabbi, a ritual slaughter and a cantor. In a small town like Kanjiza, where there was a small Jewish community, one person did everything. In Kanjiza there were two communities, an Orthodox community, which had fewer members and a Neolog community, which had many more. My father was a member of the Neolog community. His mother tongue was Slovak. My mother said he never learned Hungarian properly and he always spoke with a heavy Slovak accent. Even though the Jews in Kosice spoke Hungarian, which was their mother tongue, in my father's house we spoke Slovak.

My father must have been educated for several reasons. First because he worked as a cantor and I'm sure that he must have finished some school for doing so. I read letters that he wrote to my mother so he was literate. I know he sang excellently and played the piano. He was well-rounded and came from a family that took care of his schooling and upbringing. He was very religious. As far as I remember, half of his family was Orthodox, but after World War II everything changed. I met his two brothers after the war began. One brother, Lajos was a tailor and the other, Miklos, a traveling salesman. I even met their children: Greta lives in Venezuela and the other child, a son, lives in America where he works as a carpenter. He has two children.

My mother, Flora Trilnik, nee Hubert, was born in Subotica, but I don't know when. Her mother tongue was Hungarian and she also spoke German. She was the eldest child and the last to die. She was an excellent seamstress. She learned the trade in a middle school [3](#), but I don't know which one. She sewed independently, from home.

As I mentioned before, she had nine siblings. Rudi, who my grandmother liked the most and who I met, lived in Banat where he sold wood. He had a daughter, but I didn't meet her. During the war he was taken to Sajmiste [4](#) camp in Belgrade, where he was killed. Laszlo, whom I also met, was married and had a son whose name I cannot remember. He was a traveling salesman and was killed in Croatia. He wrote a letter, which I read, to his sister Rozika before he was killed asking for someone to come get his son because he wanted to save him. My aunt was unable to find someone to bring his son to Subotica and he died.

Rozika Donat, nee Hubert, sold iron and was very rich. As I mentioned before she lived in a house in Subotica with my grandmother. She was married but didn't have children. She died before the war. Miklos, a staunch communist in Hungary during Horthy's regime, was liquidated. Juliska Engelsman, nee Hubert, was married to an iron merchant, but he wasn't as successful as Aunt Rozika. Juliska had a son, Djurija, who was killed during the war. Djurija's wife and daughter survived and went to Israel after the war. I think both are still alive, but I'm not in touch with them.

Klara Szemzo, nee Hubert, died not long ago. She went with her husband Miklos to Israel. Miklos was a doctor who died in Israel a long time ago. They had a son and a daughter. Their daughter has a marketing agency in Israel, where she lives. I don't know her name nor where she lives. Iren Schwartz, nee Hubert, was a merchant in Bajmok. She had a grocery store and also went to the farmers' market where she bought chickens at wholesale price and resold them.

I saw Iren, Juliska and Rozika the most. I didn't like Rozika much because she was very rich and she knew that I was poor and never helped me. I liked Juliska the most because she was generous. She had children my age and we spent a lot of time together. With Klara, Juliska's daughter, we often went on vacations and we were in contact until she left for Israel.

## Growing up

I don't know how my parents met. I do know that they married in the synagogue in Kanjiza. As a cantor at the synagogue my father was well paid and my mother worked as a seamstress, so they were doing fine. I was born in Kanjiza on 18th August 1914. As a small child I lived with my mother in Kanjiza. I was six when my mother remarried. We then moved to Subotica. My mother and Mojsije Trilnik, my stepfather, met much earlier. This is quite an interesting story. My mother's relative was married to Trilnik. After her death and my father's death they decided to marry because my stepfather was alone with two kids. He convinced my mother to marry him. She was alone and thought it would be easier to educate the children if she was with someone. We had a small apartment and a piano which we could hardly squeeze in.

My stepfather was a bill collector and a shammash in the Subotica Jewish community. His two children lived with us. We were five children in the house: my two sisters, his two sons and me. My sisters were Magda, born in Kanjiza around 1909, and Sari, born in Kanjiza in 1913. His two sons were called Lajos and Andrija. My relationship with my stepfather was terrible, but I got along well with his sons. My stepfather never hit me, but he did hit his own kids. I simply felt that he didn't love me and that he ignored me. I felt as if I was unsuccessful and stupid. He acted the same way towards Magda and Sari and they felt the same way about him as I.

I went to the Jewish elementary school in Subotica. My teacher, Varnai, was a wonderful and smart man. I don't remember the other students. Later my stepfather got a better job in Kutina [today Croatia] where I finished the 4th grade of gymnasium. I don't remember the teachers' names, but they all treated me well. In Kutina there were only trade schools for blacksmiths, locksmiths and tailors. Since I had no desire to study any of those professions, I returned to Subotica where my older sister lived. She finished four years of gymnasium and then enrolled in a private clerical school. She didn't come with us to Kutina because she had a good job as a clerk with LITERARIJA, an importer of Hungarian books and newspapers in Subotica. She had a very good salary. She was 18 and able to take care of herself. She lived with my rich Aunt Rozika. When I came to Subotica I read in the newspaper that they were looking for students who had finished four years of gymnasium for a dental technician school. I started to study and my sister Magda supported me.

My other sister, Sari, nicknamed Csanyi, finished four years of gymnasium in Kutina. She worked as a clerk in a lawyer's office and never married. She was a very good athlete and gymnast.

My stepfather's older son, Andrija, studied to be a rabbi in a rabbinical school in Sarajevo. This type of school lasted two or three years and then the boy was able to conduct the synagogue service.

After finishing school he married and went to Nova Gradiska [today Croatia] where he worked as a rabbi. When the war broke out he went back to Subotica, the Hungarians drafted him, took him to Ukraine and he never returned. He has a daughter, Boriska, who is a professor in Israel.

My stepfather's younger son, Lajos, finished a gymnasium and enrolled in a technical school in Zagreb. During that period he became a staunch communist and was sentenced to four years in prison in Sremska Mitrovica. Afterwards he went to Paris where he married and had a daughter. His daughter died of a heart defect.

As a young boy I went to the synagogue. I had my bar mitzvah along with my stepfather's son who was three months younger than me. We had a big celebration in Kutina with all our relatives. I learned a lot about Judaism while my stepfather worked in the Subotica Jewish community; we also discussed these themes in Hashomer Hatzair [5](#). Every week we celebrated Sabbath at home since my stepfather was very religious. He observed the kashrut, but I don't remember the details. I know that he conducted the services in the Jewish community where we went on Sabbath and on the high holidays. Besides that my mother observed Sabbath at home. While we lived in Kanjiza my mother lit five candles on Sabbath. I remember that on Sabbath my stepfather always blessed his sons but he never blessed us. That's just one example of how he didn't love us and how he treated us differently. Afterwards we had dinner. My mother took me to the synagogue and left me downstairs with the men while she went upstairs. I liked Pesach the best when matzot were eaten, when the mah nishtanah, the four traditional questions were asked, when we cleaned the apartment and used different dishes. During that holiday everything was different.

We were very poor during my school years and my parents were unable to afford private language and music lessons for me. My stepfather made sure that his sons received education, but there was no money for me. My stepfather once said that only one child could be educated, not two. He decided that it would be best if I were to become a merchant, that is, first an apprentice in a shop and afterwards, when I had learned enough, a merchant. My aunt Rozika, who was rich and rather stingy, offered me financial help. She was willing to pay for me to go to a cantorial school. However, when it was time for me to enroll, it became evident that it wasn't all that simple. There was no cantorial school in Yugoslavia, only in Budapest, and she didn't want to finance my studies there. The sister whom I was closest to read in the papers that a dental technician in Subotica was looking for an apprentice who had finished four years of schooling [middle school]. I met these requirements, he took me on and I began my apprenticeship. Both of my sisters had jobs and they helped me financially. I remember that Sari sent me 200-300 dinars pocket-money every month. My favorite hobby was sport; my friends and I frequently played football and went running.

While I was a dental apprentice I joined Hashomer Hatzair, whose president was Laszlo Sporer, one of my best friends. During my apprenticeship, I began to socialize more and more with members of Hashomer Hatzair and they suggested I join the organization. My mother was very happy when I joined because it meant I would have more friends. With Hashomer Hatzair we went on a lot of trips to Kanjiza, Palic and other nearby small towns. It was very nice. We took our tents and uniforms with gray shirts just like real scouts. The themes we discussed were often related to Israel; we learned the ancient Hebrew language used in prayer books, but never mastered it. During that period, I was very close to Denci Kornstajn, also a member of Hashomer, who was later hung. He went to Israel, but didn't like it and returned.

After that I got work in Kragujevac with a Jewish dentist; I was around 18 at the time. I worked as a dental assistant for Laszlo Ernest for five years. These were the best years. I had a good salary and I could indulge myself. Laszlo liked and respected me. I lived as a tenant in a room I paid for by myself. When I lived in Kragujevac I established a Zionist organization there because there wasn't any. I was the president as long as I lived there. I had a lot of friends some of whom were Jews. It's interesting to note that I ate at a restaurant where a lot of Slovenians used to eat. I befriended them and they taught me to ski and dance. I was young and full of life and these were truly the best years. I was in contact with my parents and went home once a year to visit them. My mother came to visit me once, too.

## Married life

Afterwards Laszlo Ernest helped me find work in Belgrade with a dentist named Jancsi Horvat. Because he was unable to conduct his research in our country, he closed his practice and went to Germany. I worked as his assistant. During that time I went to the Jewish cafeteria where I met my wife, a law student named Flora Finci. She was born in Bijeljina [today Bosnia and Herzegovina] in 1913.

Flora had a lot of brothers and sisters who were older than she was. It was her father's third marriage because both of his two previous wives died. Flora had a wonderful stepmother who took care of her as if she was her own daughter. Her stepmother didn't have her own children so she accepted her as her own. I don't remember a lot about her childhood. By the time she was born her father was already really poor and life wasn't easy. At that time a Jewish girl couldn't get married without a dowry. Her father had a daughter and was in a new marriage with Flora's stepmother; he had to support all of these people and have something to live off. I don't remember much about her education; I know about the period when she was in Belgrade, when we met. Flora had two sisters who didn't return from the war and a brother who had been in captivity and did return. Bijeljina was a Muslim town and after the war not one Jew remained there. They destroyed the synagogue. When her brother, who was very religious, returned from captivity he committed suicide as a result of the stress and negative influences of war. Out of all these sisters and brothers she was the only one to survive.

We married in Kutina in 1938. Her father died before our wedding. We had a wedding under a chuppah, but not in the synagogue. The chuppah was erected in our garden. Two rabbis married us: one was Andrija, my stepfather's son, and the other was my stepfather. We had our first child, Vladislav, or Vlada, in 1940 and after that I joined the army. My wife remained with the child in Belgrade. I served in Novi Sad where I was assigned to work as a dental technician. The war broke out, and luckily, a few days before the bombing of Belgrade, my Flora left with the child for Bijeljina to be with her stepmother.

I went to Subotica with a Hungarian friend from the army who lived in the Czech Republic and had opened a dental technician practice. He came to Yugoslavia to serve in the army because at that time the army service was shorter in Yugoslavia than in the Czech Republic. This lasted a very short time because by the time we started work the war began. When the war intensified in our area I wanted to bring Flora and the child closer to me, but I didn't know how. I had a friend, Tibor Rem, who I went skiing with when I lived in Kragujevac. He was a Hungarian spy so I asked him to help me. I told him how much money I had with Flora in Bijeljina, and that I would give him all of it

if he brought Flora and the child to me. He went to Bosnia and he brought Flora and Vlada to Subotica.

My friend and I worked well together until they took me into forced labor around 1941. For some time after they took me away, he even gave my part of the money to Flora. However, when he married his wife forbade him to help my wife and child. Since she didn't have anything to live on, Flora began to knit. She supported herself and our son from the money she made by knitting. After the war she began to work as a judge.

Magda and Sari, my mother, my stepfather, my wife and my son Vlada were all in forced labor on the border between the Czech Republic and Austria; I don't know the exact location. They were there for a year to a year and a half. Vlada was young and no one touched him. They were among the rare cases that were taken to forced labor and not to the camps. They slept in a movie theater and worked in a sugar factory where they were assigned to the hardest physical labor. They lived decently during this time because the other workers frequently gave them bread. Compared to people in other camps they weren't hungry. They also had as much sugar as they wanted. Luckily, they weren't sent from forced labor to a camp and they all returned. When the end of the war was in sight they put my family and some other Hungarian families from Szeged in a bunker covered with straw. The Czechs took care of them, brought them food and as soon as the war was over they found a train to take them home.

### During the war

When the war broke out the men were drafted. I was drafted in Belgrade and my friend Denci in Subotica and we met in Ruma, in the courtyard of the Serbian church. There he told me that we had to run away because the Germans were going to take us into captivity. They had already started to make groups of captives based on nationality. The two of us were put in a group with Hungarians and we went by foot to Sombor and then to Subotica. I was already married, as was he. His wife, Ljubica Kornstajn, is still alive.

I remember that it was rare at that time for someone to have a radio. Denci invited me to listen to the news because war had broken out between the Russians and the Germans [see Great Patriotic War] [6](#). I came to his place and ran into a lot of people; only later did I learn that he was a communist and a member of the party. A few days later I met him again and again he invited me to listen to the radio. I was scared and asked him if he thought it was a good idea to invite all those people and make propaganda. A short time later they hung him.

The war began, and this is how my life looked at that time: In 1941, I was already living in Subotica and working with a colleague in his dental technician practice. After six months, they took me to forced labor. One day the Hungarian authorities [see Hungarian occupation of Yugoslavia] [7](#) called me to Sombor, where all the Jews my age from Subotica were taken, to register for forced labor. We were put up in a school. In Sombor we worked at the airport. From there they took us to Prigrevica where we were put up in a stable. I must say it was bearable; they even let us go home during the winter. After that they moved us to a railroad unit at the most heavily used station in Budapest [Rakos rendezo] where we worked alongside the Hungarian soldiers.

We dug up time bombs and were very lucky that none of them went off and no one was wounded. Since that station was used for army transport, they unexpectedly removed us and transferred us

to the border close to Slovakia; I don't know exactly where. Suddenly, they took us somewhere near Szombathely [today Hungary], where there was a forest. Our task was to make a new track, which I think was used to hide locomotives during bombings. That's when the harsh Jewish tragedy began for me; it was then that I began to encounter horrible things. One day, they lined up our unit and took us to Szombathely. The first thing we saw was a school with an open gate. And what we saw there! Heaps of dead bodies were arranged like wood, one on top of the other, in a pile. The Hungarians forced us into a room. The first directive was to get naked. Once we were undressed they began to beat us. We had to hand over everything we had with us: money, jewelry, documents, pictures, prayer books. They literally ran over and killed anyone who fell over and couldn't get up. The Hungarians put us in a barrack where we cried for our dead friends who weren't strong enough to make it. The next day a malicious and repulsive officer handed us over to the Austrians.

They divided us into two groups. It was very hard because we were separated from our family and friends with whom we had shared the pain from the beginning. Our group was taken to a school in Sandorfa [today Hungary] where we got awful food and were terribly hungry. We were there for two months. Our assignment was to make holes so tanks couldn't pass. One day they lined us up and took us to a road where there were already a lot of Jews from other units. There we were reunited with some of our friends and family. Then we started our way towards Mauthausen. The journey lasted days and days without sleep and food, and the procession was very long. I was so hungry I ate grass.

I remember one sad experience during this ten-day journey. At that time a large number of Germans was fleeing from Yugoslavia. While walking in procession, we saw them passing us. They rushed by us on horses and in cars. A truck passed us and German soldiers began to scream, 'Let's go, climb up!' Some of our friends got on that truck. I almost climbed up, but at the last moment a friend stopped me and said, 'Don't!' I listened to him and continued walking. Shortly afterwards, we saw our friends who had climbed onto the truck lying dead on the side of the road. We continued for days and days until we arrived in a small town where there was a mine. As we entered the village, villagers were standing outside with machine guns and they killed a mass of Jews as they were passing. It was terrible. We had to pass by dead and half dead people. Those who survived went into barracks where we received our first food of the journey: soup that was more like water than soup.

Finally, we reached Mauthausen where there was no longer a crematorium, instead there were big holes and tents. There I met my relative Klara Hubert, her mother and two daughters. When we recognized one another we hugged and kissed each other and made one other as happy as can be in a camp. By then the Germans who guarded the camp had already liquidated Mauthausen and sent the people to different camps. Klara was supposed to go to Gunskirchen, a subcamp of Mauthausen, with her two daughters and mother, but her mother was very sick and in no condition to travel. She asked me for advice, probably to clear her conscience. She didn't know what to do, to go without her mother and with the children or not. I didn't know what to tell her, but I soothed her conscience by telling her, 'Leave your mother and save your two daughters.'

Her mother stayed in a tent which was called a 'hospital', but everyone there was almost dead. I promised her that I would visit her mother every day as long as I was there. And so it was. Every day I went to visit. I promised my aunt that as soon as we were freed I would take her home. She

didn't survive, but Klara and her daughters did. I was even a witness at her daughter's wedding before she went to Israel. We never saw each other again. After Mauthausen the Germans took us to Gunskirchen. When we arrived there it was almost over. The American soldiers arrived by truck, and yelled that they were liberating us.

The first thing everyone did was run to a warehouse and check if there was still food in there because they were hungry. Our group decided not to enter the warehouse because there were so many people that they were climbing on top of each other and grabbing for food. The next morning we started walking home. On the way we found a German warehouse full of food and we packed up clothing that is uniforms, food and whatever else we could find. We didn't change our clothes immediately because we needed to get rid of the lice in order to avoid contracting typhus. Dr. Stevan Barna, known as Ivan Pruci, came with us. He was the most capable of all of us, and he took care of us.

We came across a newly constructed building with Hitlerjugend 8 written on it. Inside there were Italian soldiers who greeted us very nicely. They fed us and gave us soap so that we could wash ourselves and change clothes. It was true luck. After a few days Pruci went to the train station to inquire about trains to Yugoslavia. We learned that we needed to go to Linz [Austria]. When we arrived in Linz we found a big German warehouse full of suitcases and packed our things and food. We spent a few days in the barracks and then moved to a Russian camp. A wonderful Slovenian, a Yugoslav officer, appeared from somewhere and organized a wagon, which transported gravel, to take us home. There, Klara, whom I had last seen in Mauthausen, and I were reunited.

I remember one interesting story. The whole way home from the camp I was thinking and fearing who I would find upon my return. I don't remember what town I was in when I got off the train and went into the station café. Inside the café, a big piece of paper was hanging with the names of the Jews who had passed through written on it. On that piece of paper, I found the names of my whole family. Try and imagine how great I felt; I would make it home and my whole family would be waiting for me. I was one of the few. When I arrived home my whole family really was waiting for me. I truly had luck in this horrible war. Unfortunately, my wife did not; her whole family was killed.

## Post-war

We had to start from scratch, which was very hard. We began by living in a small room and I rented a small space for an office. Quickly I learned that a dental technician school had been opened in Novi Sad which lasted half a year. I finished that school and became a dentist. After that I received my diploma and I could begin to work.

My first dental chair was an ordinary barber's chair, but I managed quite well with such modest equipment. I worked in a private practice. After some time I heard that it was possible to get an advanced dental degree. The requirements for the course included eight years of gymnasium and two years of dental school. I enrolled in that school with my colleague, Stevan Ric. We studied a lot, passed all the tests and finished the course. He and I were the first advanced dentists in Subotica, the rest were all dental technicians. I worked in a health clinic, then in a health clinic for railroad workers and then privately.

I must admit, after the war I wanted to go to Israel, but there was a problem. My mother didn't want to leave my stepfather in Yugoslavia and I didn't want him to go with us. So we stayed here

because I didn't want to leave my mother. Since I belonged to a Zionist organization I supported going to Israel, a country where all the Jews would gather in one land. My sister Sari got a very good job in Belgrade and didn't want to leave. My sister Magda went to Israel. She had a daughter there, Vera. After the war I became less religious. However, I still go to the synagogue on the holidays and celebrate them at home with my wife Flora.

In the period after the war the economic situation was terrible. There was nothing. We had children and life was hard. What was important was that we were healthy. Flora very quickly found work in the court and we began to live a decent life. By the time the children started school we were in a better financial situation and were able to pay for their education.

We taught our children that they cannot run from who they are and not to hide the fact that they are Jews. We weren't very religious, but we taught our children what we knew. They went to the Jewish community where they socialized with the other children and learned about the Jewish religion. For the high holidays we went to the community and celebrated with the other Jews. We didn't go to the synagogue on Sabbath nor did we light candles.

Neither before the war nor after were we members of the party. We were entirely normal citizens who tried to rebuild their lives. I had a private practice and I didn't have any problems. Even though my wife worked in the court, a state job, she didn't have any problems because of her religious affiliation. Vlada and Miki didn't have problems in school or amongst their friends. Subotica was a multi-ethnic city and this was never an issue.

I was ecstatic over the establishment of the State of Israel. As an old member of Hashomer Hatzair I was ready to go and live in Israel, but I didn't go because of my mother who didn't want to leave her husband behind, as I mentioned before. I didn't want to leave her behind with this man who wasn't such a good person. Sari, who was a staunch party member, didn't want to leave because it suited her to stay in Yugoslavia. In the end, only Magda went with her husband and daughter. I went a few times to visit her. It was terrible for me when the wars started in Israel [see Six-Day-War [9](#) and Yom Kippur War [10](#)]. Today, I still get very upset each time something happens. Because of that I am in frequent contact with relatives outside of Yugoslavia.

My friends after the war were mostly Flora's colleagues from the court and mostly non-Jews. During the holidays we socialized with Jews, but that was only within the Jewish community.

Before the end of communism we didn't live so well. We retired and were lucky that our children helped us to get through the hard times. Except for sickness, to this day we don't have any serious problems. Now we are recipients of the Claims Conference which helps us a lot.

As long as I lived in Subotica I socialized with Jews, but when we moved to Kutina my circle of friends consisted mainly of non-Jews because very few Jews my age lived there. I must say that there was no anti-Semitism, and the Jews that lived there were involved in commerce and were very wealthy. Besides Jews, Serbs were also involved in trade, but Croats were not. Jews owned a lot of coffee shops as well.

In Subotica there was always some anti-Semitism, mainly among the Hungarians. The others weren't as hostile. I don't remember any bigger offensives. Anti-Semitism was much stronger before the war. After the war life was hard for everyone so they didn't pay attention to the Jews

and anti-Semitism. While I lived in Belgrade I didn't feel any. Nor did I feel any in Kragujevac. Amongst my Slovenian friends, who I mentioned earlier, I occasionally felt signs of anti-Semitism, but it was inconsequential, a joke or a story. Serbs always liked me and invited me to their saint's days, Easter and Christmas. After the war and during communism it was impermissible to express anti-Semitic sentiments.

I mentioned already that we had a son, Vladislav. He is a dentist, like myself, and lives in Switzerland with his wife and daughter. My son married a Croatian, Bunjevac. In their house they celebrate both the Jewish and Catholic holidays. I know that all the high holidays are celebrated, that Vlada fasts and that most of their friends are Jews. Even though she is a Christian we love our daughter-in-law very much. Religion isn't important to us. Vlada and his wife taught their kids both about Christianity and Judaism. When Vlada finished dental school he started to work in a clinic in Subotica. He was employed in the main clinic where all the bosses made dentures while the others treated and extracted teeth. This bothered him a lot and he started to look for possibilities to leave the country. The first offer he received was in Switzerland and he went. He had luck there and today he lives very well.

My other son, Miroslav or Miki, was born in Subotica in 1950. He is a professor at a medical school in New York where he does scientific research on human skin. He organized his life according to a plan: he finished university, married and then left for America. I don't know why he left. I know that he was active in the Jewish community of Subotica. Along with his late friend, Petar Klajn, he wrote and published the local Jewish youth paper which covered a variety of issues. While working on the paper he was invited to a youth seminar in America and he went. America enchanted him and he quickly found a way to get assistance in America.

Miki has his own family: a wife, a son and a daughter. He married a Jewish woman with whom he goes to a modern Jewish community with a woman cantor every week. He celebrates every holiday at home. Not long ago he told me that he began research and lecturing on which Arab lands are closest to the Jewish nation. The results of his research were that Palestine is closest. He has never told me that he is religious, but I have that impression since he is always in those circles and he celebrates every holiday and observes Sabbath. After the war, I talked to my sons a lot about the terrors of the war. Vlada doesn't remember the war nor does he remember being in forced labor camps with his mother.

I have to admit that as Flora and I are older now we miss our children very much. We are quite alone and it's very hard for us that our children are so far away. However, I wouldn't like for them to return. I'm sure that they don't wish to because they have made good lives for themselves elsewhere. Vlada has a wonderful and very good practice, with four assistants and Miki is also successful.

## Glossary

### **1 Neolog Jewry**

Following a Congress in 1868/69 in Budapest, where the Jewish community was supposed to discuss several issues on which the opinion of the traditionalists and the modernizers differed and which aimed at uniting Hungarian Jews, Hungarian Jewry was officially split into two (later three)

communities. They all created their own national community network. The Neologs were the modernizers, who opposed the Orthodox on various questions.

## **2 Horthy, Miklos (1868-1957)**

Regent of Hungary from 1920 to 1944. Relying on the conservative plutocrats and the great landowners and Christian middle classes, he maintained a right-wing regime in interwar Hungary. In foreign policy he tried to attain the revision of the Trianon peace treaty - on the basis of which two thirds of Hungary's territory were seceded after WWI - which led to Hungary entering WWII as an ally of Germany and Italy. When the Germans occupied Hungary in March 1944, Horthy was forced to appoint as Prime Minister the former ambassador of Hungary in Berlin, who organized the deportations of Hungarian Jews. On 15th October 1944 Horthy announced on the radio that he would ask the Allied Powers for truce. The leader of the extreme right-wing fascist Arrow Cross Party, Ferenc Szalasi, supported by the German army, took over power. Horthy was detained in Germany and was later liberated by American troops. He moved to Portugal in 1949 and died there in 1957.

## **3 Middle school**

This type of school was attended by pupils between the ages of 10 and 14 (which corresponds in age to the lower secondary school). As opposed to secondary school, here the emphasis was on modern and practical subjects. Thus, beside the regular classes, such as literature, maths, natural sciences, history, etc., modern languages (mostly German, but to a lesser extent also French and English), accounting and economics were taught. While secondary school prepared children to enter university, middle school provided its graduates with the type of knowledge, which helped them find a job in offices, banks, etc as clerks, accountants, secretaries, or to manage their own business or shop.

## **4 Sajmiste**

Fairground in the town of Zemun (opposite Belgrade, across the Sava river) which was used as an internment camp for Serbian Jews. Mainly women and children were deported there. In the spring of 1942 most Jews of the camp were killed in gas vans, the rest died of hunger and exposure.

## **5 Hashomer Hatzair in Yugoslavia**

Leftist Zionist youth organization founded in 1909 by members of the Second Aliyah, many of whom were active in revolutionary movements back in the Russian Empire. In the diaspora its main goal was to prepare Jewish youth for the hard pioneering life in Palestine. It was first organized in Yugoslavia in 1930.

## **6 Great Patriotic War**

On 22nd June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War. The German blitzkrieg, known as Operation Barbarossa, nearly succeeded in breaking the Soviet Union in the months that followed. Caught unprepared, the Soviet forces lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment

to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November 1941 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The war ended for the Soviet Union on 9th May 1945.

## **7 Hungarian occupation of Yugoslavia**

In April 1941 Yugoslavia was occupied by German, Hungarian, Italian, and Bulgarian troops. Hungary reoccupied some of the areas it had ceded to the newly formed Yugoslavia after World War I, namely Backa (Bacska), Baranja (Baranya), Medjumurje (Murakoz) and Prekmurje (Muravidek). The Hungarian armed forces massacred some 2,000 people, mostly Jews but also Serbs, in Novi Sad in January 1942. The Hungarians ordered the formation of forced labor battalions into which all Jewish and Serbian males aged 21-48 were drafted. Many of them were sent to the Ukrainian front, others to Hungary and German-occupied Serbia (the infamous Bor copper mines). After the German occupation of Hungary in March 1944 the Jews of the area were deported to Auschwitz.

## **8 Hitlerjugend**

The youth organization of the German Nazi Party (NSDAP). In 1936 all other German youth organizations were abolished and the Hitlerjugend was the only legal state youth organization. From 1939 all young Germans between 10 and 18 were obliged to join the Hitlerjugend, which organized after-school activities and political education. Boys over 14 were also given pre-military training and girls over 14 were trained for motherhood and domestic duties. After reaching the age of 18, young people either joined the army or went to work.

## **9 Six-Day-War**

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

## **10 Yom Kippur War**

The Arab-Israeli War of 1973, also known as the Yom Kippur War or the Ramadan War, was a war between Israel on one side and Egypt and Syria on the other side. It was the fourth major military confrontation between Israel and the Arab states. The war lasted for three weeks: it started on 6th October 1973 and ended on 22nd October on the Syrian front and on 26th October on the Egyptian front.