

# Mariana Farkas

Mariana Farkas

Brasov

Romania

Interviewer: Andreea Laptas

Date of interview: May 2004

[My family history](#)

[Growing up](#)

[During the war](#)

[Post-war](#)

[Glossary](#)

Mrs. Farkas is a 74-year-old woman; she's tiny, thin yet nimble, with short white hair, with a tint of lilac in it, and blue eyes. Her hand is still dressed because of a car accident she suffered recently, and her eyes are still bluish behind the foundation she uses. She lives in an apartment in a building in the old center of Brasov, and she has two rooms and a kitchen. In the living room one can see a photo of her mother, when she was still a young lady, and photos of her daughter and granddaughter. Her library contains mainly books in Hungarian. Mrs. Farkas is very hospitable, and very open; she loves to have guests. While she talks, she smokes one cigarette after another, because, she says, it's the only pleasure she has left, and everybody has to die from something!

## My family history

My grandparents on my father's side were called Iosif and Gizella Stein. I know my grandmother was born in 1867, but she died before I was born, in 1927; she died at a rather early age, at 60, because of stomach cancer. Both [my grandparents] spoke Hungarian, and I know that my grandfather was a clerk, and my grandmother a housewife. They lived in a village very close [20km] to Budapest, a village called Maglod.

After my grandmother had died, my grandfather lived there with my aunt, one of my father's sisters, who was called Elena – or Ilona in Hungarian – Meier, nee Stein. My grandfather died there as well, in 1937 or 1938. I knew my grandfather; sometimes I went during the holidays to my aunt's, when I was little, but I stayed there only a few days a year. But he was already too old, he was over 80 years old; he did love me, but the poor man was already ill and at that age one has very little patience with children, so I didn't have a strong relationship with him. I don't know how religious he was, but no one in our family was a bigot.

The house where my grandfather lived when I knew him belonged to my aunt's husband, a Jew called Jakob Meier, who was an engineer. It had three rooms and a kitchen, I believe, and it had running water and electricity. They kept hens, I remember that, and there were some greens in the garden. My aunt was in charge of the household; she had no help, although they weren't poor people. They had one daughter, Alice, who left for Sweden in 1947. She had a son, George, who was born there in 1948.

My father had three sisters and a brother: so there was Elena Meier, who lived near Budapest, and who was married to Jakob Meier. Another of my father's sisters was Hilda Allenberg, nee Stein, who was married to Leo Allenberg, a Jew who had a timber warehouse near Arad, at Vinga. They lived in Arad and then left for Sweden in 1956, to Stockholm, where my aunt died in 1983. In Sweden, Uncle Leo worked as an accountant at a ready-made clothes factory. They had a son, Victor, who died at 20.

The third sister was Rozalia, who was married, but I don't remember her husband's name; he was, however, a Jew from Vienna. She lived with him in Targu Mures, and she died in a concentration camp, in 1944, I think. Rozalia didn't have any children.

My father's brother was called Emil Bozoky [changed from Stein] and he had a textile factory in Budapest, where he also lived. He was married to Victoria, with whom he had two children: a girl, Lea, and a boy, Imre. Then Victoria died, when Lea was twelve years old, in 1928, I think, and he got remarried to Helga, who was a woman with a very beautiful face, but was obese, that's why she died in 1940 or 1941. I only remember that she used to make cappuccino for me when I came to visit, and I didn't like it. After that Uncle Emil married Irma.

My father, Albert Bozoky, changed his name from Stein to Bozoky [1](#) in the 1920s because he worked with his brother, my uncle, who owned the factory. My uncle was the first to change his name, and my father followed his example, back then he was still single. When Transylvania [2](#) was returned [Mariana is referring to the Trianon Peace Treaty [3](#)], the Jews and the other nationalities were generally forced by the state to change their names. Anti-Semitism existed in Hungary even then, and my uncle didn't want a Jewish name to be written on the frontispiece of the factory, he wanted to avoid some problems, for example somebody could have set the factory on fire, or something like that.

My father was born in Becicherecu Mic, in Yugoslavia [during that period it was under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and now it's on Romania's territory], in 1894. He studied at the faculty of economics in Budapest, and he worked as an accountant. He spoke Hungarian as his mother tongue, just like my mother. My mother, Johana Bozoky, nee Seidenfeld, was born in Petrosani in 1903, and she had gone through four classes of high school.

I know how my parents met. I had an aunt, one of my mother's cousins, Victoria, who was married to my father's brother, Emil [she was his first wife]. The two of them met there, within family circles. My mother used to come from Transylvania to Budapest many times, and she stayed at her cousin's, she also had other relatives there, my father visited his brother, and that's how they met. But it was a love marriage, it wasn't arranged. They married religiously in 1927, in the synagogue, they probably had a ketubah as well, but I don't remember ever seeing it.

My father was drafted into the army during World War I. He used to tell us how life on the front was. He was a young officer back then and he told us that at the officers' mess there was a specific Hungarian dish, which he liked tremendously. It was a dish made from boiled potatoes, cut into little pieces and then put in a pot with fried onion. Then you boiled some noodles, usually the square ones, and put them in the pot. Then you added a bit of paprika on the potatoes, for the color, and when everything was boiled, you stirred it, added salt, pepper; and this was the dish my father liked, but I don't remember what it was called. My mother also tried to make it, as she knew the recipe. She made it at home, but my father didn't like it, he said that it wasn't like the one from

the officer's mess and that the officers received better food there. And I know Mother told him, 'Of course, you were hungry there, your guts rumbled, that's why you liked it so much, hunger makes one eat anything!'

My maternal grandparents, Lipot and Gizella Seidenfeld, lived in Rau de Mori, in the region of Hateg. My grandfather was born in Lupeni, and he had a store. I think he had some elementary school, and his mother tongue was Hungarian, as well as my grandmother. Her maiden name was Lorincz, and she was from Hateg as well; I think she did four classes of high school, and she was a housewife, but of course she helped my grandfather a lot with the store. I know that my grandmother had a brother, who lived in Deva, and some other siblings in Dej, but I don't know anything more about them.

My mother, Johana Bozoky, had four sisters and a brother: Frida Bauer [nee Seidenfeld] was married to Ottó Bauer, a Jew from Zagreb who was a clerk. They lived in Zagreb, and Frida was a superintendent at a boarding school for girls there. Aunt Frida's husband, Ottó, killed himself, because he gambled in a game of cards the money of the factory he worked for, and only after that he realized what he had done. He was away in Belgrade, I think, and he shot a bullet through his head there, in a hotel room. After that Frida remained in Zagreb. Frida died in 1944 in a concentration camp, and she didn't have any children.

Irina Pavlici [nee Seidenfeld] was married to Anton Pavlici, who was a Catholic, and who also worked in Zagreb as a lawyer. Irina was a housewife, and she had a daughter, Nada, who lives in London [England] now.

Matilda Weinberger [nee Seidenfeld] was married to a Jew, Adolf Weinberger, who was a notary. They lived in Targu Mures, and he died of natural death, before the Holocaust. Matilda was a housewife, and she had a daughter, Magdalena. Matilda died in Auschwitz, in 1944.

My mother's third sister, Borbala Steinhart [nee Seidenfeld], was married to a Jew, but I don't know his first name. Borbala was a housewife as well, and she had a son, Nicolae. She died in a concentration camp in 1944, either in Auschwitz or in Bergen-Belsen, I don't remember exactly.

My mother's brother was called Alexandru Seidenfeld, and he was also a shopkeeper, he helped my grandparents with their store. He was married to a Jewish woman, Reghina, and he didn't have children. He got sick with consumption; when he was on the front during World War I; he had to stay in water up to his waist, that's how he fell ill. So he stayed with my grandparents, helped them as long as he had the strength, but then the disease progressed, and killed him. Alexandru died in 1939 in Rau de Mori.

My grandparents had a big house with about six rooms, which was their property. I remember there was a large bolted gate through which the carts entered, and to the right there was always the guest room. My grandmother rented it out during summers, there were many tourists coming, because my grandparents lived at the very foot of Retezat Mountains [Editor's note: Massif located in the western Meridional Carpathians, between the depressions of Hateg and Petrosani]. Many tourists climbed the Retezat from there, and in the summer there were loads of people who wanted accommodation.

There was no electricity there, but my grandmother had gas lamps, the water was brought from the fountain, and wood was used for heating. My grandmother had a servant, a man to look after the animals, but she did have many children, six, and she couldn't cope with everything alone. I remember there was a garden, and she always had somebody to work in it. The garden was about 1000 square meters, and it wasn't near the house, it was on a nearby street, but it was a marvel: there were fruit bearing trees, anything one can imagine grew there. As for animals, my grandparents raised a cow and horses; they needed them for the coach.

My grandparents had a small grocery store, and they also had an inn, which were in the same house: the grocery store was in one room, and the inn in another room. They sold food in the store, anything from bread to oil, but they didn't sell meat. In the inn they served beer, wine, and my grandparents were in charge of everything, they had no help except from my uncle Alexandru. He may have been sick in his lungs, but he was the one who would keep the discipline in the pub. My uncle was highly esteemed! God, he had some strength in him! He would crack a head open with his bare hands if the customers were drunk and caused trouble.

They were rather well off, but they had enough problems, that is, they weren't rich because they had six children to raise and dress: five girls and a boy, so they weren't rich. But they lived well. They had time to go out, my grandfather went with the girls to balls in Hateg, where there were Purim balls, because there were many Jews there, but other balls as well, where long dresses were worn, like it was in those times. But I don't remember my grandparents ever going on a holiday; with six kids and a household I don't think they ever got further than a spa.

My grandparents had friends in the village, the intellectuals: there was a doctor, a Romanian priest who came to their house rather often, and then there was the administrator of a near-by castle – there was a certain Count Kendeffy who had some sort of a castle there and had that administrator in his service. I remember it, on the way out from Hateg to Santamaria Orlea – that was the first village, about four kilometers away from Hateg – one could see this castle. [Editor's note: The castle at Santamaria Orlea was built in the 13th century by the Cande family, better known under the name Kendeffy. It was rebuilt in 1782 by Alexis Kendeffy and his wife, Kirsztina Bethlen. The castle is now a modest two star inn.] And from that castle onwards there were only gardens on the 12 or 14-kilometer road to Rau de Mori. Gardens, fruit bearing trees, on a twelve-kilometer road, it was a wonder.

I know that my grandmother always bought kosher meat from Hateg, once a week. The animals were slaughtered there, because there were many Jews in Hateg during that time and animals could be slaughtered the kosher way. There were no other Jews in the village; they were the only Jewish family in Rau de Mori. The grocery and the inn were closed on Saturdays. There was no synagogue in the village, only in Hateg. I'm not sure, but I think that my grandfather, for as long as he was healthy, went to Hateg every Saturday with the coach, and of course with all the family on the high holidays. But I haven't spent a holiday with them, I was in Budapest at that time, I usually went to see them during the summers with my parents, when I was on holiday: we would come to visit and we would stay about a month and a half, maybe two, that's before the 1940s. We came by train from Budapest to Hateg, and my grandfather came to pick us up with the coach from the station.

I was born in Budapest, in 1930; it was a splendid city, as it still is now. The Jewish community in Budapest was very big, I don't know how many Jews there were, I was too young, but there were many. There were several synagogues, one is the largest and most beautiful in south-eastern Europe, it's the one with the silver tree in the courtyard, it's a splendor. [The interviewee is referring to the Great Synagogue on Dohany Street [4](#).] I think there were several other synagogues: another seven or eight synagogues. The community had a rabbi, and there were all the functionaries, hakham, shochet, there were cheders and yeshivot, and so on. There was also a mikveh, but no one from our family went there.

There weren't typical Jewish occupations back then in Budapest; Jews were traders, but many were poorer workers. Many, the majority, were intellectuals, professors, doctors, and artists. The Latabar brothers were Jews; they were famous comedians of the time. [Mariana is referring to Kalman and Arpad Latabar. Kalman was the more famous actor than his brother. Graduated in 1921 from the Rakosi Szidi's acting school. He was a comedian with distinguished humor and dynamism, had excellent dancing skills.] Jews lived everywhere in Budapest, but many religious Jews lived on Dohany Street, near the big synagogue; that's where the ghetto was also built in 1944.

The financial situation of our family was rather good, because my father earned very well. My father was an accountant, he was the chief-accountant at a food factory that belonged to a Jew, something with import-export, and he had about 20 people subordinated to him. My father didn't work with his brother since his brother's factory went bankrupt in 1933 or 1934. My mother was a housewife and she looked after the house.

Our house in Budapest was rented; it was actually an apartment in a four-story building on 33 Csaky Street. It was very beautiful and spacious, and we had running water, electricity, and gas heating. The house had three rooms: there was my room, a living room and my parents' room, plus the bathroom, the kitchen and a hallway. The furniture in the house was rather modern for those times. We had a refrigerator back then, not like refrigerators are now, with electric power, but it worked all the same: there was a cart with ice that came twice a week, and my mother bought ice and put it in the fridge, below, in an ice box; it lasted for a few days. We had a small garden in the back, but we shared it with several families. The garden was for leisure, the neighbors would gather there during summers, but no one grew anything in it.

We had books in the house as well, I had my own library with my books, and my parents had their own library, mainly with books of acknowledged writers. Both my parents read in Hungarian, but my father read in German as well. They advised me as far as reading was concerned, and they bought for me books for my age: fairy tales at first, books for young people later.

My father read the newspaper, but my mother didn't, she had no interest in politics; my father was interested, but he wasn't in any political party. My father wasn't involved in politics, but he hated communists. I know that in Budapest, after the war [World War II] there were a few weeks when the communists were in power, and those who didn't have a certificate from the state that they had been in the Communist Party [5](#) couldn't get a job in Budapest. My father was young at the time, he was 25 years old, still single, and he had to have that document, because otherwise he wouldn't have gotten a job in Budapest.

My mother had help in the house, there was a woman who came once a week; she cleaned, she also came when my mother did the big cleanings in the fall and the spring, or when there was a lot

of laundry to be done. But my mother was the one who cooked. The food wasn't kosher, because it was very expensive and the kitchen we had in the house wasn't adequate for two tables, separate stoves and tableware, there was a problem with space and the expenses.

I went to the market with my mother sometimes, when I was home, because in the morning I was in school. There was Lehel-piac, the market there that was close to us; it was an ordinary market, with greens and everything else. We had stores near the house. There were many Jews and therefore many were small traders and near us there was a Jewish family who had a grocery store. And I remember that my mother used to shop there and pay when the salary came. She could buy on credit, if she didn't have enough money on her when she went shopping, and the owner noted everything down in a notebook.

My father usually went to the synagogue on Saturdays, it was on the same street where we lived, and my mother and I accompanied him on the high holidays, when the women go there as well. My parents fasted on Yom Kippur, and I also fasted all day, from 5 o'clock in the afternoon until the next evening, when the moon and the stars appeared. I think I started fasting when I was ten years old. My mother lit the candles and recited the blessing on Friday evenings, and she cooked the traditional dinner: for Friday evenings she usually baked sponge cake; we used to drink coffee with milk and eat sponge cake. On Saturdays we ate chicken soup with balls made from matzah flour. She made cakes as well, like hamantashen, on Purim. My mother never worked on Saturdays, except on the things she couldn't avoid. My father used to say the prayers, but he wasn't a bigot, he knew I studied religion in school so neither he nor my mother made my head swim with this.

I liked all the holidays, I didn't have a favorite, all are beautiful and our songs are wonderful. I used to sing when I was little, Jewish songs and others as well, I had an ear for music. I don't remember receiving Chanukkah gelt on Chanukkah, but my mother used to light the chanukkiah at home, a candle every day, seven of them altogether. [Editor's note: On Chanukkah, usually eight candles have to be lit in seven days]. I didn't dress up on Purim, but we received at home little packages with cakes, with hamantashen, from the synagogue. There probably were Purim balls in Budapest, but I don't remember my mother and my father ever going to one. We didn't have kosher Pesach on Pesach, we didn't have separate tableware, but for eight days we didn't eat bread, only matzah, and my mother did a big cleaning before, as she always did before any holiday. I know a sukkah was built in the synagogue in the fall, but I never stayed in one. The war had already started in 1940, and people didn't observe the holidays like they used to anymore.

When I was very little, my mother used to trim a Christmas tree for me, a small one, because you can't say to a two or three-year-old child that you are Jewish, the other is Christian, and all the other kids had a tree in the house, I saw it when I visited them. But I didn't receive any gifts, and when I understood that I was Jewish, my mother didn't trim one anymore. On Hungarian Easter we received red eggs from our neighbors, and on that occasion my mother baked sponge cakes and other cakes, because the day after Easter the neighbors would come to sprinkle, the sprinkling is very popular among Hungarians. [Editor's note: Sprinkling is a national Easter custom. This custom was thought to be an ancient fertility and cleaning ritual, this is why girls and women were sprinkled with water. It takes place on the second day of Easter: on Easter Monday. This custom is dying now.]



Among our neighbors, there were about three Jewish families, but the rest of them were Christians. There were the Berkovits, who didn't have any children; they had a very cute white dog I used to play with. There were also the Faragos, they had a daughter, we were friends, but that was about it. There was another family, the Bernsteins; I believe they had a boy, older than me. We kids were always together in the courtyard. My parents visited other families as well, because they were very open. My mother was a very special woman; everybody loved her. But I can't say that our neighbors were our friends, they were mere acquaintances.

Our family was very large, about ten families in total, and when my parents had the time, they visited their relatives, they came to us or we went to them. The relatives we visited most often were the ones from Budapest, my father's brother, but there were also some relatives who were just in-laws: my mother had three cousins and their wives, whom we visited and got along with very well, but I don't recall their names.

My father's brother, Emil, lived in Budapest, and he visited us. He had been a very rich man, and he lost his factory and all his belongings from one day to another, he did something foolish probably, I wasn't told because it wasn't for me to hear, I was eleven or twelve years old and I probably wouldn't have understood what had happened. Uncle Emil was a rather weird man, I remember my cousin Lea was very unhappy in his house after he remarried: she came home from school one day, and she found a note from her father, in which he said that he didn't want to pay for her school anymore and that he wanted her to move out.

So Lea lived with her relatives, uncles and aunts, for a long time. She didn't have a fortunate fate when she grew up either: she fell in love with a man from a good family, and, from what I understood, he allegedly told her that he would have married her, if she hadn't been a Jew because he wasn't a Jew. So when she was 28, I think, Lea killed herself because of this, I think she took some pills or something like that; she went to bed and didn't wake up.

Aunt Hilda came to visit us from Arad until the 1940s, after that it wasn't possible anymore. My aunt Elena used to come over to our place all the time, because her daughter, my cousin Alice, lived in our house; the situation was like this because in that village, Maglod, there was no school. She went home at the end of the week, as it was close. I only visited Aunt Rozalia, who was in Targu Mures, once. She came to visit us a few times after that, but after 1940, when the war broke out, all connections broke off. They wrote letters to my parents for a while, but after that they were deported. My mother's sister Frida was in Zagreb, and so was Irina. But these two aunts never came to Budapest, and we didn't go to them either, but they wrote to my mother.

Aunt Matilda visited us, too, and we also went to Targu Mures after Transylvania was returned, after 1940 [6](#), but that was the last time, because the deportations began after that, and she and my cousin Magdalena were deported to Auschwitz and my aunt died there and only my cousin came back. After that, she left with all her family for New York, USA. I saw my mother's brother, Alexandru, for the last time in 1939, I was almost ten years old back then, after that the war broke out and we weren't allowed to cross the border. Aunt Borbala lived in Gheorgheni, but we didn't visit her at all, only my mother might have written to her.

My mother used to beat me because I was a terribly naughty child. I was a tomboy: I climbed trees and I don't know what else all day long, and I didn't eat, I was as thin as a dried herring. And, of course, my mother was the one who tormented herself with me; I stayed mostly with her, because

my father was at work. She had reasons to be upset, if I had been in her shoes, I would have killed such a kid, nothing else. My poor mother always told me, 'If you'll have a kid, let it be at least half of what you are!'

My father loved me very much; he spoiled me. It was a wrong education, because my father spent very little time with me and when he came home, of course he spoiled me; and as I barely ate, I caused problems when we were seated at the table, and my mother was already fed up with me, and my father used to defend me and say, 'Leave my child alone, you want to kill my child, leave it to her, she'll eat I don't know what.'

I didn't like anything that was on the table; I was very fastidious and terribly thin. The only things I liked were fried potatoes and meatballs and Viennese schnitzel, but I wasn't at peace with spinach or vegetables, and my poor mother didn't know what to cook for me to eat anymore. I did like soup with meat in it, when my mother made it, with matzah balls, but I wasn't a horse to eat spinach! And my mother used to buy exotic fruits and vitamins to keep me standing. But I played sports a lot, and therefore I started to recover. And I learnt to eat during the war, when the famine was terrible, we received, I don't know, 100 grams or 200 grams of bread each day.

My mother used to tell me stories when I was little, and play with me, but when I grew up I was mostly around the house with the other kids, or we went swimming on Margaret Island. When I was little I went to a German kindergarten, since I was six years old. After that I did four classes of elementary school and four classes of high school.

There were Jewish elementary schools, but my parents sent me to a state school. There were private schools as well, but one had to pay a lot of money there so my parents sent me to a state school. But we had religion classes in school and we learned the Jewish alphabet, we learned to read. A Jewish teacher taught us. In school, I liked history a lot, it was like a story for me, but I didn't like some subjects where I had to calculate, like math, chemistry or physics. I had a favorite teacher, she taught history, she was our class teacher, whom I loved very much, but I don't remember her name. I never had problems with my teachers or with my colleagues because I was Jewish.

I had friends when I was in school, we visited each other, and they were Jews and non-Jews alike, there were no differences. I had a friend who lived in the same house as me, Farago Zsuzsa was her name, and we were neighbors. I don't remember other names, but it's startling that I do remember physiognomies. We went together to the swimming pool, skiing, and skating. We went to the cinema very often as well, we sneaked away from home, my mother didn't even know. I had pocket money and we went to the matinee performance. We had a cinema nearby, Ipoly was its name, and I loved the movies, they were extraordinarily good movies, and we had great artists: I saw very good Hungarian movies, but American ones as well. And we went to the theater for children, it was close, right near our house, the Vigszinhaz Theater, on Sundays there was always a matinee performance for children. I used to go with my father or my mother, or with both of them, but they didn't forbid me to go with just my friends.

Other activities outside the school were these trips we made with the scouts organization, we went during summers and winters, we visited the country and I saw nearly all the cities: Szeged, Debrecen, Tatabanya, Kecskemet, Szolnok [all located in Hungary today], all the cities. I had a uniform as a scout, of course, we, the girls, had a skirt, with shoes and stockings or socks when it



was summer, and a khaki-colored blouse, a hat with large brims, like the Mexicans have, tied up under the chin, and a tie. I remember we had meetings; we cleaned around the school, the parks or around the houses where we lived. I didn't have much time to make friends outside school, except for my cousins maybe, whom I met in the family. During the week I was busy with the scouts, with school, with learning, so I didn't have a lot of free time.

We didn't go on a proper holiday, somewhere to stay for two or three weeks, before the war, but we went on trips a lot. I saw almost the entire country, we traveled a lot, and we went to Matra. My favorite holiday destinations were Balaton, and the mountains, at Matra. We went a few times for an entire week to Balaton, and the city itself offered so many satisfactions and it had so many places worth seeing and visiting.

We also went to my cousin Imre's, Uncle Emil's son, hut. He was still single back then and he worked, and I went swimming with my father. My father was on the bank, because he couldn't swim, but he regretted it so much that he hadn't learned swimming, that he wanted to teach me at all costs: he stayed there with me, the water was deep for me, but he was taller, the water came up to his waist and he showed me what I had to do. He also accompanied me to the swimming pool in Budapest, it was on Margaret Island. And I remember that at this swimming pool, which we went to more often, the men and the women swam separately. But I was just a child, so I was allowed to swim with the men; I was with my father mostly. I had a fairy like childhood, the kind I could never offer to my child. First of all, it was the city, which was a splendor itself; there was also the Danube, where I learnt to swim.

I remember I was at military parades, on 20th August it was Saint Stefan's Day, the first Hungarian king who was baptized a Catholic, 1000 years ago. We went up to the royal castle, in Buda, on the bank of the Danube, where the Matyas Korvin church was. And there, on every Sunday, there was the changing of the royal guard. The men were ravishing, all of the same height, 1.80 meters, dressed in special uniforms. The guard was continuously on duty there and they changed every eight hours, and Sundays it was something special: anyone who wanted to, went up there to the big castle to see them. Be it winter or summer, every Sunday we were there. It happened very rarely that we didn't go. In kindergarten and then in school, children were brought up to be patriots.

I had school on Saturdays, but I spent the rest of the day at home with my parents, studying; but I can't say that I was forced to stay at home, except for the high holidays, of course. I was away alone in camps during summers with the scouts, for about two weeks or ten days. We sometimes went out to eat, but that was seldom. We didn't have a car, cars weren't so common back then, one had to be very rich to have one, but we traveled by train - when we went on a holiday - and by bus.

## During the war

The first time I came across anti-Semitism was in 1943. I was in the youth organization in school, the scouts' organization. We wore a green uniform, and large green hats, and we took hikes in the woods, gathered the litter when that was the case, and that was very rarely, because the Austrian civilization made its presence felt in Hungary. That's when I felt the first slap, when I was 13, when the Jewish children were thrown out of the organization, and we had to leave our uniforms there.

Also, in 1943, I saw the first signs of the war, which terrified me. The Hungarian soldiers came from the front; it was summer, and I was at the swimming pool, and there were hotels that had been turned into hospitals for these young wounded soldiers, the majority below 40. Some were in baskets, without arms or legs, only a trunk, yet still alive.

Anti-Semitism appeared [in school] only in the fourth grade of high school, at my last exam, when I already wore the yellow star [7](#) on my coat: I had worn it since March already, and my last exam was in June. Some of my classmates were Jewish – there were separate classes for boys and girls, but no one from my colleagues or my teachers treated me differently, they knew that we, the Jewish kids, were pretty wretched.

There were anti-Jewish laws [8](#) in Budapest however, Jewish children couldn't sign up for university, only I don't know how many, one percent, could [9](#). Jews were allowed to shop only in certain stores, at certain hours in the morning and in the afternoon. We weren't allowed to go out. And we already wore the yellow star, it was of about ten centimeters on the left side, it had to be visible, if you didn't wear it, some ill-willed person could denounce you and you could get into trouble with the authorities. My father was also affected as far as his job was concerned, the factory where he worked closed down in 1944 because of the air raids.

My parents knew about the invasion of Poland [10](#), they discussed it, but they didn't want to believe it, they simply couldn't believe that such things existed. They had probably found out about concentration camps, but they didn't discuss it in front of me, there was no television back then, just radio, but I didn't listen much to the radio either, I was busy with school. My poor father, until the whole thing with Jews and concentration camps started, firmly believed that it would never happen in Hungary. Until 1942, 1943 we didn't feel the war, but after [19th March] 1944 the German army entered Budapest [11](#).

In summer 1944 we had to move from our house; the Germans forced us to leave the house when they entered the city. We moved somewhere close to our former house, on a nearby street, into a yellow star house [12](#). We were crowded, two Jewish families in two rooms, and we shared a kitchen; it was a big house, with about four stories, and there were many Jewish families there, I don't know how many. My father brought the furniture from one room to that house where we had to move, but I don't know what happened to the rest of our things. I know a Christian family lived across the street from us and that my father took two or three suitcases with things there, clothes and what was left over. We took them back after the war.

It was during that time when the air raids intensified, since spring, March 1944, they occurred day and night. We spent more time in the cellar than we did in the house upstairs, the air raids happened almost every hour, every day, five, six, seven times, day and night. There were anti-aircraft shelters, but not very close to us. We found out that the house we had lived in was bombed, the frontispiece crushed over the huge bolted cellar, and that everybody in it had died. The air raids took place for six to seven months, until the Russian army entered the city after Christmas. At the beginning of October 1944, my father was taken to forced labor camps around Budapest from that yellow star house; they couldn't get him out of the city because Budapest was almost surrounded by the American and English armies and by the Russians.

On 15th October 1944, Governor Horthy [13](#) wanted to take the country out of the war because he realized that the war was lost. And he spoke on the radio about it, and after that speech, the

administrator of the house we lived in, an elderly Jew, he was almost 70 years old, I think his name was Lovi or something like that, thought the war was over, and the next day he took the yellow star off the house. The day after Horthy's declaration Szalasi Ferenc [14](#) entered, because Horthy had to leave the country, but the old man couldn't imagine that Szalasi would come in Horthy's place. Probably all the other houses still had the yellow star on them, and two German officers and two or three Hungarian gendarmes came in our house and asked for the administrator, because they saw that the yellow star had been taken off. We shared the apartment with the old man. And as they didn't ask, but only knew how to beat and torture, they started thrashing the old man because he had no right to take the yellow star off the house. And the old man yelled, and my mother got frightened.

Like any mother, she immediately wanted to keep her child from who knows what danger and hide me. But where was I to hide, they were already coming; I could hear steps coming towards our room. The first thing at hand was to hide under the bed. And as I was on my all fours, trying to hide under the bed, I think my behind and my legs were still outside, the door opened and one of the Hungarian gendarmes shot at me, without asking, he probably thought I was a man. And I felt a blow in my knee. And when I got out from under the bed, both my legs were full of blood. I was lucky that the bullet came out, it was found under the bed, but my right knee had already been wounded. I came down from the fourth floor alone, because that's where we lived, and a private car took me to the hospital, where I was hospitalized. After that the gendarme said that he fired his gun in self-defense, that was unbelievable, how is that, self-defense in front of a 14-year-old child? Could I attack him? That's something I haven't understood to this day.

I was taken to the Jewish hospital [15](#), which was near the ghetto we were crowded in after that. The Jewish hospital had four stories, and it was full of sick people, it hadn't been closed. This Jewish hospital had existed even before the war started, most of the doctors there were Jews, but it was for everybody. At the hospital they took X-rays of my leg and they put it in a plaster, and the other knee, from which the bullet ricocheted from, was dressed. But the knee that had been shot had a problem, because, as the bullet went under the knee, it was split in two and it needed time to heal. I was there for two or three weeks, but my mother didn't stay with me, she couldn't come because of the air raids.

When I was released from hospital it was already Christmas, it was on 24th December, when the Jews were gathered and taken to the banks of the Danube [16](#) and shot there. We were very lucky to make it. On Christmas Eve at about 6 o'clock in the evening, my mother was away, because she was allowed to go shopping. I was at home, in bed, I was still wearing the plaster, I hadn't taken it off, I had to wait six more weeks for that; we had no electricity as the city didn't have electricity anymore, we used candles. After some time, two German officers and some Hungarians came into my room – the doors were open, but they weren't policemen, they were civilians, and asked me what I was doing in bed. I told them that I had been shot in the leg and I had to wear a plaster, and then they saw my earrings, they were gold child earrings, and told me to take them off. They also took a small ring and my watch, and then left. They didn't say anything; they didn't take me because they saw that transporting me was a bit of a hassle.

All the others from the house were taken away. After that I found out that they were taken to the banks of the Danube and that they were all shot into the Danube. And right then my mother was on her way home, and a neighbor, I think he was a Christian, signaled her not to go there and told

her, 'Ma'am, I saw all the Jews gathered from the house, don't go there!' and then my mother said, 'What do you mean not go, I have a child who's lying in bed there!' Then the man said, 'Stay here so that no one can see you. I'll go see if they take the child away as well, they would have to carry her on a stretcher, there's no other way.' And the Germans left, and the man saw that I wasn't among those taken away, and then my mother immediately came home and took me and then we went to the ghetto [17](#). We were in that yellow star house from April to December.

It wasn't until then that the wall around the ghetto started to be built, and those still alive after that raid were taken there, and we went there as well, it was sort of compulsory to go to the ghetto. The ghetto was set up near the big synagogue, where the Jewish hospital was; it was fenced and guarded by soldiers and the police. We weren't allowed to go out, we were brought food there once a day, our bread portion, but the hunger we endured then was terrible. We stayed in the ghetto for about a month and a half, that was all.

There were no living conditions, we had no wood, we had no heating, and it was the height of the winter. I stayed in one room with my mother, and then my father came, and we all shared a room. Until he came, my mother didn't know anything about him, where he was, what he was doing. My father didn't tell us much about where he had been, but I know he couldn't leave Budapest because the allies had already surrounded the city, he dug trenches and he did other hard work, I think. The city was already bombed continuously and the Germans started to withdraw from the city, but they fought for every house, they didn't want to surrender the city.

We didn't go into the street much; there was mad continuous shooting there. Somebody in the ghetto had a radio and we found out from that man that the Germans had surrendered the city; but there were still fights on the outskirts and they went on for quite some more weeks, but the Soviet army was already in the city.

For as long as we were in the ghetto, my mother had passports for us, issued by Count Wallenberg [18](#), but I never saw them, I think those who had those passports weren't deported. I don't know how my mother got them, but she did, my father wasn't with us, he had already been taken away for forced labor. My mother probably went to the Swedish embassy; Jews were allowed to enter there. There were many Jews who actually lived on the precincts of the embassy to escape. That's what this man, Wallenberg, did; he was a remarkable man. And such a fate, my dear God! No one knows to this day where he died, when he died, and how.

For as long as we were in the ghetto, we had no idea what had happened to the rest of our family. Then we found out. Uncle Emil ran from Budapest to Czechoslovakia, he left with his wife so that they wouldn't be taken to a concentration camp, but he didn't know that Jews were taken away from there even sooner than they were from Hungary. He left at the beginning of 1944, and when they started to gather the Jews from Prague, he and his wife killed themselves. They killed themselves because they didn't want to be taken to a concentration camp. My uncle died, and my cousin, his son, after the war, went there and tried to find out something about them, where they had been buried, but he never found out anything, there was probably a mass grave.

I know my father asked Aunt Elena and Uncle Jacob to come to Budapest when it all started; they would have escaped like my parents and I did, with the Wallenberg passports. But they didn't want to leave their house, and there, in that small village, everybody knew that they were Jews, and they were the first to be deported.

After we had been liberated in January 1945 we returned to the yellow star house, because there was nothing left from the other house after the bombing, where we had lived; we could go inside, but the house had no windows, no doors, no furniture. I remember that after we had been liberated, people went out into the street and took dead horses from the street and ate horsemeat, those were the horses that had died in the air raids, they weren't sick, of course. But maybe even if they had been, people would have eaten them anyway, as they were so starved and mad. I ate horsemeat as well, my mother made some meatballs and they were very good, after all that famine.

My plaster was taken off my leg at that time, but my leg was as stiff as wood. I couldn't bend my knee so my mother found a nurse who would come every day and make me do some exercises; it was a terrible pain until the leg started to move again. I would start crying because of the fear of the pain when I heard the woman come up the stairs. But with time, slowly, I could bend my leg again.

We didn't look for anybody after liberation; the whole city was in ruins. After quite a while, about a year I think, we found out that my aunts had died in Mauthausen [19](#). My father wrote to someone from Budapest and asked that person to find out. We knew that the ones in Targu Mures had been taken away [deported]. Only my mother's younger sister, Irina, survived. Aunt Frida had been taken to a camp. Aunt Irina escaped deportation, because she became a Catholic under the stress of circumstances, it was her husband's religion.

## Post-war

In spring, in April 1945, we came to Arad, the borders were open, one could go to Vienna, one could go to the USA, and one could go to the West. My father spoke with his sister Hilda, who lived in Arad, and we went to visit. We went to Arad in a cattle train, but we went to visit, we had no intention of staying here. We came with just the clothes we had on us, we had nothing left. But in the end, my father's sister and my uncle insisted until my father said that we would stay in Romania, and we didn't return to Budapest.

We stayed in Arad for a while, at my aunt's, and then I stayed for six or seven months in Hateg with my mother, because she took back some things from her late parents: furniture, things like that, pots, bed sheets, pillows, clothes. My grandfather had died in 1933 or 1934 and my grandmother in 1940. My mother went there to see the cemetery first of all, to see where my grandparents and her brother were buried. She found it in the Jewish cemetery, of course, and then she went to see in what state the house was, she talked to the owner, but that was all. All this happened in fall 1945, or in 1946.

It was then, when I was 15 years old, that I met the man I loved all my life, and I still do: his name was Tibi Gusita, he was a lot older than me, he was about 24 years old, and he was a student in Bucharest. He wasn't a Jew, he was a Romanian and he came from a well-off family. I saw him for the first time on 23rd August 1945, it was the first celebration [of this date] [20](#) like that since the war was over; he was the most handsome man there, he had the most extraordinary blue eyes and brown hair, but I didn't talk to him then. And I think I was also striking, I was a bit peculiar, I didn't speak Romanian at all, and I was dressed in a different way, not like it was in the countryside.

After a few days we were introduced to each other in social circles, and I fell in love with him. It was a very pure love, and I thought he felt just as strongly for me as I did for him. We were inseparable for as long as I was there, and he was a perfect gentleman, although he could have done anything with me, I was so lost in my love for him. Then I went back to Arad for three weeks, I don't remember what for, and when I came back, and I found out that he was courting another girl, who was wealthy. I was so hurt, but soon we left for Miercurea Ciuc, that I never confronted him. However, I did find out that he married that girl, and I remember I cried my eyes out in Miercurea Ciuc, so forcefully that my mother didn't know what to do with me, she even beat me, because I couldn't snap out of it. I cried and I said that he would never be happy with her, or I with somebody else, and I was right in both cases.

When we left for Hateg my father had just found work and he had left for Miercurea Ciuc. He met an old acquaintance from Arad, because my father used to travel to Romania a lot, and draw contracts with wood for furniture from 1940 until 1944. Hungary has very few forests, and here there were rich forests, especially in Harghita, Covasna. And he met in Arad somebody he knew, a Jew, Lempert. He was much older than my father, and he told my father, 'Mr. Bozoky, come to Miercurea Ciuc, I'll find a place for you to live, you'll have a job, you'll work as a chief accountant in my factory!' He had a timber factory and a mill in Miercurea Ciuc, and he dumbfounded my father. To cut a long story short, that's how we got from Budapest to Miercurea Ciuc.

My father worked as a chief accountant at the timber factory there. We lived in the center of town, it was an old house that we rented, there were no apartment blocks then in Miercurea Ciuc, but it was a disaster. We had two rooms, a kitchen and that was it. We lived on the first floor, and there was no running water, we had to carry water in a bucket from the well in the street. We had electricity, but the toilet was at the end of the corridor, and it was made of wood, like it is in the countryside, and in winter when you had to go your buttocks would freeze until you took off your pants and sat on the toilet. It was terrible.

I think my father suffered a great turmoil because of the loss of his siblings, they were a very united family, and he consumed himself. Moreover, he made this mistake, and he realized it, that he prejudiced me by bringing us to Miercurea Ciuc, which was like the end of the world. We were very poor indeed back then, and in six or seven years, that is for as long my father still lived, we couldn't make a fortune.

My cousin Magdalena, the daughter of my mother's sister Matilda, sold my grandparents' house, when she came back from the concentration camp. She told my mother that her father, who had died before they were deported, had loaned my grandparents some money, because they were up a tree, they had problems with the shop, with the house; I know that my grandfather borrowed some money, but I also know that my grandparents returned this money, so my mother was also entitled to the house, it belonged to her parents. And in the end Magdalena sold the house exactly when the money changed in 1948. [Editor's note: actually, the monetary reform took place in 1952, when the banknotes and the coins issued during the royalist regime were replaced with banknotes and coins marked with the Popular Republic of Romania; the new parity was 1/20 at CEC - Casa de Economii si Consemnatiuni, the Loan Bank, and 1/300 in private.]

So she practically threw away this beautiful house with a garden and everything, because she sold it before the stabilization and she was left only with some millions. My father wrote Magda a letter



and told her not to sell the house before the stabilization because she would practically throw the money out the window, that it would have no value. And, of course, my father wrote a rather dour letter, because he knew my mother wouldn't say anything. Madgalena wrote my mother such a harsh letter - that allegedly my mother had claims over the house, although it wasn't true - that my mother never wrote back, although she was her niece, and they never saw each other again.

After the war ended we didn't think of emigrating, back then it wasn't possible yet. It was very hard to obtain this permission. It wasn't possible to do it in another country either, if you didn't have relatives who would pay the communist state. One could only get a passport - but hardly, that was a problem, too - for a trip, leave and not come back. But in that case the family one left behind would suffer repercussions.

I continued high school in Miercurea Ciuc, because I had already finished four classes of high school in Budapest, out of eight, like the system was back then. After high school I worked for a year, I think, as a secretary for the Town Hospital in Miercurea Ciuc in 1949. I studied at the technical design school from 1948 to 1951, in Miercurea Ciuc as well, while I was working.

I was glad when I heard about the birth of the state of Israel [21](#), like everybody else. I have no relatives in Israel, so the wars [22](#) [23](#) didn't affect me directly. I've never been to Israel because I had no one to go to, my friends who were there forgot about me, they simply cut all relations with me, they didn't send a postcard or a letter after they left.

I met my husband, Albert Farkas, at a hockey match, in Miercurea Ciuc, in 1948. My husband's boss was an acquaintance and he introduced us. Albert was born in 1923 in Sandominic, he was a Jew, and he spoke Hungarian, just like me. He studied at the librarianship school in Budapest, but when I met him he was an officer in the Romanian army.

My husband had three sisters: Rozalia Szekely, who was married to a Hungarian, Bela Szekely, and who still lives in Dej; Etelka Regeni, who is married to a Hungarian Jew, Zoltan Regeni, and who lives in Targu Mures [her husband is dead, Etelka lives alone now]; the third sister is Iuliana Reismann, who is married to a Jew, Edmund Reismann, with whom she lives in Sfantu Gheorghe.

My husband's parents died in a concentration camp, in 1944, as well as a sister of his. His parents were taken from Gheorgheni, together with two sisters, to Bergen-Belsen [24](#), I think. His sister, who was married in Targu Mures, was taken to Auschwitz. During the Holocaust, my husband was in Mauthausen. First, he was taken to forced labor camps somewhere near Budapest, I don't know exactly where - he was in Budapest at the time - when the Jews were taken away by the Hungarians, and then he was taken to a concentration camp, to Mauthausen, and he stayed there for more than a year. He kept in touch with his sisters, they were very united, and as the only man in the family, he was very fond of his sisters.

We got married in 1950; it was more because of my father's pressure, who kept telling me that a good Jew was hard to find in that town. It didn't matter to me if my husband was Jewish or not, because my family was very variegated, very mixed up. We had many Christians in the family, especially my cousins. We didn't have a religious wedding, because there was no synagogue in Miercurea Ciuc. There was a temple, but it was in ruins. And the Jews were so few that they couldn't afford to repair it, and I don't even think there were ten men for the minyan. It was demolished between 1940 and 1944, when the Hungarians were there, and all the things were

stolen. More to the point, Albert was a party member and he worked where he worked, so there was only a civil ceremony.

After I got married we lived in Miercurea Ciuc for almost another year. We rented a house, it had a room and a kitchen, that's all we had, and we stayed there. Our friends were Romanians and Hungarians and Jews alike. There were few Jews there, because they had been deported, and the majority of those who came back left for Israel.

I got pregnant with Eva very soon, and I didn't intend to have a baby, I was too young, I was only 20 years old, but my doctor said that I was very thin, very small, and that I might never get pregnant again, and I would regret it for as long as I lived, if I lost that child or had an abortion. Moreover, my husband worked in the army and nobody would have performed the abortion.

Before Eva was born, in 1951, my husband was transferred to Brasov, and when he found a place to live we moved there as well, Eva was three weeks old. I gave birth to Eva in Targu Mures, because there was no hospital or a specialist in Miercurea Ciuc, and my mother didn't want to leave me there, if a problem or complication occurred, it would have been dangerous. Taking into account that my husband's sister lived in Targu Mures, I stayed with them, and had my baby there.

I remember a funny story that happened back then, although I didn't feel like laughing at the time. About three weeks before I gave birth, I went with my sister-in-law and her husband to a summer garden, to eat steak. It was in the evening, we ate, but then people started dancing. I was seated at the table with my family, and at the table in front of us there was a handsome young man, who had been looking at me all evening. I was extraordinarily thin, even though I was pregnant, you couldn't tell by my face, and as I was seated down, and as I was very young, he probably imagined that I was single. So I asked my sister-in-law to go home, so that I wouldn't put him and myself in an unpleasant situation. Of course, he was perplexed when I got up and he saw my belly!

When I was taken to the hospital and I had to give birth, guess whom my doctor was? He was the very same man from that evening, he was a student in his sixth year in medicine, and he assisted me. I thought the earth would open up and eat me, from the shame. I even asked him if he didn't get tired of seeing women in such unpleasant postures, but he told me that if a woman gives birth beautifully, he could still fall in love with her! Quite a courteous young man he was.

In the meantime my husband had received a place to live, and we brought the furniture and everything we had from Miercurea Ciuc to Brasov. It was a house that belonged to the state, and we had a room with a hallway, a kitchen, a bathroom and a garden.

After I got married, I always observed the Jewish holidays in the family. When we came to Brasov, I went to the synagogue, it didn't interest me if someone followed me or not. My mother and my father always came from Miercurea Ciuc to observe the holidays together, on New Year [Rosh Hashanah], in the fall, and on Easter [Passover], in the spring. I didn't take Eva along, she was too little. She only made noise in the synagogue and I didn't take her with me.

I always received an invitation at the dinner that was held in the community's canteen. My husband didn't come because he was in the Party, and he couldn't, and he didn't lead the ceremony on Seder evening, for example, because we went to the temple to eat. I always lit candles at home on Friday evenings and said the blessing. I baked cakes, not hamantashen,

because I didn't know how, I was too young, I didn't really know how to cook, but I baked other cakes. For example, I had learned from my mother to make fruit soup, I made it from sour cherries, plums, gooseberries, with eggs, a bit of flour, sugar and water, it was more of a dessert that could be eaten cold as well.

We did observe Christian holidays in the family when Eva was little. We had a neighbor, who had a small girl, of her age. And on the [Christian] New Year I trimmed a tree, because the girl would cry. What could I tell a two-year-old child – that you are Jewish and the other is Christian? I couldn't, she would cry. But when she grew up I told her that she was Jewish and she understood that we don't celebrate that. I did dress Eva up for Purim, when she was at the temple, and then she joined the community choir. I don't think I ever gave her Chanukkah gelt, as in especially for Chanukkah, but she always had pocket money.

I didn't keep kosher, I couldn't, and it was very expensive. You had to have a proper kitchen, with two tables, separate cupboards for the tableware, separate tableware for milk and meat, and we didn't have the possibility. Especially since we were so poor, because we started from scratch. The house I live in now is the third place we had since we moved to Brasov, I've been living here since October 1959. Until then we lived in places with a shared kitchen for eight years and I had had enough of it, it was also in a house, I never lived in an apartment block.

My father died in 1954, exactly ten years after the war, and, poor soul, he kept saying that he wouldn't die until he saw Budapest one more time, he was in love with the city, but he didn't make it. Our financial situation wasn't good enough to afford a trip there, and he fell ill quickly. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Miercurea Ciuc. After my father died, my mother went on living there but she would come in the fall to stay with us, and she would stay until May or June, until Eva finished school; then she would go back and stay two to three months in Miercurea Ciuc.

After my father died, my mother went abroad a few times. She went to Zagreb, to her sister, Irina, in 1956, exactly when the Revolution in Budapest started [25](#); I know she was very worried, she didn't know what was going on with us, in Romania, she had no news then. And then, in 1956, my mother saw her for the last time. Irina had problems with her heart; in 1957 or 1958, she went to a spa for a treatment, but she was already ill, and she died there, at the spa. Uncle Anton wrote to my mother that she had died.

My mother was already a widow for some years, and she looked very much like my aunt Irina, and my uncle asked her to come to Zagreb, and marry him. My mother didn't want to, she wouldn't have left us. She said how could she leave us behind? She wouldn't put a border between herself and her only child and granddaughter, because I already had Eva by then. She could have gotten married if she had wanted to, it wouldn't have been the first mixed marriage in the family, but even though she was a relatively young widow, at 51, she never remarried.

I didn't work for about seven years; we had just one salary in the house. I got a job only in 1958; I worked as a technical designer. I worked for eleven years at the Regional People's Council, at what the prefecture is today, at the former Brasov region, as it was back then: back then the city of Brasov was called Stalin. [Editor's note: after 1949 Brasov was renamed Stalin city, from an order of the Russian government, and a statue of Stalin was set up in front of the prefecture; the city kept this name until 1959. The administrative denomination of the zone was first the Stalin district, Brasov region and then Brasov county.] Then I worked at the 'Constructorul' cooperative, in the

design workshops, and that's where I retired from in 1985.

For as long as I worked, I have never had problems at work because I was Jewish, never. In the design department, when I got employed, we had a boss, the architect Andor, who was Jewish. He was a very special man. The two of us were the only Jews there. We had Saxon, Hungarian, Romanian colleagues, all nationalities, we even had two Russian colleagues, and they were from Leningrad.

I didn't join the Party because in school I dodged the UTC [Uniunea Tineretului Comunist - Union of Communist Youth]; those who were UTC members automatically joined the Party when they turned 18. But because I got around it somehow, to this day I don't know how it happened, I was never a party member. My husband never suggested that I become a party member. His sisters were party members, and so were my brothers-in-law, but I wasn't in the Party, and neither were my mother or my father. I participated in marches, we were all sent on 1st May, on 23rd August, we had meetings after meetings, where I would keep my mouth shut, I wasn't into politics at all, I would just shut up and listen.

My husband left the army in 1960; at first he was the chief of the commercial inspectorate of the Brasov district. He worked there for about three years and then he asked for a transfer at the former ICRM [Enterprise of wholesale commerce of metalo-chemic products and building materials], today's Brintex, and he was the manager of the stationary department there. He didn't want to leave the army, but there was some reorganization and the Saxons, the Jews, and the Hungarians, were laid off. I didn't like the uniform, so I was glad about it.

After 1960, after my husband left the army, I wanted to leave for Israel, but he didn't want to. I couldn't tell why, as a matter of fact he never wanted anything, he was a man content with whatever he had; he was pretty lazy, he just wanted good food and peace, he was a very crotchety man, that's the truth. So we didn't file for it. And in the first years after he left the army, we wouldn't have received the approval to leave anyway. After he retired, my husband worked for the community for four years as the administrator of the villa the community has in Cristian [commune in Brasov county, approximately 12km away from Brasov], and as the canteen administrator, but I had no connections with the community.

I couldn't say I suffered from many restrictions during communism. I didn't suffer from cold because gas was cheap. When we moved here, we had to pay a lump sum for gas, we didn't have a timer. If you lived in a house, problems weren't so big. From time to time, we didn't have electricity, but we had no problems with gas. There were food stamps for food, but we always had a store assistant or an acquaintance that would provide something extra. A former colleague of my husband's would come with sirloin. And we would buy as much as ten kilograms of sirloin and put it in the freezer. My freezer was totally full with fruit, vegetables, and meat. We were lucky.

We went on holidays during communism all the time, we went to the seaside every year, and we could afford it. I couldn't go abroad for a long time, I didn't get a passport because my husband was an officer; I could leave only in the 1970s. I went to Prague and Bratislava in Czechoslovakia. I was also in Hungary a few times, to visit my relatives in Budapest, and I went to Sweden three times. The first time was in 1977, then in 1980 and then in 1986, to Stockholm. Of course, my cousin from my father's side, Alice, sent me the ticket, but I had no problems with my passport. I waited for three months but I got it. I didn't try to use connections – it would have been too

suspicious that I was in such a hurry to go. I filed all the papers, and I said that if the answer was yes, I would go, if it was no, I wouldn't go and that was it. I filled in the same kind of paperwork you have to fill in now. I went abroad alone, because my cousin didn't agree to pay the ticket for my husband as well, it was pretty expensive.

I also went to the old house in Rau de Mori, which had belonged to my grandparents, and which had been sold in the meantime; where I had seen those splendid orchards. Everything was in ruins: there were no trees, nothing except barren land. I contacted Tibi again on that occasion, and I found out what had happened to him: his wife had divorced him, she had found another man, and he was devastated; I think he must have loved her in the end, if he suffered so much because of her. We met, we talked about old times, when I called him I told him exactly this: 'You know who this is? It's the little girl from Budapest from 1945!' We agreed that we would write to each other, and he wrote to me, on the address of a friend of mine, and I also called him from time to time when my husband wasn't home; I didn't want him to know. But he was, however, a weak man, I think he got the vice of drinking, and for a long time I didn't hear from him. I found out that he died in 1990, I think, and that before he died he had said, that if he were to get better, he would get in touch with Mariana, that's me. But that never happened.

I had many close friends during communism, and the majority was Jewish; for as long as we were young, we went out, we visited each other, or we went to a feast, or once a week we went out to a restaurant to eat. Almost all left for Israel, the USA, Canada. There's no one left here.

I didn't have problems with receiving letters during communism, or that the letters wouldn't reach their destination, I wrote to my relatives in Budapest, to my cousin in Sweden. The letters got there, it's now, after the revolution [26](#) that I have lost dozens of letters, with photos in them, those which were a bit thicker – someone from the post office probably imagined that there was money in it, and in 1993/4 my daughter sent me a package weighing one kilo which never got here; they were stolen at the post office, it was a big scandal back then, it was on television as well.

My daughter, after she graduated from high school, studied two years at the faculty of physical education in Bucharest, and then she did a three-year electro techniques course. Eva worked here in the country at the former ICRM, she worked with electronic computers, and it was the first time they had appeared here, in Brasov at least. She got married here, in the country, to Roland Gottschick, who isn't Jewish, he is a Saxon, in 1972. There was only a civil ceremony. She wanted to get even with her former boyfriend, who was her first love; they quarreled, they had a problem, but I don't know what it was. It wasn't a kosher wedding; I didn't agree to Roland either, especially taking into account the history of our family, I said it wouldn't come out well, and that's exactly what happened. Barbara, my granddaughter, was born in 1975.

I was separated from my husband from 1972 to 1973, we weren't getting along, I didn't love him, and I got a transfer from work to Miercurea Ciuc, and I stayed with my mother. I came back mostly because of my mother, who was already ill, and who insisted that the family should be united, at least for Eva's sake. So I came back to Brasov in 1973.

I listened to Free Europe Radio [27](#) ever since it started, which was in 1970 or 1975, I think. I listened to it in an undertone, at home, but I always knew what was going on everywhere. We told jokes at home, there were plenty of jokes about Ceausescu [28](#), but we told them only among very close friends, not out loud, in the street. My husband also listened to the radio. He was a party

member because he had no choice, if you weren't a party member you wouldn't get a house, you wouldn't get a good job, nothing at all. You were some sort of an outcast. Most of the people who were in the Party didn't have opinions against communists; very few were convinced communists.

My mother died in 1976 and she's also buried in the Jewish cemetery in Miercurea Ciuc. There was no rabbi at the funeral, only a chazzan. There was somebody from the community who recited the Kaddish in the first years. The Jewish cemetery in Miercurea Ciuc still exists, but there are no more funerals there; I don't think there were as many as three or four more funerals there in Miercurea Ciuc after my mother died. I kept Yahrzeit for my parents every year, and I sat shivah after their death in the house, on a little stool.

When the revolution in 1989 took place, it was Chanukkah. And Barbara was in the choir, and she stayed with me, it was during the Christmas holidays. Eva phoned me and asked me to send her home to do her hair, so that she would look beautiful in the choir. And we settled that the girl would come for the choir; Eva lived in Bartolomeu passage [the distance between Bartolomeu neighborhood and the synagogue is approximately 3km], so Barbara, all made up, had to take the bus number 16 to the synagogue. My husband worked in the canteen, he was the administrator, and he had already left home, and when I left for the synagogue, I met a lady in Poarta Schei [Poarta Schei, monument built between 1927-1928 in the old center of Brasov] who asked me what was going on in Prund [region located also in the old center of Brasov, made up mostly of old houses], because there were shots fired in the center. I answered that I had no idea what was going on; I hadn't heard anything until then, on television or on the radio. And I was terrified when I found out that there were shots fired in the center, and I ran for the synagogue. It felt like forever to cover that short distance, I thought I would never get there.

I started thinking of the girl, of what had happened, wondering if the bus had come all the way up, if she wasn't stopped in the center, if everybody had to get off, and I said to myself, a 14-year-old child, she would get lost in the crowd, she would be trampled underfoot, anything could happen, because Barbara was too quiet, a bit soft, and I was terrified for her; I thought I would die until I reached the temple, that I would have a heart attack, but she was already there.

By then everybody knew what was going on, and Mr. Roth [Tiberiu], the president, said that we should stay there, that we were safe, and that we would close the doors, but I didn't want to. I knew there were Arab students in Brasov, and I said no, they were capable of setting the synagogue on fire, or who knows what else, because we were outside the law, everything was in disorder then.

I remembered Budapest and everything that had happened to me, and I said I wouldn't stay, anything could happen in a few hours, and I took Barbara and went home. I also went to Prund to buy two loaves of bread to have in the house in case we couldn't go out, I covered the window in the small room with a blanket and I turned on the television. The Securitate [29](#) headquarters were close, shots were fired, and I remember that in the evening, on the second day of Christmas, there were shots fired in the nearby garden, the scandal was huge. We barricaded ourselves in the house; I didn't let the girl go out in the garden for three days, until the situation calmed down in Brasov.

I don't think things got better after 1989, for me at least everything is harder. The money isn't enough, even with the help I get from the community: gas is very expensive, and I had a lot to fix



around the house. It's true that there was no freedom of speech during communism, but I shut up, what was I to do, I couldn't get my family in trouble.

My daughter left for Germany at the beginning of 1990, with all her family: her husband and her daughter. I didn't agree with Eva leaving for Germany, but what could I do, I couldn't separate a family. I didn't like this marriage from the beginning, but there's no way to talk to the young people today, it's in vain. When I went to visit my daughter in Germany I had to wait three months for the visa; that was in 1992. I waited three months for the visa, exactly like it was during communism. Everybody at the consulate in Sibiu treated us like we were animals, like we were gypsies. Now Eva works as an accountant in Niederhausen. She's separated from her husband, but not divorced, their temperaments didn't match; Roland has a very reserved and weird character.

My husband died in 1998, and he was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Brasov. There was also a chazzan, and Mr. Roth delivered the speech. There were many people at the funeral, I think there were at least 200 people, and he was much appreciated. Many more would have come, his former work colleagues didn't know, I didn't have time to post an advertisement in the newspaper, because funerals are done very quickly in our religion.

I don't go more often to the synagogue now, we, the women, only go on the high holidays, but I still light the candles on Friday evenings and I say the blessing. The community helps me, I receive assistance and packages, a sum of money, not much, but it helps; in the winter I receive help for heating, otherwise I wouldn't pull through. It's all right here, but it's a house that is hard to maintain, and it's cold. I had plenty of problems, I repaired the terrace I don't remember how many times, the last time was two years ago [in 2002], with the help of my nephew, because there was no way I could have paid 20 million from my pension. I benefited after my husband from the decree 116, because he was taken to forced labor camps, I don't pay for television, phone and radio subscription, I have free bus and train tickets, I can get free tickets during summer at a spa if I want to go.

The community isn't so big in Brasov nowadays. When I came here the synagogue was totally full, you had to go earlier to have a seat. Now there's no one left, the young people have left. I was run over by a car this year [2004], in February, and my face and my arm were pretty badly hit, and my hand heals very slowly because of the age; I can't lift anything, and I needed to hire a woman for cleaning.

I was close to my aunt Hilda from Arad, but she left for Sweden in 1956, with her husband, and I didn't have other relatives. In Budapest there are some left, from my father's side. I keep in touch with my nephew George, and of course with my daughter's family, with Barbara, who is a pharmacist now; she writes to me rather often and she sends me photos from all the places she travels to, that's her hobby. I think she considers herself Jewish, but because she lives where she lives she can't really manifest her ideas. There's no problem with the German state, but there is with the people, they are anti-Semites. A Jew isn't well accepted in Germany. I think that for as long as a German lives, not all the waters of the ocean will wash him clean of the shame of the Holocaust.

## Glossary:

## **1 Adoption of Hungarian names (Magyarization of names)**

Before 1881 the adoption of Hungarian names was regarded as a private matter and the liberal governments after the Compromise of 1867 treated it as a simply administrative, politically neutral question. At the end of the 19th century the years of the Millennium brought an upsurge in the adoption of Hungarian names partly because the Banffy cabinet (1895-1899) pressed for it, especially among civil servants. Jews were overrepresented among those adopting a Hungarian name until 1919 (the last year when more Jewish than Christian people were allowed to do so). After WWI, during the Horthy era, politicians did not consider the nation a mere political category anymore, and one had to become worthy of a Hungarian name. Assimilation of the Jewry was also controlled by this process (only the Minister of the Interior had the right to decide on it), and in 1938 the adoption of Hungarian names by the denominational Jewry was practically stopped. After WWII, between 1945 and 1949, 50,000 petitions were filed, about a third of them by Jews, on reasons for changing German or Jewish sounding names.

## **2 Transylvania**

Geographical and historical region belonging to Hungary until 1918-19, then ceded to Romania. Its area covers 103,000 sq.km between the Carpathian Mountains and the present-day Hungarian and Serbian borders. It became a Roman province in the 2nd century (AD) terminating the Dacian Kingdom. After the Roman withdrawal it was overrun, between the 3rd and 10th centuries, by the Goths, the Huns, the Gepidae, the Avars and the Slavs. Hungarian tribes first entered the region in the 5th century, but they did not fully control it until 1003, when King Stephen I placed it under jurisdiction of the Hungarian Crown. Later, in the 12th and 13th centuries, Germans, called Saxons (then and now), also arrived while Romanians, called Vlachs or Walachians, were there by that time too, although the exact date of their appearance is disputed. As a result of the Turkish conquest, Hungary was divided into 3 sections: West Hungary, under Habsburg rule, central Hungary, under Turkish rule, and semi-independent Transylvania (as a Principality), where Austrian and Turkish influences competed for supremacy for nearly two centuries. With the defeat of the Turkish Transylvania gradually came under Habsburg rule, and due to the Compromise of 1867 it became an integral part of Hungary again. In line with other huge territorial losses fixed in the Treaty of Trianon (1920), Transylvania was formally ceded to Romania by Hungary. For a short period during WWII it was returned to Hungary but was ceded to Romania once again after the war. Many of the Saxons of Transylvania fled to Germany before the arrival of the Soviet army, and more followed after the fall of the Communist government in 1989. In 1920, the population of Erdély was 5,200,000, of which 3 million were Romanian, 1,400,000 Hungarian (26%), 510,000 German and 180,000 Jewish. In 2002, however, the percentage of Hungarians was only 19.6% and the German and Jewish population decreased to several thousand. Despite the decrease of the Hungarian, German and Jewish element, Transylvania still preserves some of its multiethnic and multi-confessional tradition.

## **3 Trianon Peace Treaty**

Trianon is a palace in Versailles where, as part of the Paris Peace Conference, the peace treaty was signed with Hungary on 4th June 1920. It was the official end of World War I for the countries concerned. The Trianon Peace Treaty validated the annexation of huge parts of pre-war Hungary by

the states of Austria (the province of Burgenland) and Romania (Transylvania, and parts of Eastern Hungary). The northern part of pre-war Hungary was attached to the newly created Czechoslovak state (Slovakia and Subcarpathia) while Croatia-Slavonia as well as parts of Southern Hungary (Vojvodina, Baranja, Medjumurje and Prekmurje) were to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (later Yugoslavia). Hungary lost 67.3% of its pre-war territory, including huge areas populated mostly or mainly by Hungarians, and 58.4% of its population. As a result approximately one third of the Hungarians became an - often oppressed - ethnic minority in some of the predominantly hostile neighboring countries. Trianon became the major point of reference of interwar nationalistic and anti-Semitic Hungarian regimes.

#### **4 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 orientalist 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.

#### **5 Communist Party between the two World Wars in Romania**

The Romanian Communist Party was formed on 11th May 1921, by laying the Socialist Party on communist bases, as a result of the decision taken at its convention. Its joining the 3rd International, which placed it under Moscow's orders, determined the response of the Romanian home security forces. The following conventions of the Party (Ploiesti, 1922; Vienna, 1924) maintained the affiliation with the Communist International and established that the fight to separate some Romanian provinces from the State territory was a priority. The Vienna convention chose Elek Koblos as secretary general. Until 1944, this position was held by Romanian citizens belonging to minority groups (Boris Stefanov, Stefan Foris) or by foreign citizens (Vitali Holostenko, Alexander Danieluc Stefanski), because it was believed that Romanians didn't have a strong revolutionary spirit and nationalistic inclinations. In 1924, the 'Marzescu law' was passed. The activities of the party became illegal, and its members went underground.

#### **6 Hungarian era (1940-1944)**

The expression 'Hungarian era' refers to the period between 30th August 1940 and 15th October 1944 in Transylvania. As a result of the Trianon Peace Treaty in 1920, the eastern part of Hungary (Maramures, Partium, Banat, Transylvania) was annexed to Romania. Two million inhabitants of Hungarian nationality came under Romanian rule. In the summer of 1940, under pressure from Berlin and Rome, the Romanian government agreed to return Northern Transylvania, where the majority of the Hungarians lived, to Hungary. The anti-Jewish laws introduced in 1938 and 1939 in Hungary were also applied in Northern Transylvania. Following the German occupation of Hungary on 19th March 1944, Jews from Northern Transylvania were deported and killed in concentration camps along with Jews from all over Hungary except for Budapest. Northern Transylvania belonged

to Hungary until the fall of 1944, when the Soviet troops entered and introduced a regime of military administration that sustained local autonomy. The military administration ended on March 1945, when the Romanian administration was reintroduced in all the Western territories lost in 1940 - as a reward for the fact that Romania formed the first communist-led government in the region.

## **7 Yellow star in Romania**

On 8th July 1941, Hitler decided that all Jews from the age of 6 from the Eastern territories had to wear the Star of David, made of yellow cloth and sewed onto the left side of their clothes. The Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs introduced this 'law' on 10th September 1941. Strangely enough, Marshal Antonescu made a decision on that very day ordering Jews not to wear the yellow star. Because of these contradicting orders, this 'law' was only implemented in a few counties in Bukovina and Bessarabia, and Jews there were forced to wear the yellow star.

## **8 Anti-Jewish laws in Hungary**

Following similar legislation in Nazi Germany, Hungary enacted three Jewish laws in 1938, 1939 and 1941. The first law restricted the number of Jews in industrial and commercial enterprises, banks and in certain occupations, such as legal, medical and engineering professions, and journalism to 20% of the total number. This law defined Jews on the basis of their religion, so those who converted before the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, as well as those who fought in World War I, and their widows and orphans were exempted from the law. The second Jewish law introduced further restrictions, limiting the number of Jews in the above fields to 6%, prohibiting the employment of Jews completely in certain professions such as high school and university teaching, civil and municipal services, etc. It also forbade Jews to buy or sell land and so forth. This law already defined Jews on more racial grounds in that it regarded baptized children that had at least one non-converted Jewish parent as Jewish. The third Jewish law prohibited intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, and defined anyone who had at least one Jewish grandparent as Jewish.

## **9 Numerus clausus in Hungary**

The general meaning of the term is restriction of admission to secondary school or university for economic and/or political reasons. The Numerus Clausus Act passed in Hungary in 1920 was the first anti-Jewish Law in Europe. It regulated the admission of students to higher educational institutions by stating that aside from the applicants' national loyalty and moral reliability, their origin had to be taken into account as well. The number of students of the various ethnic and national minorities had to correspond to their proportion in the population of Hungary. After the introduction of this act the number of students of Jewish origin at Hungarian universities declined dramatically.

## **10 German Invasion of Poland**

The German attack of Poland on 1st September 1939 is widely considered the date in the West for the start of World War II. After having gained both Austria and the Bohemian and Moravian parts of Czechoslovakia, Hitler was confident that he could acquire Poland without having to fight Britain

and France. (To eliminate the possibility of the Soviet Union fighting if Poland were attacked, Hitler made a pact with the Soviet Union, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.) On the morning of 1st September 1939, German troops entered Poland. The German air attack hit so quickly that most of Poland's air force was destroyed while still on the ground. To hinder Polish mobilization, the Germans bombed bridges and roads. Groups of marching soldiers were machine-gunned from the air, and they also aimed at civilians. On 1st September, the beginning of the attack, Great Britain and France sent Hitler an ultimatum - withdraw German forces from Poland or Great Britain and France would go to war against Germany. On 3rd September, with Germany's forces penetrating deeper into Poland, Great Britain and France both declared war on Germany.

## **11 German Invasion of Hungary**

Hitler found out about Prime Minister Miklos Kallay's and Governor Miklos Horthy's attempts to make peace with the west, and by the end of 1943 worked out the plans, code-named 'Margarethe I. and II.', for the German invasion of Hungary. In early March 1944, Hitler, fearing a possible Anglo-American occupation of Hungary, gave orders to German forces to march into the country. On 18th March, he met Horthy in Klessheim, Austria and tried to convince him to accept the German steps, and for the signing of a declaration in which the Hungarians would call for the occupation by German troops. Horthy was not willing to do this, but promised he would stay in his position and would name a German puppet government in place of Kallay's. On 19th March, the Germans occupied Hungary without resistance. The ex-ambassador to Berlin, Dome Sztojaj, became new prime minister, who - though nominally responsible to Horthy - in fact, reconciled his politics with Edmund Veessenmayer, the newly arrived delegate of the Reich.

12 Yellow star houses: The system of exclusively Jewish houses which acted as a form of hostage taking was introduced by the Hungarian authorities in June 1944 in Budapest. The authorities believed that if they concentrated all the Jews of Budapest in the ghetto, the Allies would not attack it, but if they placed such houses all over Budapest, especially near important public buildings it was a kind of guarantee. Jews were only allowed to leave such houses for two hours a day to buy supplies and such.

## **13 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.

## **14 Szalasi, Ferenc (1897-1946)**

Ferenc Szalasi was the leader of the Arrow-Cross Party, prime minister. He came from a middle

class family, his father was a clerk. He studied at the Becsujhely Military Academy, and in 1915 he became a lieutenant. After WWI he was nominated captain and became a member of the general staff. In 1930 he became a member of the secret race protecting association called Magyar Elet [Hungarian Life], and in 1935 he established his own association, called Nemzeti Akarat Partja [Party of the National Will]. At the 1936 interim elections his party lost, and the governing party tried to prevent them from gaining more ground. At the 1939 elections Szalasi and his party won 31 electoral mandates. At German pressure Horthy appointed him as prime minister, and shortly after he got hold of the presidential office too. He introduced a total terror with the Arrow-Cross men and continued the eradication of the Jewry, and the hauling of the values of the country to Germany. He was arrested by American troops in Germany, where he had fled from Soviet occupation on 29th March 1945. He was executed as war criminal on 12th March 1946.

## **15 Jewish Hospital**

The public foundation hospital of the Jewish community of Pest opened its doors with 479 beds in 1889 on the corner of Arena and Szabolcs Streets, and was later expanded by a children's hospital (1897) and a confinement ward (1910). In a peculiar way, the numerous *clausus* act of the Horthy era (1920) aided in the creation of an exemplary work force: medical workers qualified but not admissible for a university professorship because of their origin, many of whom already had outstanding professional experience and were of international fame, were compelled to work here. The hospital was taken over by the Germans in May 1944 and transformed into a military hospital. After the war it was given back to the Jewish community for a short time. It was nationalized in 1950 and as a gesture of appreciation it became the first institutional center for post-graduate medical training in 1956.

## **16 Banks of the Danube**

In the winter of 1944/45, after the Arrow-Cross, the Hungarian fascists, took over the power, Arrow-Cross commandos went round the protected houses of the Ujlipotvaros, a bourgeois part of Budapest, and took the Jews to the Danube and shot them into the river.

## **17 Budapest Ghetto**

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

## **18 Wallenberg, Raoul (1921-?)**

Swedish diplomat and businessman. In 1944, he was assigned to Sweden's legation in Budapest,



where he helped save approximately 100,000 Hungarian Jews from Nazi extermination. He issued Swedish passports to approximately 20,000 Jews and sheltered others in houses he bought or rented. Adolf Eichmann, heading the transport of Jews to concentration camps, demanded that Wallenberg stop these activities and ordered his assassination, but the attempt failed. In 1945, the Soviets, who had just entered Budapest, imprisoned him, possibly because of work he was doing for the U.S. secret service. In 1957 the Soviet government announced that he had died in prison of a heart attack in 1947, but he was reported seen at later dates. In 1991 Soviet authorities released KGB records that, although they did not contain proof that Wallenberg was dead, appeared to confirm that he had died in 1947, most likely by execution. He was made an honorary U.S. citizen in 1981. (Source: The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001)

## **19 Mauthausen**

concentration camp located in Upper Austria. Mauthausen was opened in August 1938. The first prisoners to arrive were forced to build the camp and work in the quarry. On 5th May 5, 1945 American troops arrived and liberated the camp. Altogether, 199,404 prisoners passed through Mauthausen. Approximately 119,000 of them, including 38,120 Jews, were killed or died from the harsh conditions, exhaustion, malnourishment, and overwork. (Source: Rozett R. – Spector S.: Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, Facts on File, G.G. The Jerusalem Publishing House Ltd. 2000, pg. 314 – 315)

## **20 23rd August 1944**

On that day the Romanian Army switched sides and changed its World War II alliances, which resulted in the state of war against the German Third Reich. The Royal head of the Romanian state, King Michael I, arrested the head of government, Marshal Ion Antonescu, who was unwilling to accept an unconditional surrender to the Allies.

## **21 Creation of the state of Israel**

From 1917 Palestine was a British mandate. Also in 1917 the Balfour Declaration was published, which supported the idea of the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Throughout the interwar period, Jews were migrating to Palestine, which caused the conflict with the local Arabs to escalate. On the other hand, British restrictions on immigration sparked increasing opposition to the mandate powers. Immediately after World War II there were increasing numbers of terrorist attacks designed to force Britain to recognize the right of the Jews to their own state. These aspirations provoked the hostile reaction of the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states. In February 1947 the British foreign minister Ernest Bevin ceded the Palestinian mandate to the UN, which took the decision to divide Palestine into a Jewish section and an Arab section and to create an independent Jewish state. On 14th May 1948 David Ben Gurion proclaimed the creation of the State of Israel. It was recognized immediately by the US and the USSR. On the following day the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon attacked Israel, starting a war that continued, with intermissions, until the beginning of 1949 and ended in a truce.

**22 Six-Day-War:** (Hebrew: Milhemet Sheshet Hayamim), also known as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Six Days War, or June War, was fought between Israel and its Arab neighbors Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. It began when Israel launched a preemptive war on its Arab neighbors; by its end Israel controlled the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. The results of

the war affect the geopolitics of the region to this day.

### **23 Yom Kippur War (1973 Arab-Israeli War)**

(Hebrew: Milchemet Yom HaKipurim), also known as the October War, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, and the Ramadan War, was fought from 6th October (the day of Yom Kippur) to 24th October 1973, between Israel and a coalition of Egypt and Syria. The war began when Egypt and Syria launched a surprise joint attack in the Sinai and Golan Heights, respectively, both of which had been captured by Israel during the Six-Day-War six years earlier. The war had far-reaching implications for many nations. The Arab world, which had been humiliated by the lopsided defeat of the Egyptian-Syrian-Jordanian alliance during the Six-Day-War, felt psychologically vindicated by its string of victories early in the conflict. This vindication, in many ways, cleared the way for the peace process which followed the war. The Camp David Accords, which came soon after, led to normalized relations between Egypt and Israel - the first time any Arab country had recognized the Israeli state. Egypt, which had already been drifting away from the Soviet Union, then left the Soviet sphere of influence almost entirely.

### **24 Bergen-Belsen**

Concentration camp located in northern Germany. Bergen-Belsen was established in April 1943 as a detention camp for prisoners who were to be exchanged with Germans imprisoned in Allied countries. Bergen-Belsen was liberated by the British army on 15th April, 1945. The soldiers were shocked at what they found, including 60,000 prisoners in the camp, many on the brink of death, and thousands of unburied bodies lying about. (Source: Rozett R. - Spector S.: Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, Facts on File, G.G. The Jerusalem Publishing House Ltd. 2000, pg. 139 -141)

### **25 1956 Revolution**

It designates 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 started in which Stalin's gigantic statue was destroyed. 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 stationing in Hungary since the end of World War II, but they returned after Nagy's announcement that Hungary would pull out of the Warsaw Pact to pursue a policy of neutrality. The Soviet army put an end to the rising on 4th November and mass repression and arrests started. About 200,000 Hungarians fled from the country. Nagy, and a number of his supporters were executed. Until 1989, the fall of the communist regime, the Revolution of 1956 was officially considered a counter-revolution.

### **26 Romanian Revolution of 1989**

In December 1989, a revolt in Romania deposed the communist dictator Ceausescu. Anti-government violence started in Timisoara and spread to other cities. When army units joined the uprising, Ceausescu fled, but he was captured and executed on 25th December along with his wife. A provisional government was established, with Ion Iliescu, a former Communist Party official, as president. In the elections of May 1990 Iliescu won the presidency and his party, the Democratic National Salvation Front, obtained an overwhelming majority in the legislature.

## **27 Radio Free Europe**

Radio station launched in 1949 at the instigation of the US government with headquarters in West Germany. The radio broadcast uncensored news and features, produced by Central and Eastern European émigrés, from Munich to countries of the Soviet block. The radio station was jammed behind the Iron Curtain, team members were constantly harassed and several people were killed in terrorist attacks by the KGB. Radio Free Europe played a role in supporting dissident groups, inner resistance and will of freedom in the Eastern and Central European communist countries and thus it contributed to the downfall of the totalitarian regimes of the Soviet block. The headquarters of the radio have been in Prague since 1994.

## **28 Ceausescu, Nicolae (1918-1989)**

Communist head of Romania between 1965 and 1989. He followed a policy of nationalism and non-intervention into the internal affairs of other countries. The internal political, economic and social situation was marked by the cult of his personality, as well as by terror, institutionalized by the Securitate, the Romanian political police. The Ceausescu regime was marked by disastrous economic schemes and became increasingly repressive and corrupt. There were frequent food shortages, lack of electricity and heating, which made everyday life unbearable. In December 1989 a popular uprising, joined by the army, led to the arrest and execution of both Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, who had been deputy Prime Minister since 1980.

## **29 Securitate (in Romanian**

DGSP - Directia generala a Securitatii Poporului): General Board of the People's Security. Its structure was established in 1948 with direct participation of Soviet advisors named by the NKVD. The primary purpose was to 'defend all democratic accomplishments and to ensure the security of the Romanian Popular Republic against plots of both domestic and foreign enemies'. Its leader was Pantelimon Bondarenko, later known as Gheorghe Pintilie, a former NKVD agent. It carried out the arrests, physical torture and brutal imprisonment of people who became undesirable for the leaders of the Romanian Communist Party, and also kept the life of ordinary civilians under strict observation.