

# Mariann Szamosi

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Hungary

Interviewer: Klara Laszlo

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Mrs. Mariann Szamosi is a tall elderly lady in her mid-70s, who radiates understanding and warmth. Her tall figure retains marks from the experiments performed upon her while in the concentration camp during the Holocaust. But these limitations - difficulty walking - don't deter her from living an active and fruitful life. She still works to this day. She's lived in Kobanya, an outer district of Budapest, in a three-room apartment, in a block of flats built in the 1950s, for the last forty years, with her daughter, who is divorced. Mariann supports her daughter, who cannot work for psychological reasons. The furniture, pictures, and decorative objects that remain are appropriate to the apartment, once a bourgeois (middle class) home. Today, and every day, Mariann goes to her job, a responsible position as Managing Director at the Cicero book publisher in Ujlipotvaros (Budapest, 13th district). Humanism and care pervade her relationship with her co-workers.

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## Family background

From family legend, I know that my great grandfather, my mother's maternal grandfather, was a schoolmaster known as Jozsef Schon, who is in the Jewish Lexicon ['Magyar Zsido Lexikon', Pallas Irodalmi és Nyomdai Reszvenytarsasag, Budapest, 1929], and was a textbook author and pedagogue in his time. I know that he was a very good man, and that he lost his wife young. He had two daughters, one was my grandmother, Hermina, the other was Szera, and I have very close relations with Aunt Szera's branch of the family. They played a very important role in my life. Especially, a long time ago in my childhood, but primarily when I lost my parents in the Holocaust, and was left an orphan. They loved me as my mother had. Aunt Szera married Jozsef Messinger, and their daughter was Erzsike [diminutive of Erzsebet (Elizabeth)], who later became Mrs. Andor Karman. Sadly, she's already dead. But I'm still in close contact today with her children, Gyuri Karman and Juli Karman, though I'm descended from the Hermina side.

I'd like to start with a few sentences about my maternal grandparents and the Neufeld branch. This is the male branch. My maternal grandfather was Mano Neufeld. They magyarized it to Sebestyen, but I don't know when. My maternal grandfather had six true, and six step-siblings. I only remember three of the daughters' names: Hanna, Frida and Terez. Of the true siblings, there was Aunt Hanna, who married Mano Alexander, and they lived in Satoraljaujhely. They had a lot of children. There was Odon, Sandor - whose wife's name I remember as Cora. Dudus [a nickname]- I

don't recall what his other name was. Elza, Ilona - who lived in Szerencs and, if I remember correctly, her husband was a doctor - and finally Erno. Erno's wife, I believe was called Margit, and their son was Gyurika [diminutive of Gyorgy (George)]. We had a close, loving relationship with their family. You could say they were the most religious branch of the family.

Most of my grandfather's siblings' children went to America in the 1920's, so I don't know too much about them. I know two of all sibling's children: Iren, and Erzsi both emigrated to America and put down roots.

My grandfather, Mano Sebestyen married my grandmother, Hermina Schon, and she became Mrs. Hermina Sebestyen. I don't know when my grandfather was born, I only know that he died in 1933, when I was five. He was probably born in Homonna - in Slovakia now - but I'm not sure of that. My grandmother, Hermina Schon, was born in Veszprem in 1870. I don't know how they met. Their marriage probably took place in Budapest at the end of the 1800s, because their first child Erno was born in 1895.

My grandfather was the principal of a school of commerce for many decades, and at the same time, he was a court handwriting expert. I knew him from my early childhood. He was a very kind, good man. He loved me a lot, but I can't say much about him. I have more memories of my grandmother. I really had two mothers, my grandmother Hermina and her daughter Leonora. Grandmother lived with us.

My maternal grandparents had four children, none of them are still living. Though my grandmother had her teacher accreditation, she didn't work. Women traditionally took care of the raising of children then. In the 1920s, it was not an easy thing to raise four children from one income. My uncle, Erno Sebestyen was the oldest. He worked a bit as a lawyer and was able to live through the war with false documents, working in a factory. There was a pretty big age difference between Erno and their next child, Lilike [diminutive of Lili] who was born in 1901. She died young around 1930. The family never got over her death. It was a tragedy for us, she got blood poisoning and they couldn't cure her. Then came my mother, Leonora Sebestyen, born in 1904 and probably died in Ravensbruck [1](#). My mother spoke very eloquently and attended the acting school for a while. But nothing came of that, most likely, due to financial reasons, she had to quit. She became a housewife and lived at home.

My grandparents' youngest child, Lajos Sebestyen, was born in 1908. Both the boys, Erno and Lajos were trained as lawyers, and for my grandfather to afford that expense, his two daughters had to find husbands from wealthy families. That was the cost of educating the boys. The girls succeeded. Note well, that the boys couldn't really practice because, by the time they were qualified, the Jewish laws [numerus clausus][2](#) came in. The older brother, my uncle Erno Sebestyen, probably lawyered a little bit, but Lajos never did. Lajos got married in the early 1940s, to Magda Wollak. They had an tropical fruit grocery on Erkel street. Lajos died in a labor battalion [3](#) in the Ukraine. The last we heard from him was in 1943. I still have the letter, in which he wrote that in a few days, they're taking him with the 41st or 42nd battalion, and to try to help him, but we didn't succeed. The Arrow Cross [4](#) shot Magda into the Danube [5](#).

My paternal side is the Rosenfeld side. My grandfather was Miksa Rosenfeld, my father's father. The family was from Nagykoros, my grandfather was the founder and later the director of a fruit and vegetable distributor. I didn't know him personally. He died in 1928, just before my birth. I only

knew my grandmother, Malvin Bruck. While we lived in Nagykoros, she lived in one house with her and one of my father's brothers, Pali [diminutive of Pal (Paul)] Rosenfeld. My grandmother was a very primitive, simple Jewish- peasant lady. I can't say too many nice things about her, nor bad things! Grandma Rosenfeld never acted like a grandmother to me. I never felt she was. She died soon after. In the early 1930s, I think in 1933, she died. I remember her funeral. It was a Jewish funeral, neolog [6](#).

My father had five brothers. He had a half-sister named Iren Rosenfeld, whose married name was Mrs. Herman Fabriczky. She lived in Pest [Budapest], and had a pickling business on Csaba street, where they produced kinds of pickled vegetables. I think her husband died young, and their two very masculine daughters took over the running of that business. After the war, I think they went abroad. They had no children. At that time, my uncle Imre Rosenfeld was a doctor in Nagykoros. He was the youngest, a bachelor. Except for his great generosity, he was really a grumpy guy, with a sullen manner, but he could play piano miraculously. He would put on the records of the best pianists and, with the windows open, he would play along with the record. Then there was my uncle Gyula Rosenfeld, a lawyer, he had a sweet daughter, Klarika [diminutive of Klara]. Klarika and her mother ended up in Auschwitz, and never came back. Then there was my father, Sandor Rosenfeld, who was a prisoner in World War I, and spent seven years in Siberia, in Krasnoyarsk. He married pretty late, I think he was 44 years old when I was born. His Christian wife had a boy named Imre at the last moment. When they took my uncle Pali to the ghetto in Kecskemet, the child was in his hands, his wife ran after and got the child from him. That's how Imre stayed alive. There was another brother, Istvan Rosenfeld, uncle Pisti, who lived in Fullopszallas. He had a general store, and very rarely appeared at our house. He had no children. They adopted a girl named Ibolyka [diminutive of Ibolya]. She and her mother died in deportation.

My father, Sandor Rosenfeld was born in Nagykoros in 1884. He magyarized his name to Acs in 1938. He was a lanky, thin man, not especially intelligent, not a reading man. He liked to play cards. But he was a good man. He loved me. Sometimes he'd take me to the theatre to see Uncle Lakner's performances[Artur Lakner (1893-1944) - Puppet master and founder of the twentieth century's most popular Hungarian children's theater], when we already lived in Budapest. Uncle Lakner had a children's theatre. He [father] was a little left out of the family. He took part in the writer's dinners my mother's friends organized, but he didn't really take to them.

After my grandfather's death, his two sons, Pali and my father, took over the running of the Nagykoros company. Their specialty was collecting lots of fruits and vegetables from around Nagykoros, then many, many women would pack them. They shipped them on refrigerated traincars to Germany, and I don't know where else. The refrigerated cars were white, they had a special color. My father went buying in the morning, and brought the produce by truck, where the women would already be in the courtyard working, so that the produce was taken to the train nearly the same day. They had to work quickly. Sometimes, the produce would arrive in an unacceptable condition, which led to arguments about price. I remember, their correspondence. They would write horribly angry letters, because if the produce wasn't good quality, they couldn't market it.

My uncle Pali was also a Jewish peasant, and my father was that type of man, too. My father worked very diligently in the company. At dawn, he would go to buy produce around the area, to Cegled, and the smaller villages. He was the main buyer, and oversaw the packaging, and shipping.

Both my uncles, Erno and Lajos took part in the company's affairs, in that, they represented the business in Germany, where they shipped the fruits and vegetables. They met the shipment and took care of the business on that side. They also shipped to Switzerland. My mother also got involved in the joint stock company, and later became the family breadwinner. She had an agile character. Once in my childhood, I went with my mother to Switzerland, she took me with her, she had some business meeting, and we went. Just the two of us. I remember the snow and the gulls. And in the hotel, I ate butter for the first time in my life. They had such good buttered crescent rolls.

The business was successful up until 1941. Then the company went bankrupt. The competition ruined it. There was another wholesaler in Nagykoros, the Benedek company. This Benedek firm, who also wholesaled wine, ruined my father, when in one year that my father also sold wine, they let theirs go for such a low price that my father couldn't sell his, and they were left with all their wine. They lost everything. They had to auction off the house, the horses, the truck, everything we had.

My parents were probably recommended to each other. The marriage didn't come from passionate love or intimacy. It was an honorable, decent marriage. My father came back from detention after World War I, it had to be in 1925, then they were married in 1926. I was born in 1928. I lived in Nagykoros before my school years. I started at the Jewish grade school there.

The house in Nagykoros was a miracle of my childhood. It was pretty large, separated into two parts, the front part for my parents, and the rear part for uncle Pali and Grandma. In our part, there was a bedroom, a kid's room, a kind of salon and a big dining room, which we never used because it was very dark. Downstairs were the utility rooms: a big pantry, a big kitchen and a kind of maid's room. There were steps on the side of the house that led up to the bathroom. For that time, the furniture was modern, the windows were very pretty, with wild grape vines or proper grape vines covering the house. I remember you could open one of the windows and eat the grapes. There was a little flower garden with a tiny little pond, and fish in it. Great big trees, with turtle doves in them, and there were acacias, which we would breakfast underneath. The courtyard was paved all around, so you could ride a bicycle around the house. That was one of my favorite pastimes. There was a kind of warehouse, where the fruit-packing women worked, plus a big cellar where the barrels were kept. Life was pretty lively there.

## Growing up

The house was in the center of Nagykoros, in a really good location, a very nice area. We lived there all the way up to 1941, when the business went completely bust due to a competing business. Then we moved to Budapest.

I remember we always went to temple in Nagykoros. I started at the Jewish school there. I really loved the teacher. His daughter was a good friend of my cousin, Klarika Rosenfeld. I went down to visit them a lot, even after we had no house there, anymore. In the summer, I stayed with them. And we went to temple, but we didn't pray, we just talked. My friends there were all Jewish. Life there was about going to the open spa together, a very good artesian spa, we took bicycle tours, and went to the cinema. Life was still nice and peaceful around 1935.

The Jews in the city lived all over. We didn't have too many connections with them, and I don't remember that they were particularly so religious. The Jewish school was next to the temple. I don't remember any other institution. I remember the teacher, but not the rabbi. And we had more connections with the secular, intellectual Jews, because one of my uncles, Imre Rosenfeld, was a doctor. He was a doctor for the peasants. He was the kind of man who would go on a motorcycle to different farms, and if the peasants didn't have money, he would buy them medicine. There was my uncle Gyula Rosenfeld, my favorite cousin Klarika, who was two years older than me. And her father, he was a lawyer. Pali Rosenfeld took a Christian woman, Margit for a wife in 1943, or 1944. They'd been lovers for a couple years. I remember there was a glazier, glass seller, or porcelain storeowner; they were the Hoffers. There was a spice merchant, Mr. Fenyves, whose daughter Zsuzsa Fenyves was my girlfriend. There was Mr. Lazar, a feather merchant. He had a lot of children, only one survived, Vera. The others were killed.

Summers were warm and happy. We were at the pool from morning to night, or at the rock garden. There was a very pretty forested park that we went out to, where the older and more clever kids played tennis. We just watched them. In the afternoons, we gathered together in some kind of big warehouse at the Lazars and played Twenty Questions. We went to the cinema. Sometimes we biked to Kecskemet, sometimes to Cegled. Life was happy.

When the business went under, we moved up here to Budapest, my mother and father and I. I continued my life here under the wing of my grandmother. The grandparents' Budapest house was a happy family nest up to the beginning of the war years. We lived at 119 Ulloi street [a main avenue in Budapest] in a four bedroom apartment, grandma and grandpa - while he was alive, my mother and father, me and my Uncle Lajos, until he got married. It was a family of love, music and literature. We weren't rich, in fact our life was rather troubled.

When my father's possibilities of putting bread on the table had already run low, my grandmother and mother started knitting. They primarily did needlework. Knit patterns were popular in the years up to the war, and they learned them well. That was the source of income. In fact, they even had people working for them. They sold the finished pieces to a shop on Vaci street [the most elegant promenade and shopping street of Budapest]. My father spent most of this time playing cards. I learned piano. I went to gymnasium [High School], read a lot. I didn't notice anything around me, but music and literature. My mother had a lot of nice friends, good people who visited us often. I would peek in from the curtained-off part, and listen to what they were talking about. I slept in one room with my mother and grandmother. I'd wake up Sunday mornings to them talking about some incomprehensible thing. It would turn out that they'd both read the same book and were discussing it.

We kept a modest house, but while it was still possible, we had hired help come in. Just one girl, plus the German fraulein who tutored me, and helped raise me. The maids were usually little Transylvanian girls who took part in the cleaning and cooking. [The previously Hungarian province of Transylvania was annexed to Romania in 1920. Many of the Transylvanian Hungarians found refuge in Hungary, especially in Budapest, in the interwar times.] Until the Jewish Law [anti-Jewish Laws]<sup>[7]</sup> forbid it, then later we didn't have the money for them. In the later years, the maid's room was rented out.

The family wasn't religious. Except that grandma did light candles on Friday, and we fasted on Yom Kippur. That was all. There was some kind of esoteric faith within our family. My parents didn't go to temple. I went to religion class - since it was compulsory - at school. But we never got deeply involved. Our family had an enlightened, liberal view of the world. But naturally, we had feelings towards things Jewish. My grandmother had two siblings in Israel. [At the time, the area was called Palestine, and was under British authority.] It was hard then to keep in contact with them, but we did somehow.

We were a political family, enlightened in the ways of everything. So much so, that they even got me involved. I read the papers, and at family dinners these subjects always came up. I remember concretely how, in 1936, I heard about the Gombos funeral on a radio transmission, and how I already knew he'd been an evil man.<sup>8</sup> There was an interesting occurrence to the political side of that. My uncle, Erno Sebestyen, who'd been working in Germany in the 1930s, in the time of Hitler, as a commercial agent, was a little dazed by what the Germans were producing, Hitler's products. There were a lot of bloody arguments within the family because of that, they couldn't understand how a Jew could show appreciation for anything the Germans did.

Besides this, the family had a big social life, a lot of good friends. Among them, I'd say Gyorgy Szanto was the one who visited us most often. He was a painter before World War I, then he was blinded, and became a writer. Through him, my mother had a lot of writer friends, including Aron Tamasi [1897-1966, major Transylvanian, later Hungarian writer. ] who would stop by to see us. We had Christian contacts too, primarily from the business where my mother sold her goods. Even a couple of acquaintances from the building would drop by. I wouldn't say a lot, there was just one family we were in direct and good contact with. The lady, Mrs. Zoltan Kiss, lived on the same floor as us, and my mother gave her a lot of work.

I started grade school back in Nagykoros, but then continued here in Budapest, in the Prater Street grade school. I went to school, collected photos of film actors. I remember my first grade teacher from Prater street, Mrs. Antal Haros, who was a very kind, older teacher. School was already in progress when I got there. I don't remember much about the education from grade school. I had a really nice classmate, a very poor little girl, whose name was Ilona Veres. She played an important role in my life. At the beginning, we studied together, and that continued, so that very often she would stay over at our house. We almost became sisters. Eventually, she and her family gave us all the fake documents we used to go underground with, and to escape with.

I had a mix of girlfriends, probably more Christians than Jews. I probably had Jewish friends due to the fact that A and B class, all the Jews, had to go to one religion class. This gave us all some kind of connection. It's interesting that somehow I can always tell, and still can, if someone's Jewish. I can't explain it, I just get some kind of emotional connection with them, and that my children are just half-Jewish. My first husband was Christian.

I went to High School on Prater street. My favorite subjects were literature and grammar. And I was very weak in mathematics. Singing, gymnastics, I always did well, when I took part in them. I didn't really feel a great interest in the arts. I was learning piano, I liked the piano, but I didn't feel I was so talented that it would be worth doing. I swam, and loved winter sports, especially skating at the Fradi [FTC, Ferenc City Sport Club, a major Budapest Club] rink. I went to dance school, too, but just in the later years. Once I had a big run-in with the German teacher, Mrs. Schultz. I wrote a note



that said these kids are stealing and Schultz is disgusting. She caught me with it, and they almost threw me out. Then they changed their mind. I finished six grades there, because then came March 19, 1944, the German invasion [9](#). I didn't finish my sixth year of secondary school. From the time the Germans came, when I had to start wearing the yellow star, from then on, I couldn't go to school.

### During the war

I felt the situation of Judaism in our family change, when the possibilities for survival thinned out considerably. For one, there was no man of the house, because my father couldn't do anything from the beginning of the 1930s. And we listened to the radio, and checked around, and my parents read newspapers, and the interesting daily topic was always connected to questions about dealing with the Jews. Concretely, it was the Jewish Law that hit our family, when my uncles could no longer work. In school there were people we already knew to be sympathetic to the Arrow Cross. There were two boys in the building where we lived, called the Rostas brothers. We knew them to be Arrow Cross. They would never speak to me. They were older than I was. I couldn't say they ever directly harassed me.

I remember the house-search we had. I was a dumb little kid then, some-teen years old, and I was scared they would take the food out of the cellar, so whatever I found there, I carried through the bathroom to the big room, and stuck the lentils under the quilt, and the beans. I took some out to the hallway, too. But I don't know why they were searching our house.

When the Germans came, we started thinking about survival. My mother was a pretty smart woman, and she decided we won't go into the yellow star [10](#) house. They took the furniture and belongings to the delegated place, her girlfriends house, if I recall, on Zoltan street. We went deep underground, instead. My mother had a Christian girlfriend named Mrs. Aniko Vertes. She offered to hide us. So when it was time to move to the star houses, it just looked like the four of us went there, we really went to 1 Hogyes Endre street, to Aunt Aniko's apartment. It was a groundfloor apartment, and she supported all of us. Cooked for us, shopped. We lived with the rollblinds down, and when the Americans carpetbombed, it was horribly frightening. Nevertheless, we didn't dare go down into the shelter. There was another person who had a significant role in our lives. He was a Christian boy named Bela Molnar who was a lot older than I was. He tried to help me when we had to move out of Ullo Street, by moving into our apartment with my girlfriend Ilonka, to save the apartment.

A month or two into the American carpetbombing, and the confinement took its toll on me. So he took me to his mother's house in Tata-Tovaros. I was there for about a month all alone. Aunt Margit, Bela Molnar's mother, knew I was Jewish, but supported me as if I was a refugee. A month after that, after going down to Tata, they bombed the Erzsebet Hospital next to the Hogyes Endre street house, and there was a huge debacle. In that, my parents got scared, and got on a train to come after me, to Tata-Tovaros. This also had an interesting sidelight. One stop before Tata is Vertesszolos. There, my mother got off the train for some reason, I don't know, probably to buy water and she didn't get back on. The train left with my grandmother and father on it. She met a miner named Tomasek that night by the tracks. But there was nothing really special about that then. The next train came and they came after us. Then the whole family was at Aunt Margit's. Everybody was there, as Transsylvanian refugees. We stayed there all the way up to October 15th

[until the Arrow Cross came to power].

When the Horthy Proclamation [11](#) came out, the Arrow Cross government takeover, then everybody got scared, and my mom said we couldn't stay there any longer. Then she thought of the old man, Tomasek, the miner, and she went over to Vertesszolos, and then came the family. He was the third person to hide us, but the first who didn't know we were Jews. It's possible he knew, but he took us in, anyway. We stayed there until December 13th. My father couldn't do much there either, but the two women, grandma and mother again, and I, just started knitting. We knitted socks, and warm gloves. And we lived from that. I remember, one December day, probably the 13th, there was a sudden deluge of Arrow Cross, saying they were looking for Sandor Acs who goes by the name of Ferenc Veres, and Mrs. Sandor Acs, who goes by Mrs. Ferenc Veres, and Mariann Acs, who goes by Ilonka Veres. From that we knew they had come out because someone had turned us in. Our suspicion is that that certain Mrs. Zoltan Kiss, who lived in the house, had a brother who was Arrow Cross. They found us from his report. The problem had been that Mrs. Kiss knew where we were. Sometime somebody, either Ilonka or Bela, had told her. One of them could have accidentally given themselves away, and that's how Mrs. Kiss's brother moved into our flat. He probably wanted to make off with the whole thing, so he reported us.

That's how the Arrow Cross took us away in December of 1944 from Vertesszolos, from the Tomasek family, poor people who suffered for it too, because they were beaten badly, his wife as well. They even took him to Komarom, to the Csillag Fort. We stayed a night there in Vertesszolos, then they turned us over to three Hungarian constables [12](#). The three constables took us from Vertesszolos to Tata- a 5 km trip - on foot. My mother tried to convince them to let us go. It was very near the end of the war. She would testify, if they get in trouble, that they had let us go, let us escape. But no, they took us to Tata. It was either a constabulary or a military center, I don't know exactly, and a short time later, to the Komarom Csillag Fort. We were there for about eight days. My mother had a map which marked where the front was, that's how they knew where the Russians were, and how the Americans were coming across Sicily. I remember the scene, there in the jail, a lot of women, we could already hear the cannons, from above, and we hoped we might just make it. But we didn't.

They put us in train cars in Komarom and took us to Ravensbruck. My father was taken by another train, we can only guess that he went straight to Dachau, but maybe from Dachau he ended up in Auschwitz. The two trains went parallel. After a long freight train ride, we arrived in the village of Furstenberg on December 24th, where there was a concentration camp, Ravensbruck. They took us in to the camp when we arrived, we had a night of freedom, we slept on the ground. The next morning they took away every last little trinket we had. After a cold shower, we had to remove all our clothes, we got a kind of rag in place of them, and they took us to Barrack 31. We were there for two months. Every day, there were constant appeals for mercy, it was very difficult to bear, it was very cold. It's close to the Baltic Sea. My mother got very sick, either with kidney stones or cancer. A prisoner doctor examined her, talked to her. My seventy-five-year- old grandmother was in better condition. They sometimes took me out of the camp to do all kinds of nasty work, sometimes they didn't. When I could, I tried to conserve energy so I'd stay strong, it was frightening.

They were unnecessary jobs. They only took me to a place where I had to shovel sand, earth. Around and around, on top of the other, for no reason. I had a clever excuse. We were put in lines



when they gave out the work, and once, when we started to go, I just did a 180 degree spin. They asked me how I got to go back. I said they didn't need me, and I came back. So I didn't have to do too much of such terrible work, but stayed in the barrack. That was my occupation for the day.

My grandmother had a lot of spirit in her. There was a Czech prisonmate, who was a Jewish woman, a very upstanding woman, who encouraged us. It could have been at the beginning of March, when the evacuations started. They brought people from Auschwitz, there wasn't even an empty barrack for them, they just put them in something called a 'zeltlager' [tent camp in German]. It was a tent, in which there weren't even beds. The people layed on the ground and slept. I went over there, looking for acquaintances, and I found some, I think those people were in a horrible situation. There was an awful upheaval in the camp, one appel for the other, these groups, those groups.

One night, my mother said that they're only collecting young people, taking them, and they hid me under the bed. They went out and never came back. We never saw each other again. I was left there all alone. I was already in a terrible state, then they disappeared and I was worse. They put me in a different block, there I got some kind of skirt I had to throw away because it was so full of lice. In minus - I don't know - 10 or 15 degrees [Celsius], I would wrap myself in a plaid blanket instead of having some clothes on me. Then I wound up in another block. Then they took everybody to ditch digging work, everybody left inside. One time, I fell down on the way to work, and I couldn't get myself up. The 'Aufseherin' [overseer woman] set a dog on me, it grabbed my arm and pulled me after. The prisoners at these times always stepped in to help, lifted me up and carried me to the worksite. There, they stuck me in the corner of a ditch, then took me home, supporting me on either side. But I don't have to say, that when we got back in the evening, at the role call they discharged me from service. What they told us was that the sick and weak were taken to the so-called 'kinderlager'[children camp]. We didn't really know then what it was, we just guessed everything. We smelled the stink of burnt flesh. We just couldn't accept these monstrosities, plus I always hoped that I might get to go where my mother and grandmother were. The next morning they collected this group, I was one of them, to take them to the 'kinderlager'. I guess my lust for life was too great, I knew German, I went over to the German SS Head Supervisor woman and I told her that I'm sixteen years old, and I feel I'm capable of working, and to let me go back. She did. Well, I didn't work after that, because by evening I was even worse.

How I ended up in the 10th block, the 'revier' [hospital], I can't say, surely somebody helped me. The fact is, I woke up in the hospital. There was a kind of sham hospital. The mentally ill were there, the wretched who screamed hideously, occasionally they were taken away. And my great luck was, that I met Gracia Kerenyi there. She was a very religious Christian girl, who went from one prison to the next, eventually from Auschwitz to Ravensbruck, because at University she put up anti-German posters. Gracia was a language talent, who knew German and English. In the hospital there, she got a position of trust. She deloused and took temperatures. She was a year older than I was, we came from the same family background, and we became really good friends, and she helped me a lot. I had a fever once, I had banged my leg, they put me in an elimination group again, she came in, and got me out.

It was a sham hospital, and they did experimentations. They x-rayed me, and the doctor said I had tuberculosis, so they immediately pumped my lungs full of air. It was pretty painful. The doctor checked me, gave me everything. He did quite a lot of examining and watching us. Once he ordered me into the surgery. Surgery?! There was a small table, and a female soldier brought

something red in on a tray, that looked like some kind of meat. They told me later it was a calf gland [thymus gland]. But I couldn't tell what it was. They cut my thigh open and sewed it into me. The International Red Cross examined it and said they had performed medical experiments on me. I had a lot of medical certifications about it, but I never understood a word of it. I was there in the hospital, laying on a bed with a gypsy woman, who died there next to me. That was about the middle to the end of April. And all at once, the Germans left. We stayed there for one or two days in complete stasis. The people who could walk broke into the warehouse, and found an incredible amount of Red Cross packages. They dumped the boxes into the main road; food, chocolate, milk powder, sardines, canned meats, and we ate that. I remember that I only ate chocolate, very carefully, so I didn't get sick. Two days later the Russians arrived.

It was miraculous! They came in two columns, hanging in bunches off the tanks, playing guitars. And those who were still in good shape, jumped up on the tanks. In an hour and a half, they had set up their goulash cannons [portable cooking vats], cooked soup and potatoes. They transferred us, those of us left, within a week, and turned the whole place into a Russian hospital. All at once, it was full of Russian doctors and nurses. They healed us. That was in the first days of May, and on the 22 of August 1945, they let us go. They healed the scar on my leg, I was still feverish, plus I had to fill out, I weighed 36 kilos [79lbs]. Then we left in Red Cross buses. We had no idea that we weren't going home. It never occurred to us that we're going somewhere else.

Once, a Red Cross bus or car had come, and they had wanted to take Gracia to Switzerland. Because her father, Karoly Kerenyi was a classics-philology expert, who had been living there for a long time. [Karoly Kerenyi (1897- 1973): classics-philologist and religion- historian, MTA (Hungarian Academy of Sciences) member. An internationally known expert on ancient religious history. He emigrated to Switzerland in 1943.] But it didn't work out, they didn't get her on the bus. Thomas Mann had also tried to save Gracia. They [the Germans] told him that she couldn't go because she knew a lot, and had seen a lot. So Gracia came home with us. Almost straight to the Budakeszi Sanitarium. When I came out of the sanitarium, I didn't move in with my uncle Erno Sebestyen, because they wouldn't have allowed it, so I moved in to 8 Bajcsy-Zsilinszky street, a one-room apartment, with my girlfriend, Ilona Veres. Ilona's stepfather was a printer. There were five of us in the one [bed]room flat. I lived with them for a long time.

## Post war

I found out that my relatives from Szeged, the Karman family, were still alive, because they had been taken to Austria instead of Auschwitz, so I went down to Szeged, to their house. The relatives wanted me to start school again, but as a child in new surroundings, I was in no condition to do that for a long time. I accidentally bumped into a friend of mine from Nagykoros, Vera Lazar, we met while I was travelling. Her family still lived down in Nagykoros, but she was living in a student house in Pest. She convinced me to move up to Pest. The Karman's really didn't want me to, but nobody could stop me. That was in 1947, then I was just twenty years old. I had no plans, intentions. I stayed in the student house, a smaller house of Joint<sup>13</sup> on Zoltan street, for university and academy students. I was learning violin with Tatrai, and I started playing piano again. [Vilmos Tatrai, violinist, founder and director of the Tatrai Quartet and Hungarian Chambermusic Orchestra.] Then I applied to the College of Humanities, for history and geography. But I didn't have my high school diploma, I should have matriculated already, but I couldn't decide. I half went to University, I hung around with the medical students and the humanities students, and I had to

leave the student house. By then I hadn't applied anywhere. I left the student house, became a renter, moving from one flat to the next. In 1948, I completed a crash course. That came about when Vera Lazar was already in the Travelling Chorus, and she brought me along. It was a chorus of the [communist] movement, and there were a lot of decent people there. I suddenly got this chance, they sent me to a vocational course. I went for four months, but it was very far from my abilities, to have to learn accounting and auditing. But I finished it, and found a position at the Produce Distribution Enterprise, and worked there for a good while. They arranged produce acquisition courses, and sent me in my twenties, to be the school director. I worked in Nagyteteny, Monor, Tordas and various places. They brought in the bright peasant kids, and I taught them. I taught them orthography, gymnastics, that kind of stuff, up to the 1950s, when suddenly it comes out that I'm a Jew, and I come from the bourgeoisie. I wasn't allowed to do that anymore. They fired me without any reason, and put me on forced leave - I already had a good position at the Animal Distribution Enterprise, and had married in the meantime.

I met my first husband at one of the schools. He was a peasant kid who had finished three years of grammar school, he was a very brilliant man. His name was Gyorgy Popa. We were married in 1950, and when I wasn't allowed to go to the courses as the school director anymore, I got an idea - my interest in literature came up again. I read in the Literature News, that Gyorgy Mate was the director or party secretary, and like a naïve child I went to see him. I told him, I'm so and so, interested in literature, can he help me. He picked up the phone, called Marton Buza, who was the group director at the Szikra Books, and told him: "Marci, there's this so and so, try her out!" I went there, passed the interview, and they hired me at Szikra Books. That was in 1951. When I got into Szikra, my life consolidated. They were disciplined [communist] party members, you had to appear at the collective meetings, join the party, but it wasn't such a big drill.

Meanwhile, in 1946, I got connected with the Good Pastor Mission. There was a med student in the student house named Peter Fillenz. He had a cousin by the same name, with whom I somehow became friends, and he worked in the Good Pastor Mission. The Mission had two fantastic directors, Jozsef Elias, who was a protestant priest, and Imre Kadar. The Good Pastor Mission's mission was to convert Jews. And I didn't just fall under their spell, I really tried to believe in it, but it didn't ever work out. Many times I toyed with the idea believing in any kind of God, but I never could. However, they hired me as a typist. It was a decent atmosphere, they were good people, both Elias and Kadar. I only worked there a few months. For a while, when I was still living with the Veres's, we were pretty destitute, and at that time there wasn't any normal money yet, they paid in gold, and flour.

My first husband and I started our life on Szabadsag Hill. That happened because my girlfriend Vera Lazar married a boy named Tibor Szoke from the Travelling Chorus. He was with the interior ministry then, he'd been a partisan, and he knew of an apartment, that was available. I went there, and it was empty. That's how I got that apartment. We moved there in 1950. I had it in my head that I had to get him schooled, because he only had three years of elementary education. He eventually finished at the Agricultural College, and became an agronomist. He worked mostly in the countryside.

We had two daughters. They were not easy births - it's likely that due to the hormone treatments [from the concentration camp], I couldn't get pregnant, because my body changed. When I started gaining weight, I was skinny from the waist up, but gained weight from the waist down. It's

possible, that the emotional element that comes with this, was the part of why I couldn't have kids for so long. So after a really long medical treatment, after six years of marriage, my first daughter Kati was born in 1956, and my second, Julia, was born in 1957. That's when I felt that I had a family again. I got back a reason to live. I was with the kids, my husband went from one place in the countryside to the next. It didn't matter that he got an education, that lifestyle of his, which he lived, and the one which I lived, couldn't be reconciled. So we got a nice, peaceful divorce. I think that was in 1962.

In 1956, there was the counter-revolution [14](#). We lived up on Szabadsag Hill, I was at home with my daughter, she was seven months old. They came in, these youngsters, and threatened us. There was a woman on the ground floor, whom I didn't even know, and had never seen, and they brought her up to my apartment, and this woman says that when Stalin died, I was crying on the street. They started prodding, questioning, it was a critical situation. The child was in my lap, and I pinched her bottom like this, pretty hard. She started screaming. The baby was screaming, and it was either this or something else, I don't know, but they left saying they'd be back. They didn't come back.

I worked at Szikra Books from 1951, but not for long, because after the events of 1956, they fired a lot of people, who they labeled revisionists. They let eighty of us go. The lucky thing was, that a couple of the agile and clever workers among them immediately started founding a new publishing house. And they did, that was Gondolat Publishers. I worked there until 1991.

I got married again in 1965 to Ivan Szamosi, who was a Jewish man. We lived for thirty one years in perfect understanding, in the middle of all those problems. In actuality, he's the real father of my daughters, they've also recognized this, my youngest girl Julia still views him as her father to this day. It caused a couple of difficulties that my husband had an ex-wife and a child, Zsuzsi. I think of her as my daughter, and her children as my grandchildren.

I met my husband through a mutual acquaintance. Only his mother and grandmother were alive when we got together. His father died of tuberculosis in 1945. His mother loved him, as he did her, she took good care of him. It was a Jewish family at heart, though they weren't especially religious, but the grandmother and my mother-in-law kept every Sabbath, on Friday evening they lit candles, and they celebrated Yom Kippur. How my mother-in-law made it through the war, during that particular march, they took her all the way to Hegyeshalom[on the Austrian border], where a nephew - who was some member of the Jewish Council - stepped in, and got her out of that march to Germany, and then they came home. This is how they lived through the liberation. My husband was in a labor battalion and [sent] to Bor [15](#). He was liberated there. The grandmother had a little tobacconist's shop on a side street.

My husband first worked as a blue-collar worker. Next as a technician, then later found a position where he could do engineering work. My husband was a very kind, good-natured, funny, diligent, agile man, he was a qualified mechanic, but the first thing he did after we married was get a degree at the Kando Kalman College. [An electro-technical college in Budapest] Like all qualified mechanics then, he was also very poorly paid. We also had to pay his child support. So our life was pretty hard, and I had a way to make a little extra at the Gondolat Publishers. He also always tried to give our life a boost, by getting work abroad, so that for two or three years, he was in Syria and Iraq for a long time.

The apartment on Szabadsag hill, where I lived during my first marriage, wasn't really a comfortable place. It didn't have regular heating, or a normal kitchen. We exchanged it for a three-room apartment in Kobanya [Budapest, 10th district]. I moved here with my first husband, but I was living here with Ivan soon after. We took an acquaintance of ours with us to help out with the kids, Terez Kovacs, to this three-room place. We lived together for many years, she got married in the meantime, and her husband lived here, too. Then they moved out and we stayed here, where we're still living. I've been living in this apartment for close to forty years.

All three girls successfully got a college education. Two girls went to the Economics University, Zsuzsa and Juli. My daughter Juli also finished at the Theatre Arts College, in production management. She really didn't like foreign trade. Then she learned French, worked for a few years in foreign trade, but only to Arab countries, where it was easier for her. Then she got into film. She worked in the film industry for a long time, as an assistant, then as a substitute production manager. Until she met her husband Peter Szilagyi, who she worked with. My son-in-law is a film technician, he's got a company, and works with different groups and productions.

My daughter Kati finished a degree in English at the College of Humanities. She married Gyorgy Hajdu, who she knew from University, and quickly fell in love and got married. Katica [Kati] had already finished University, or it was her last year, when they got married. They are almost the same age. Gyorgy finished University also, in geophysics. Gyorgy's family lived in Budapest, but his mother and father are from Pecs. His father is totally Jewish, his mother half-Jewish. They lived with us for a good couple of years, then succeeded in buying a co-op apartment. My son-in-law worked in the countryside, very devotedly, to get the money together. They lived together for more than twenty years. They also divorced peacefully, certain ideological problems came up between them, which led them sadly to divorce. Kati has lived with me for four years now. She can't work, so I support her. From their marriage, they have a big, handsome boy, Tamas, who is already an adult. He's a programmer, a computer guy. He lives alone. I guess he'll get married in a couple years, but right now he just studies, he's very smart. He goes to the Information Technology College, works really hard to build his future.

Most of my extended family moved abroad. On my mother's side, the Neufeld side, I had relatives in Satoraljaujhely. They were deported, just two of them survived, Elza and Odi [Odon]. Both were deported but came home. They didn't have an easy life. Eventually, they went to Israel after 1956, because there were anti-Jewish incidents there. They got scared and went away. They lived and worked a pretty settled and subsistence-level life there, then Elza's husband died suddenly. Odi left for America, to his cousins, then went back to Israel to die.

Israel means a lot to me, the emotional ties are very strong. But, for me to go live there, I would never be able to! Naturally, I'm rooting for them, I watch the news, I despair when they are killed, I'm very sad that the world turned out this way. And the manifestations of anti-Semitism here are unbearable to me. I feel like I'm a Jew, and I also feel like I'm a Hungarian, if I hadn't felt I was a Hungarian, I could have left after 1956. I never moved to America. I met with my two cousins, who left in the 1920s, for the first time in my life in 1965 when they came to Hungary as tourists. For a second time, when I was in Los Angeles for official business. Of course, they asked me whether I wanted to go out[emigrate or not]. I said no.



I can't say I was so happy about the political change [1989]. Those who weren't scared then, know today, that capitalism isn't an all peaches and cream kind of thing. The life of Gondolat Publishing - where I worked then - also transformed.

It started with the GMK [Gazdasagi Munka Kozossege - Hungarian labor reform which allowed workers in big communist enterprises to work extra for money] around 1985. They had given us smaller printing jobs. We had to package books, there was a so-called Gondolat Friends Circle, and the director woman had us do the organization of it. After the death of Erno Havas, a great director, Margit Siklos came to head the publishing house. She was an old communist, incidentally also a Jewish lady, a very smart woman, and direct. She gave us work, and we were incredibly lucky with our first job. A letter came from a librarian in Mosonmagyaróvár, who offered to put together a book on pastries. And we did that. Three companies ordered eighty thousand copies. We had negotiated with the author that half the profits would go to her, and the other half to us. That established our activity.

In 1991, we started the Cicero Publishing House. Our main profile was publishing children's books. But aside from that, we do informational books. Primarily hobby books for people in villages - things to do with various produce and fruits. We also put out classic literature, for example, Hasek's 'Svejk'. We have a schoolbook line we call 'Sulikönyvtár'[school library], in which we could put classic Hungarian literature, required reading for schools. Aron Tamasi's 'Abel', and Kalman Mikszath's 'The Speaking Robe'. After eight years of survival, the publishing house hit hard times. Our distribution dropped. Since I had a lot of good contacts, for example, Tamas Foldes from Gondolat Publishing, who had become the head of Talentum Press, we chose him. We fused the companies. The most important thing was to keep everybody employed. He put our catalog on consignment, into his warehouse, and since then he's distributing us. Today, he owns sixty percent. And we didn't go under. I'm still working, at the age of seventy-six.

I was forced to be a capitalist, but emotionally I care nothing about money. I'm not saying that I don't need it, because in the end, I have children, one of which I must completely support, but I got a financial windfall. First, I inherited a little money from my cousin, who died in Israel. Secondly, because of the medical experiments, the International Red Cross gave me support, and not just once. The first time, after the war, was in 1962, and recently I got a larger sum. I successfully used the first one to help raise our standard of living at that time. I have no financial problems, I have a proper pension, and I also get a pension from my husband.

If I was physically stronger, I would travel more. I've had to say no to that, in the last few years. I've been to Germany a lot. I have a German publishing partner, Schafer. I went to the Frankfurt Bookfair many times, and met a lot of Germans. I never had any bad feelings. I know the Germans took it very seriously, they've processed the memory of the Jewish persecutions, they feel it. I went two times on a memorial trip.

The Hungarians didn't take the Holocaust, nor reparations for it, very seriously. Not just primarily, the monetary part, but the spiritual part is still not worked through, which is painful even today. Because as they usually put it, it was never a Hungarian problem. They don't consider it part of Hungarian history, it's a Jewish question, and they've never faced that certain part of their past, never accepted it. It's interesting that it was Zoltan Pokorni, one of the leaders of Fidesz [16](#) that recommended a Memorial day for the Holocaust. It was a pretty positive step on his part, and



following through with it would be more positive. I'm happy that there's a Holocaust Museum and Documentation Center in Hungary, to which I could give such documents and photos, make them available, so people in the future can be assured physically of what happened. Showing them with our lives.

I am amazed at the rebirth of Jewish life. Even more so, because one of my nephews from the Karman family had a ritual [synagogue] marriage, which my children took part in, and found very interesting. My participation is limited to the very rare visit to the Balint House [Budapest Jewish community house].

One of my grandchildren, Sari, due to a girlfriend, wound up in the Szarvas Camp [Jewish youth camp] last summer. Her life changed to an enormous degree, and that has to be thanks to the life in the Szarvasi Camp. She got spiritually much closer to Judaism, and keeps contact with the friends she met there. Naturally, she'll be going again next summer. Luckily, she attends the Radnoti High School, where there is protection for this mentality. We'd like our littlest grandchild to attend there. To live in those surroundings, and be enriched by those social influences.

My oldest grandchild, Tamas is my daughter Kati's oldest. He studied to be a computer programmer, he has a very good job, he works very diligently, and attends the Information Technology College. He maintains a respectful relationship with his mother. My daughter Zsuzsa also has two children. Andris, the older, just matriculated, the younger, Kata, is in her third year of High School. I mainly have good contact with the little girl, the older one is a bit grouchy, he doesn't talk much.

I would love to tell them more about what I lived through in connection to Judaism, and if an opportunity appears, I'll do what I can. To a certain degree, there's some kind of hesitance in them. They're not very interested in the question. In my will, I've asked that, after my death, they play the film the Spielberg Foundation did with me for my children and my son-in-law. Also, at Christmas, I just gave my two daughters and my grandchildren the nobel prize-winning book by Imre Kertesz, 'Fateless', in which I wrote them that they should read the book as if it was about my life.

## GLOSSARY

### **1 Ravensbruck**

Concentration camp for women near Furstenberg, Germany. Five hundred prisoners transported there from Sachsenhausen began its construction at the end of 1938. They built 14 barracks and service buildings, as well as a small camp for men, which was completely separated from the women's camp. The buildings were surrounded by tall walls and electrified barbed wire. The first deportees, some 900 German and Austrian women were transported there on May 18, 1939, and soon followed by 400 Austrian Gypsy women. At the end of 1939, due to the new groups constantly arriving, the camp held nearly 3000 persons. With the expansion of the war, people from twenty countries were taken here. Persons incapable of working were transported on to Uckermark or Auschwitz, and sent to the gas chambers, others were murdered during 'medical' experiments. By the end of 1942, the camp held 15,000 prisoners, by 1943, with the arrival of groups from the Soviet Union, its numbers reached 42,000. During the working existence of the camp, altogether

nearly 132,000 women and children were transported here, of these, 92,000 were murdered. In March of 1945, the SS decided to move the camp, so in April those capable of walking were deported on a death march. On April 30, 1945, those who survived the camp and death march, were liberated by the Soviet armies.

## **2 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.

## **3 Labor Battalion**

Under the 1939 II. Law 230, those deemed unfit for military service were required to complete 'public interest forced labor'. After the implementation of the second anti-Jewish law within the military, the military arranged 'special work battalions' for those Jews, who were not called up for armed service. With the entry into northern Transylvania (August 1940), those of Jewish origin who had begun, and were now finishing, their military service were directed to the work battalions. The 2870/1941 HM order unified the arrangement, saying that the Jews are to fulfill military obligations in the support units of the national guard. In the summer of 1942, thousands of Jews were recruited to labor battalions with the Hungarian troops going to the Soviet front. Some 50,000 in labor battalions went with the Second Hungarian Army to the Eastern Front - of these, only 6-7000 returned.

## **4 Arrow Cross Party**

The most extreme of the Hungarian fascist movements in the mid-1930s. The party consisted of several groups, though the name is now commonly associated with the faction organized by Ferenc Szalasi and Kalman Hubay in 1938. Following the Nazi pattern, the party promised not only the establishment of a fascist-type system including social reforms, but also the 'solution of the Jewish question'. The party's uniform consisted of a green shirt and a badge with a set of crossed arrows, a Hungarian version of the swastika, on it. On 15th October 1944, when Governor Horthy announced Hungary's withdrawal from the war, the Arrow Cross seized power with military help from the Germans. The Arrow Cross government ordered general mobilization and enforced a regime of terror which, though directed chiefly against the Jews, also inflicted heavy suffering on the Hungarians. It was responsible for the deportation and death of tens of thousands of Jews. After the Soviet army liberated the whole of Hungary by early April 1945, Szalasi and his Arrow Cross ministers were brought to trial and executed.

## **5 Banks of the Danube**

In the winter of 1944/45, after the Arrow-Cross, the Hungarian fascists, came to power, Arrow-Cross

commandos combed through the 'safe houses' of Ujlipotvaros, a bourgeois part of Budapest, collected the Jews, brought them to the bank of the Danube and shot them into the river.

## **6 Neolog Jewry**

Following a Congress in 1868/69 in Budapest, where the Jewish community was meant to discuss several issues on which the opinion of the traditionalists and the modernizers differed and which aimed at uniting Hungarian Jews, Hungarian Jewry was officially split into two (later three) communities, which all created their own national community network. The Neologs were the modernizers, and they opposed the Orthodox on various questions.

## **7 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 percent 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 percent, 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.

## **8 Gombos, Gyula (1886-1936)**

Politician, military officer. From 1920, he was an MP. In 1923, he founded his own party called the Racial Defense Party. He was Prime Minister of Hungary from 1932-1936. He pursued racial protectionist, anti-Semitic politics in the 1920s, but became more moderate at the end of the 1920s and rejoined the moderate right government party. As Prime Minister, he launched a program called the Gombos National Workplan to deal with the repercussions of the 1929 economic world crisis. His political views were closer to Italian fascism and Mussolini's politics, than Hitler's German political program. He tried to build up diplomatic relations with Italy in order to achieve the revisitation of the Trianon Peace Treaty (on the basis of which Hungary was forced to forfeit two-thirds of its prewar territory.) At home, he started preparations for an extreme right-wing transition in politics. In the 1935 parliamentary election, his followers, the so-called 'extreme right-wing center' gained a majority in parliament.

## **9 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 'Margarthe 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

March 18th, 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.

## **10 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.

## **11 Horthy declaration**

On 15th October 1944, the governor of Hungary, Miklos Horthy, announced on the radio that he would ask for a truce with the Allied Powers. The leader of the Arrow Cross party, Ferenc Szalasi, supported by the German army, which had already invaded Hungary in March 1944, took over power.

## **12 Constable**

A member of the Hungarian Royal Constabulary, responsible for keeping order in rural areas, this was a militarily organized national police, subordinated to both, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence. The body was created in 1881 to replace the previously eliminated county and estate gendarmarie (pandours), with the legal authority to insure the security of cities.

Constabularies were deployed at every county seat and mining area. The municipal cities generally had their own law enforcement bodies - the police. The constables had the right to cross into police jurisdiction during the course of special investigations. Preservatory governing structure didn't conform (the outmoded principles working in the strict hierarchy) to the social and economic changes happening in the country. Conflicts with working-class and agrarian movements, and national organisations turned more and more into outright bloody transgressions. Residents only saw the constabulary as an apparatus for consolidation of conservative power. After putting down the Hungarian Soviet Republic, the Christian establishment in the formidable and anti- Semitically biased forces came across a coercive force able to check the growing social movements caused by the unresolved land question. Aside from this, at the time of elections - since villages had public voting - they actively took steps against the opposition candidates and supporters. In 1944, the Constabulary directed the collection of rural Jews into ghettos and their deportation. After the suspension of deportations (June 6, 1944), the arrow cross sympathetic interior apparatus Constabulary forces were called to Budapest to attempt a coup. The body was disbanded in 1945, and the new democratic police took over.

### **13 Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)**

The Joint was formed in 1914 with the fusion of three American Jewish committees of assistance, which were alarmed by the suffering of Jews during WWI. In late 1944, the Joint entered Europe's liberated areas and organized a massive relief operation. It provided food for Jewish survivors all over Europe, it supplied clothing, books and school supplies for children. It supported cultural amenities and brought religious supplies for the Jewish communities. The Joint also operated DP camps, in which it organized retraining programs to help people learn trades that would enable them to earn a living, while its cultural and religious activities helped re-establish Jewish life. The Joint was also closely involved in helping Jews to emigrate from Europe and from Muslim countries. The Joint was expelled from East Central Europe for decades during the Cold War and it has only come back to many of these countries after the fall of communism. Today the Joint provides social welfare programs for elderly Holocaust survivors and encourages Jewish renewal and communal development.

### **14 1956**

Refers to the Revolution, which started on the 23rd of October 1956 against Soviet rule and the communists in Hungary. It was started by student and worker demonstrations in Budapest and began with the destruction of Stalin's gigantic statue. Moderate communist leader Imre Nagy was appointed as prime minister and he promised reform and democratization. The Soviet Union withdrew its troops which had been stationed in Hungary since the end of World War II, but they returned after Nagy's declaration that Hungary would pull out of the Warsaw Pact to pursue a policy of neutrality. The Soviet army put an end to the uprising on the 4th of November, and mass repression and arrests began. About 200,000 Hungarians fled from the country. Nagy and a number of his supporters were executed. Until 1989 and the fall of the communist regime, the Revolution of 1956 was officially considered a counter-revolution.

### **15 Bor**

The copper mines of Bor, Yugoslavia were one of the most important resources for the German war industry, supplying them with 50 percent of their copper. After the capitulation of Yugoslavia, the Germans requested Hungarian forced labor battalions from the Hungarian government to use in the mines. In July of 1943, transportation of the Hungarian Jewish labor battalions to Bor began, and by September of 1944, more than 6000 people had been sent for 'obligatory forced labor'. When the Germans left, they force marched the prisoners to Germany, executing the majority of them along the way.

### **16 Fidesz**

Originally the abbreviation of the League of Young Democrats, a youth organization founded in March 1988. It supported legally guaranteed radical transformation of the communist regime, won seats in the National Assembly elections in 1990. During the following decade, under the leadership of its charismatic leader Viktor Orban, it changed its name to Fidesz Civilian Party, with Fidesz no longer an abbreviation, and became the strongest conservative party in Hungary.