Mihaly Eisikovits

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Nagybanya
Romania
The interviewer: Emoke Major
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Mihaly Eisikovits lives alone in Nagybanya, in a two-room apartment on the ground-floor of a flat block.

The furniture of the living room is middle class style, typical for the apartments furnished in the communist era, the family photos on the walls make the apartment a special one.

There are both old and new photos. The tie and the shirt are the indispensable components of Mihaly's wardrobe, he pays attention to the elegance even of the smallest things, for example the napkin and some fancy biscuits have to be near the coffee cup.

On holidays and on Saturdays he goes to the synagogue to make up the minyan and to make possible the prayer, although he is not on good terms with the president of the Jewish Community.

- **My family background**

The Eisikovits family – I found out from my uncle, Moshe Eisikovits, who lived in Israel, but died already – got to Romania approximately 240 years ago [from Russia somewhere] through Odessa, when they were running away from the pogroms.

There were three brothers, and one of them was called Heisikovits, not Eisikovits, because there was a law in Russia saying that if one had three sons, one of them had to join the army. And then, to save his son, the father changed his son's name by putting an H before his name.

[Editor's note: The Jewish children enrolled in military institutions in the Tzarist Russia were forced to convert to Christianity by the circumstances, and they were called Cantonists. They introduced the mandatory military service for the Jewish boys between 12 and 25 in 1827, and they transferred the underage in Cantonist institutions.

The Jewish Communities had to assure a quite high number of draftees for the army. The difficulty of the military service and the fact that weren't allowed to observe their religion made the affected ones to try to avoid this somehow.

The leaders of the Jewish Communities sent mostly the boys from poor families to the Cantons.] The family was quite large and they were all millers. And because they were millers, one part of the family settled down by the Maros, the other by the Kukullo, and the others by the Szamos [rivers]. They were millers, but they also built some water-mills, as well, because that was the fashion then.

Some relatives from the third generation were corn traders, and the others were intellectuals. As far as I know, one of my great-grandfathers was greffier in Nagyiklod, the other had the same job in Balazsfalva.

His children were already famous intellectuals. One of them was Max Eisikovits, a musicologist and composer, for example he was the founder of the Hungarian Opera from Kolozsvar and the headmaster of the music academy.

The family relations were strong, so we were always aware what the others were doing, moreover, approximately 70 years ago, there were some old relatives who were always asking about the others. I remember a one of my grandfather's cousins from Marosvasarhely called Heisikovits.

I spoke with him, and he always asked: 'So, how is Jakab?' The old man had three sons. One of them – he looked very much like my father, he was somewhat shorter, but he had the same face – had two daughters and a son.

The son, Joska Heisikovits, emigrated to Israel around 1935, and he was a member of the group that founded the Dalia kibbutz. One of his sisters, Julika, is a doctor in Israel, she is retired now. She married a man from Vasarhely, Bandi Frits. The other daughter lives in America, in New Jersey, her husband was a mechanical engineer called Gerson, but he died already.

My paternal grandfather, Jakab Eisikovits, was born in Nagyiklod in the 1860s. There was a large Jewish Community in Nagyiklod, and the synagogue was as big as the one in Szamosujvar. I'm sure there were 40-50 Jewish families living there.

There were landowners, carriers, cobblers, tailors – many girls took up tailoring. My great-grandfather was a greffier. My uncle from Israel told me that even today there are documents in Nagyiklod written by my great-grandfather – they began each paragraph with ornamented letters then. There was no typewriter then, and everyone who knew how to write could be a greffier.

One of my grandfather's brothers was Max Eisikovits' father. They lived in Balazsfalva, but they moved there from the county. He was a merchant, a corn trader I believe. He had three sons. One of Max Eisikovits' brothers was a very good doctor, the other one an economist.

The doctor's name was Karoly Eisikovits. For a while he was local practitioner near Vasarhely, in Sarpatak [the distance between Sarpatak and Vasarhely is 67 km]. Later he got to Vasarhely, and he was the principal of the Maros county Sanepid [public health department]. He emigrated to Israel in the 1970s, to Beer Sheva, he worked there also as doctor.

His son, Zvi Esikovits, is a full professor, he teaches criminology. He travels all the time because he is invited to several universities to hold courses, mainly in America. His wife is also a full professor in Haifa. The economist was called Dezso Eisikovits, my father's namesake. He had a son Hari and a daughter who perished in Auschwitz.

Hari survived, I don't know how. He was in Balazsfalva. [Balazsfalva is in Southern Transylvania, territory which remained under Romanian ruling between 1940 and 1944.] After the war he got to Kolozsvar, graduated the Faculty of Medicine, and he was a pediatrician in the children's hospital on Mocok [presently Motilor] street.

He married a Romanian girl. Parenthesized, it wasn't the most happy of marriages, at least that's how I felt. He came to me very often while I lived in Kolozsvar. They had a son and a daughter, both of them live in Kolozsvar. The daughter, Marta, is a doctor. The son, Gyuri [Gyorgy], if I am not mistaken, is a mechanical engineer, I heard that he even took part in the choir of the Jewish Community from Kolozsvar.

I already mentioned Max Eisikovits. He was born in 1908 in Balazsfalva. Let me tell you an interesting story about him. After he graduated the Music Academy from Kolozsvar, he came home to Balazsfalva.

His old, his father, asked him: 'So you graduated, what will you do for a living?' 'Well ... music. What else?' 'You can't make a living with music. Go to the law school!' Thus he, dr. Eisikovits, also graduated the faculty of law, but never worked in the field, he was only interested in music. Let me say that I found even today – both in Nagyvarad and Kolozsvar – students who are studying based on his theory.

But the most beautiful thing in his activity was that when he was a student in Kolozsvar he went to Sziget and the environs, where there were much more Jews living and he collected Jewish folklore, Jewish music.

I saw Elie Wiesel's two movies about his journeys, his visits to Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Sziget and around Sziget, both movies had the music composed by Max Eisikovits. His essays based on his Jewish music collections were published several times in America.

I got a booklet from America also, but once, when the rabbi from Temesvar (who was his colleague and his friend) was here – because during World War II he was a music teacher in the Jewish high school from Temesvar – I gave it to him hoping I will get it back. In the meantime he got sick and died, so they didn't send it back. I was very sorry, but I will try to recover the booklet somehow.

Max Eisikovits told me the following story. In addition to the tallit which one wears sometimes, there is another Jewish skin cover [the small tallit, that is the tallit katan, a square piece of cloth which covers the breast and the back] every Jew is compelled to wear.

It is a piece of canvas with fringes in front and at the back. The Hasid Jews wear these [the fringes] on the outside, while modern Jews put them in the trousers. According to the Jewish rules you have to wear it all the time. You may only take it down for the night, when you go to sleep.

When waking up, one says the only prayer allowed for a Jew before wash: 'Majdi ani lofunechu, melehajd dukajo' [Modeh ani l'fanecha, Melech chai v'kayam...] – I give thanks to You for You have returned my soul to me, awaken me and letting me do my everyday routine and show my love for You ['I'm thankful to You, ever living King, for compassionately returning my soul to me, how great is Your faithfulness.'] After one says this prayer, washes up, puts on one's shirt and this tzitzit on the shirt

[Editor's note: Mihaly Eisikovits referred to the tallit katan here, which is usually worn under the shirt] and gets dressed. The tzitzit are actually the four fringes in the corners.

The fringe is made of eight threads, but it also includes a ninth one, which is longer, and with this one must tie up them seven times first, then a kink [knot] must be made, then one should tie up nine times, eleven times, thirteen times with a kink between them.

My father wore it for a while, but my grandfathers wore it all the time. I also used to wear it in my childhood, until I went to middle school at age eleven. And I also wanted to tell you that Max Eisikovits visited the Jewish populated regions when he collected Jewish folklore.

He came to Borsa, Tecso, I don't know, to these places where there always was a rabbi. There was no way he could just drop into a Jewish house and ask the family to sing for him. He had to go to the rabbi first and had to tell him why he came, and ask the rabbi to help him, and ask him to assign one of his disciples to help him.

Once, I think it happened in Viso or Borsa, that the rabbi told him: 'Alright, but please tell me, do you have a tzitzit?' He answered: 'Unfortunately I don't.' 'If you don't have, there is nothing I can do for you.' And the rabbi sent him away.

He went to the village then, and walked until he bought a tzitzit. He returned to the rabbi and the rabbi asked again: 'I asked you if you have a tzitzit?' 'I do!' 'Alright then!', and he assigned a disciple to help him, and they went to the families, who already knew him, because Viso is not Paris.

He listened to their songs and wrote them down with a pencil, of course, on paper. I will never forget when I visited him – he was already ill – and he sat down at the piano and played from this Hasid songs he collected and I trolled them. I still remember one of these songs! [He trolled its melody.]

Otherwise the whole Eisikovits family is a musical family who liked music in general. They were not unfamiliar with Jewish music, because the Jewish melodies – I don't mean the liturgical music, although they have their own magic – are very catchy.

It is a known fact that the great rabbis [especially the Hasid rabbis] had their own court and school. Thus every rabbi has his own team and his own march, as well.

March is not the most adequate expression, I'd rather say they have their own music. And in many cases they don't have lyrics. But the music is able to express moods, feelings. And the Jews from the rabbi's court, the older ones, younger ones and the children, know these things. And they sing them when they meet.

For example they sit down to the Friday evening supper and they sing after the supper. They also sing on Purim, Pesach and other holidays. They sing on other people's holidays, as well, if they are allowed to. And Jews also used to dance! With their unwieldy top boots and clumsy caftans, if they felt like taking the floor, they danced.

Because they cried enough when they were forced to! Because the Jewish nation in many, many cases was force to live at the periphery, they were ostracized. While they were at home, in Judea, some were shepherds, others were farmers, cobblers or fishers. But when they were dislodged and lost their homes, they went to new places, where they couldn't find trust.

They only were allowed to stay at the margin of the villages and only for a while. They weren't able to raise cattle, sheep, goats or lambs, they had no land for agriculture. What else could they do? They had to huckster. Because they had to live, their children needed milk, you know. I can tell you many things, especially about the misery of the Jews!

My grandfather learned the Talmud, but I don't know exactly where. He worked in the distillery from Nagyiklod, and he knew distillation – distillation was a profession, after all. He was an average height man with mustache. His mustache was just like any other Hungarian middle-class man's, and had no twirl.

He also wore top boots, as far as I remember, and breeches and a short mikado winter coat with side-pockets. [Editor's note: The coat probably got its name after its dyeing. The Leonhardt and Co company (Muhlheim, Hessen) made some commercial dyes (that is dyes which dye the cotton without mordant) which derived from the di-sulphonic acid of azoxy-stilbene.

When they used this dyes they put into the dye a large quantity of table salt (50-100%). Such dyes are the mikado-yellow, mikado-orange, mikado-brown etc. From all these the mikado-orange is remarkable by its durability compared to the other commercial dyes.] And he wore hat.

This grandfather of mine used to talk like: 'Hey, gimme the fuszekli! ' Fuszekli means nether-stock, where fusz [from the German 'fuss'] means leg and szekli or sekl [from the German 'sack'] means bag.

His wife died around 1899. I don't know many things about her because my father was around 4 when she died. If I am not mistaken her maiden name was Fejer, and I think they were originally from Szaszregen.

I knew about two of her siblings, a girl, Malka, and a boy who had two sons, one of them was chief accountant at the textile mill from Sepsiszentgyorgy, while the other one ended up in Pest and he was the first violin of the philharmonic orchestra from [Buda]Pest.

According to the Jewish traditions, if the wife dies, the husband has to marry the wife’s sister. And it happened so. My grandfather married his sister-in-law, Malka. The children who were younger than my father remained in Nagyiklod.

Two of them remained there, uncle Izidor and a girl, Rozsi. The others went away from home, for example my father went to Balazsfalva. He was adopted by Max Eisikovits' father.

They were a family of orthodox Jews, so they observed the kosher rules, and other ethical rules which are generally speaking mandatory for the Jews. And since there are 613 Jewish rules, observing all of them is very difficult.

There is a saying: 'It’s not easy to be a Jew!' This has several meanings, but the main one is that it’s not easy to observe the Jewish rules. The orthodox Jews observed the rules which are their basic obligation: never to eat meaty food with milky food, never slaughter the animal yourself, there is person for this etc. What is the shochet for? To never let the cattle suffer when one slaughters them.

That's why the shochet's knife has the size according to the size of the slaughtered cattle. For example, the shochet used a 22-24 cm long knife to slaughter a barn-door fowl, a broad. He had a bigger knife for geese, and a much bigger one for calves – I believe that knife was 60-70 cm long. But it wasn't allowed to cut more times!

He had to cut the throat and the trachea with one cut. Moreover, it had to be perfect, without any little nicks, because that hurts, is painful. And the Jewish ethics said 'tzaar bale chayim'. This means that it is not allowed to inflict pain. Not to mention the human beings.

As far as I remember, they checked the knives from time to time, by running the smaller knives on his finger nail, because they could feel whether there any little nicks. There is this so called etica iudaica.

Every civilized nation has ethic rules and feeling for ethic, don't they? So have the Jews, the essence of this is the Sulchan Aruch. Many things are included in the etica iudaica, specific for Jews, among other things it is not allowed to eat meaty food immediately after eating milky food – or vice versa – only some time after.

For example, if you eat milky food, I don't know exactly, but I believe you may only eat meaty food after 50 minutes. Because if you drink milk, that leaves your stomach after 50 minutes. If you eat meat, you can drink milk only after six hours.

[Editor's note: After the admitted custom after eating milky food we must wait half an hour, we had to wash out our mouth and then we can eat meaty food. After eating meaty food we must wait 6 hours, but there are local traditions where 3 hours are enough.] Is not allowed to the meat to meet the milk, because is written: 'Lo-tevashel gedi bachalev imo.’

This means ‘Thou shalt not boil a kid in its mother's milk’. [Editor's note: The 'izim' mean goats, which fits in this context, but it does not appear in the original text.]

They didn't work on Saturday. On Saturdays my grandfather used to go to the synagogue. They lit a candle on Friday evening at home, and there was some supper on Friday evening. On Saturday [Sabbath] they ate the traditional Jewish meals: egg with onion, cholent, which in fact was bean but prepared differently.

Usually the Jewish crowds were poor, and that’s why the traditional meals remained the same. They ate during the week that lousy egg with onion, which was the cheapest, and so was the bean.

On Saturday they added a small amount of oil or grease, put a piece of beef or 3-4 – depending how large the family was – poultries in the cholent, which was only a dish of beans during the week. They made the loaf at home on Fridays.

So if they made the bread for the whole week on Friday, they made the loaf from the same duff, to give a different shape for the loaf for the holiday. As far as I remember, there were these baking tins, they used to grease them with oil and sprinkled it with poppy-seed in order to give it a festive look.

On every Friday evening and occasionally at Saturday dinner – not every family, but only those who had the possibility – there also was a glass of consecrated wine.

[Editor's note: One usually didn't say the Sabbath sanctifier phrase for the wine on Saturday, but on Friday evening, on Saturday only the appropriate blessing.]

There was prayer on Saturday evening, and at the end of the day as well, then they wished a pleasant week to each other.

And the most typical thing that must be stressed out: although the Jewish prayers were formulated thousands of years ago, the Wisdom of Solomon is rhyming and the rhymes and meters are in accordance with the requirements of the poetry of our days.

That is, when others still lived in the forest, on the trees, ate each other, killed each other, there were people interested in poetry, not only doing agriculture and livestock-farming. Furthermore, before modern world used the musical notes, the Jews already had their special notes for many, many centuries.

There weren't staves, there only were signs above the words, as far as I remember, there were at least twenty signs. I was familiar with them once, I knew them, we learned them at school. The Jewish prayers had another feature, they are not only referring to the Jews. When they ask for blessing, peace, they are asking it for the whole world.

My grandfather died around 1925, in Nagyiklod, he was approximately 60 years old. His second wife, Malka, perished in Auschwitz.

My father had five brothers and sisters: Izidor, Rozsi, Ida, Frida and Zseni. He had half-brothers and half-sisters as well: Bertus, Hani, the two twins, Mendel and Moshe, and Chaja – this means life – and the smallest, Boske or Bozsi [Erzsebet]. But the family ties were so strong that it never was any discrimination among the children.

Rozsi married a well-known clerk, called Perlmutter, in Bucharest. She died in Bucharest after World War II. She had very good children. One of her children died not long ago in Israel. Ida married in Nagyiklod a man called Fisher.

They were deported and only her husband came back, she moved to Szek and got married again. Frida also got married in Nagyiklod, but her husband died already before World War II. She was deported to Auschwitz and she perished there.

Mendel Rosenfeld, Zseni's husband, was stiller in the distillery in Iklod. This Rosenfeld was originally from Szaszregen. He had three brothers: Lajos Rosenfeld, Karoly Rosenfeld and Jozsef Rosenfeld, or as we called him, Puju.

They had a sister who was married in Petrozseny. Jozsef Rosenfeld married a sister of my mother, called Jolan. Karoly Rosenfeld was employed in Kolozsvar, he had driver's license also. He was summoned to forced labor, but he didn't join up.

He had an acquaintance who hid him, but somebody turned him in. They found him – he was hidden in a cellar –, he was court-martialed and executed in Kolozsvar. Mendel Rosenfeld had three children. His son, Viktor Rosenfeld, was a very skillful boy, he was colonel Reviczky's 2 driver during World War II.

I read Adam Reviczky' book he wrote about his father, and he mentioned Viktor Rosenfeld there. I know personally Reviczky' son, Adam Reviczky, he needed information and photos about Nagybanya for his book, I was at his house with a friend of mine then. [Editor's note: Mihaly Eisikovits referred here to Adam Reviczky' book: 'Victorious Battles – Lost Wars'.]

Viktor emigrated to West, from there to Canada, but I don't know how. I came home in July-August 1948 from captivity, and as soon as he found out I came back, he sent me 100 dollars. One of Viktor's sisters, Edit, or Mucus, perished in Auschwitz.

The other sister, Zsofi, survived in Auschwitz and got to Stockholm. But she was very weak already and she died in Stockholm. I visited her grave in Stockholm. When I visited my younger brother – he lives in Stockholm – he took me to the Jewish cemetery. There were no tombstones, they have no such traditions.

There is a concrete plate on the ground surface, on this plate there is a small, slightly raise marble plate with the data. I saw there the name and data of Zsofi Rosenfeld. And there are those who managed to get there from Auschwitz, because many people got to Sweden from Auschwitz, because the Swedes took them there after the war, but many were in such shape they couldn't pull through.

Bertuska was my father's only sister who survived World War II. Because she was at her sister in Bucharest, she survived. After the war she got married in Balazsfalva, her husband, Naftali, was a lawyer and musician.

He studied law in Italy, he came home, but because they lived in welfare in Balazsfalva, after the change of regime they were considered kulaks 1. His parents had a store, but everything they had was confiscated. They came to Nagybanya, and they had nothing, but a suitcase. He died in Nagybanya in 1974.

Hani was a beautiful, clever, nice girl, she was deported to Auschwitz. She was set free together with her sister, Boske. But they drank from a fountain which was supposedly poisoned by the Germans, and both of them died. Moshe (Moricz) was a forced laborer, his wife was deported, but both of them came home and emigrated to Israel. He died in Beer Sheva. Mendel and Chaja perished in Auschwitz.

My father Dezso Eisikovits was born in Nagyiklod in 1895. As I mentioned, he grew up in Balazsfalva after his mother died. When I was a child, I always thought he and Max Eisikovits were brothers, because they grew up together and they were together even as adults.

My poor father use to go to Balazsfalva as if it was his home while the elderly still lived. My father went to cheder, he finished four or five grades of the elementary school and four grades of middle school in Balazsfalva. He didn't finished high school because he was the eldest child and they involved him in trading while they sent the younger children to school.

He served in the Austro-Hungarian army from 1914, and he was in Russian captivity. But there were other ways then, there were no camps, but they were put to work in the villages. He came home in 1918, I think, and shortly after he married my mother.

My maternal grandfather, David Weisz, was born around 1865, I don't know where. My great-grandfather was a cobbler, and if I am not mistaken, he came from Poland – many people ran away from the pogroms then. His eldest brother was uncle Hil, Jechil Weisz.

He was a Talmudist, he studied and studied all the time. He had a share in the estate managed by my grandfather, and he received some share from there and he lived on that. He had a quite nice house in Szamosujvar, he lived there with his family. He had three daughters, one more beautiful like the other.

After they took the lands away, living became difficult, therefore around 1927 the girls emigrated to America. There was a mass emigration to America then, people emigrated in large numbers. [There was an emigration vawe from Romanan between 1919–1923.] 3.

They were three clever, beautiful girls, all of them got married and became wealthy in America. They also had a brother, he remained in Ormany, he lived there and he became mad because one night the flood took his wife and children away. I don't know any other things about him. He broke away from the family.

My grandfather had another younger brother, who lived in Marosvasarhely for a while, then he moved to Szamosujvar. He was a merchant, but a very misfortunate one, he got cleaned out twice, my grandfather aided him, then once again, and then he gave up trading when his children grew up. He had many intelligent children, one better then the other: Andor, Ilonka, Bella, Rezsin, Bela, the twins, Lipot and Sanyi, and Baba.

Andor was a clerk in Kolozsvar, a good-looking, well-mannered, elegant gentleman. He was a pleasant person, he came home often so the girls welcomed him every time. Ilonka was a beautiful, well-looking woman, she married a Schonthal, the one who gave me a tallit for my bar mitzvah.

This Schonthal family was a very wealthy family in Szamosujvar. Bella was a very skilled dressmaker and sewer, she married a farmer called Salamon in Kekes. They had land and sheep. Bela emigrated to Israel already before Word War II.

He was a glass-engraver, he was engaged in glass processing. Then he moved to Canada, when Lipot was already there, in order to be together with his brother, and he died there.

Rezsinke married in Marosvasarhely a man called Diamantstein. Lipot was a German furrier. The German furriers were those who weren't making 'kozsoks' [this is originally a Romanian word, written in Hungarian spelling, the 'cojoc' means fur-coat, sheepskin.], they only made fine fur-coats, which, even though were large, weighed only three and half kilograms. 'Lelea Florica' [auntie Florica in Romanian popular terms] didn't hurt her waist with these heavy skins.

He sewed subtly fashioned, elegant fur-coats. He became a very, very skilled and ultra-rich man. He was a forced laborer, he survived, but he buzzed off because the situation wasn't for his liking. He ended up in Canada after World War II. Sanyi died young. Baba was still a girl when she perished in Auschwitz.

My grandfather, David Weisz, was a very skilled farmer and a wealthy man. I was his eldest grandson, the most valuable one, the most dear, intelligent and gifted for him. He took me several times by carriage to the estate for me to see and learn. He had an estate near Nagyiklod, in Ormany.

In 1920 they took away the lands, and he received some other ones instead somewhere else, and also some money. [Editor's note: This was probably in 1921, when a new agrarian reform took place in Romania.] 4 But my grandfather didn't like these small lands, 3 acres here, 6 acres there, he sold them all and took up trading, specifically he exported cattle.

They bought and fattened cattle, they exported them to Vienna and Prague – they had an agreement on the quantity they had to deliver weekly.

Around 1928-1930 a crash happened. They worked with a bank called Banca Marmaros Blank. They carried out all the transactions through this bank, they paid through the bank, they collected the money through the bank, took money out of the bank for buying cattle. This bank went bankrupt and they lost most of their wealth.

[Editor's note: This case was probably related to the world-wide economic crisis from 1929.] 5

My grandfather's luck was that everybody knew him as an honest man, so they got paid in advance by the Senker company – or Henkel, I don't remember exactly, but it was in Vienna – they were delivering cattle for, and they worked for them for a while. My grandfather was involved in smaller scale trades then, he traded skins and I don't know what else.

I would like to tell a story that happened and I found it interesting for me, for us. When my grandfather moved to Szamosujvar, he choose a house he liked and he wanted to buy it. The owner was an Armenian.

They bargained. He asked too much money, and my grandfather wasn't willing to give that much, and in the end the Armenian said, 'David, I won't sell it to you – David was my grandfather – I won't sell it to you.' My grandfather sent his wife to the owner then.

She went to the Armenian, who didn't know she was my grandfather's wife. They discussed, bargained and she bought the house. After that my grandfather met the Armenian in a coffee house. He said: 'David, I want you to know that I sold the house. But I sold it to a Jewish woman.' 'You did, and what is her name?' 'Some Aranka Weisz.' 'Very well then, since she is my wife...!'

It was a quite big, U shaped house, with the gate and the main entrance in the center. In one part, to the right from the main entrance, there lived my grandfather with his family – there were seven or eight rooms there.

There was a piano in the drawing room, a palm tree, a big mirror and a small rococo-style table with chairs. In the other part of the house, to the left from the entrance, the girls got an apartment when they got married, until the next girl's marriage, in order to keep the young wife from cooking and dish-washing from the first moment, but one step at a time.

There was a long garden on the right side of the house. There was a large yard, and in the back there was the barn and two warehouses. There were horses, carriages and some oxen, four or five of them. There were two carriages, both of them tall, open and with back-board seats, both in front and in the back.

The wheels had no tire, there was no such wheel in Szamosujvar, they only had an iron rim. The carriage had brakes, the brake-screw was on the left side, so the coachman could reach it from the front seat, I remember it had to be rotated.

The grandparents knew Yiddish, and I mentioned that when my grandfather didn't want the children to understand him or he wanted to express himself correctly, he talked in Yiddish to his wife. He was a tall, slight, intelligent man, a Talmud follower.

On Saturday afternoon he retired to his room – he had some kind of an office there –, and he used to browse his books. He shaved, he had no beard or payes. He had tallit, because that was mandatory. He used to go to the synagogue every Friday evening and on Saturdays.

It wasn't possible to avoid this, because Szamosujvar is a small town and he would have been disinherited otherwise. He was a well-known, honest man, everybody respected him. The poor and the beggars always could find a home at his place.

My grandfather was a great Zionist, he was a member of the Barisia. 6 The meetings always took place at my grandfather's house, they felt good there because it was a pleasant atmosphere there.

As far as I remember, they had uniform caps, made of red velvet, with a golden border, this was their uniform cap. When they assembled, they put on these caps and began to sing the song that is the march of Israel today [the Hatikvah] 7.

But they sang it with Hungarian and Hebrew text. The Hungarian text sounded approximately like this: ‘Kezet fol az eghez, / ki ferfi, ki bator, / kit meg nem ijeszt a jovo, / hogyha lat. / Hadd zugja, sikoltsa, / viharzza a tabor .... / ... / ifjuk eskudalat.’ [Reach up for the skies, / men and brave, / undeterred by the future / you see. / Let it roar and wail, / and welter the camp .... / ... / the youth’s song of vow.] I remember this, I was 5 or 6 then.

His wife, my grandmother, was called Aranka Weisz. Her maiden name was Swartz, she was born in Bethlen in the 1870s, I think. She came from a religious family, she had a brother who was some kind of a rabbi in Bethlen, and he had several children.

They used to come from time to time to Szamosujvar, to visit their aunt and uncle. They were all Hasids, they strictly observed the holidays and the Jewish rules. They were Talmud scholars [he

probably meant Talmud followers in this context].

My grandmother was a medium height, not too large woman – because she was quite agile –, but she most certainly wasn't skinny. She was the only one who had short hair and wore a wig in the family.

As far as I remember, she wore a wig all the time, but sometimes she also wore a shawl. When the Jewish women prayed, they put a shawl on their head. Her dressing depended on the occasion.

Her home dress was modest and clean. But on [festive] occasions, for example, she put up her necklace and a small gold watch – that was the fashion then, my other grandmother also had one – there was a small pocket on the dress for this.

The men had usually wore a watch, but so did the women. My grandfather had two watches, one for everyday and one for the holidays, both of them of the same brand, Doxa. The everyday one was a big watch, probably weighed quarter of a kilogram, it was larger than an onion.

It was made of nickel, with white zifferblatt – clock-face – and the lace was made at best of silver. He used to put on the gold watch on holidays, when he used to go to the synagogue. He kept the gold watch in the same pocket and he used to hang it out through the same buttonhole of his vest, but this had a golden lace, of course.

There were only orthodox Jews in the town. Szamosujvar wasn’t large enough to give place for Neolog Jews. Otherwise orthodoxy didn't mean wearing beard, but only that they observed certain rules, better said they had kosher meals, at least at home they only had such food.

My grandma also cooked, she had a kosher household, but she always had somebody to help her. It was a large family! They observed the holidays without fail. They observed the Sabbath and the high holidays, as well. It was a tradition for the family to gather on Friday evening or on holidays at their place.

At Sukkot they even raised a canopy. There was a place paved with flagstone in the right corner of the yard, the canopy was right there. It was lined with white canvas, usually with sheets.

It had a roof made of thatch, with different ornaments hanging down, mainly paper cut-outs and bronzed nuts and apples, with some clove stuck in them in order to give them a fine smell. The family used to eat there on these occasions.

The Seder eve went on simply, it wasn't long: they recited the appropriate sentences and prayers for the holiday, then came the supper that always began with fish, let’s say, there was soup, vegetable dish, one dish of meat – roasted or boiled – and some dessert. But there was no bread on Pesach, of course, just matzah.

The religion rules forbid the eating of meals that ferment [with chametz]. Because what is in fact the symbol of matzah? The Jews were always on the road, they mixed flour with water, they put it on a hot stone heated up by the sun, and they ate the matzah baked this way. They ate the matzah in memory of all this.

The orthodox families observed this. At my grandfather’s and in our house Seder eve was celebrated according to the prescribed rite. They related what we must do and why, why they ate horse-radish etc.

They hid the afikoymen from the children – but always just to allow us to find them, of course – everybody tried his luck. Because the one who found it could ask for something, for example a football or whatever he wished.

My grandfather's greatest holiday was Purim, he used to get drunk then. He had more rooms, there were sliding doors between the rooms. A very long table was laid for Purim, everybody had his own small braid, but my grandfather's was huge. It wasn't round, it was elliptical.

Everybody knew then it was Purim at David Weisz’s, and they used to come over. They came fancy dressed, because that was the characteristic of Purim. I will never forget Feri Frenkel, a very handsome Jewish boy, who once put on the uniform of a Romanian officer who lived in the neighborhood, and he made a nice moustache, and then came to us in Romanian officer uniform.

It was interesting. Feri Frenkel was a Zionist leader, he was engaged in teaching young people. Then came the masked children, some of the masks were made of simple pasteboard, and children representing different trends, Hasid and non-Hasid, came and said some phrases, the older ones said a longer text, and they asked for money.

They always got some. There were others who had no masks, they only prinked themselves a little bit. They served the dinner for everybody. There was stuffed cabbage or some roast. Purim was a great holiday.

My grandfather used to say a prayer then, thanking God that He created bread from the ground for us. ‘Baruch Ata Adonai, Elohaynu Melekh Haolam, hamotzi lekhem min ha'aretz.’

[Editor's note: This is the blessing people say for the Saturday's challah.]

When he finished the prayer, he cut slices from the bread, and gave a slice from the blessed bread to everybody. The bread wasn't enough, that's why everybody had his own small braid.

Wealth is usual in the Jewish houses at Purim. There is a custom to give some of the different cookies to the friends. They made 6, 8 or 10 sorts of cookies, they put the cookies on a platter, a few pieces from each sort: more of the kiss, less macaroon. But not only for Jews, but for all their friends, the rule imposed it.

[Editor's note: 'Lerehu' means 'for his friend' but its traditional meaning refers to Jews. The mitzvah (the religious obligation) refers to Jews in this case, as well. But helping of the poor at holidays refers to Jews, but others as well. Moreover, this was a good occasion for the Jewish Community to express its friendship and loyalty to other people, but the law does not state this is mandatory.]

My grandfather died in 1935 in Szamosujvar, while my grandmother perished in Auschwitz.

Their eldest child was uncle Adolf, then my mother, after that Karoly, Lora, Resi, Jolan and Bozsi [Erzsebet]. Adolf and Karoly were merchants, they worked together with their father.

Adolf's wife was Pepi Farkas, they had three daughters: Mucus, Aliz and Evike. Aliz probably is still alive in Israel, the other two daughters perished in Auschwitz together with their parents. Karoly was single, he died around 1934-1935. Lora's husband was Jeno Samson, he was a very good farmer, they had lands in Apahida.

The whole family lived there, they ran the farm, they were doing agriculture. I think they also had sheep. Then they came to Kolozsvar, and they were deported to Auschwitz from Kolozsvar. She tried to flee to Romania through Torda, together with her husband and her younger son, but they were unlucky because the Hungarian gendarmes caught them.

The gendarmes beat them so bad that they were taken back to Kolozsvar half dead, with a carriage. The deportations took place then, they put them on a cattle-truck, but by the time they arrived to Auschwitz they were more dead than alive.

They had two sons, the younger, Slomi, died in Auschwitz, the other one, Elek, emigrated to Israel. He was a fisherman on the lake of Tiberias, he still lives there.

Resi married Hermann Farkas, aunt Pepi's younger brother, who died later of tuberculosis. Her husband died earlier, but Resi died also of tuberculosis approximately in 1939. They left behind two children, Tibi and Karoly.

The children were born in Retteg (near Des). Both of them ended up in the orphanage in Varad, and because my grandmother grew poor, so did my father, there was no other solution. They had a distant relation in Varad, who arranged for them to be accepted in the orphanage.

I had the opportunity to meet them for the last time in 1942, because I was taken to forced labor to [Buda]Pest then. Because we were in Nagybanya for a while then, and the sapper battalion from there requested a group of forced laborers, we were some 40-50 men, we had to go to [Buda]Pest and to load from the central warehouse I don't know how many freight cars with heavy boots for the army in Nagybanya.

But we had to wait a couple of hours in Varad for the train that took us to [Buda]Pest and I asked the sentinel to let me go and try to find them. The sentinel said: 'All right, I let you go! But so help you God, if you’re late!' I promised him I would not be late.

I walked away, I found the orphanage with difficulty and I found the two children. I didn't know then that the deportation would took place. There was no such perspective yet. This happened in 1942, the elder son was probably in the third grade and the younger in the first grade. They were taken to Auschwitz and they perished there.

Jolan married Jozsef Rosenfeld, the younger brother of Mendel Rosenfeld, the stiller. Jozsef was a mechanic, but he was also a good driver. They lived in Kolozsvar and had no children. Uncle Jozsi ended up in Ukraine as a forced laborer, he was almost 50 when they took him away. He came back half-dead as highest grade invalid [disabled] from there.

Because at that time they sent the Jews to mine-fields, as well. He was in a such a group, but not in the middle of the group, because those who were in the middle, were made shreds.

He was at the side of the group, his half body paralyzed, he became mute, he heard almost nothing, he became lame, and he walked with a stick. But by a fortunate accident he came back. He died around 1950, he is buried in the Jewish Cemetery from Kolozsvar. I have a prayer-book, he brought it back from forced labor.

His wife gave it to him when he was summoned, and she wrote the following on the front page: 'When you praye to God, please remember that there is a woman who always thinks about you.

As a souvenir, with love, Jolan. 19th July 1943.' His wife, Jolan, was the only one from the siblings who survived. I don’t know exactly how, but she was helped to escape from the ghetto of Kolozsvar and was hidden. She died in 1993-94, she is buried in the Jewish Cemetery from Kolozsvar as well.

Bozsi [Erzsebet] married Dezso Kremer, a corn-trader from Nagysarmas. They lived in Kolozsvar. They had two children, a son, Andris, and a daughter. The boy was around 5, the daughter one and half, maybe two years when they have been deported. The whole family perished in Auschwitz.

Growing up

My mother was born in 1900 in Ormany. She finished elementary and middle school. She went to school in Szamosujvar, so she moved earlier to the town than her parents. She lived at her uncle, because there were just girls there. My parents got acquainted in Szamosujvar.

My father, as a soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army, had the accommodation there. My late paternal grandfather lived already in Szamosujvar then. They knew the Eisikovits family from Nagyiklod, so when my father got to Szamosujvar, he wasn't a stranger to them.

Thus he ended up at the Weisz family, he got acquainted with one of the girls, with the eldest one, with my late mother, and here I am. They married approximately in 1919. They didn't relate about the wedding, but surely it was a religious marriage, there was no other possibility then, and my grandfather was well off then.

My mother was a beautiful woman and a very, very kind soul and a good housekeeper. She took part in the Jewish Zionist organization, she was a leader of the WIZO group from Szamosujvar.

Beside this we had a blue-white money box at home in the 1920s and 1930s, the KKL [Keren Kayemeth Leisrael] 8 money box. At different occasions my parents used to put a sum in this money box.

When the Jewish state didn't exist yet, they bought lands [in Palestine] from these sums, and they developed especially the forestry, because they knew this had to be the first measure in order to improve the lands, and it took time.

Beside the Aviva 9 and Barisia Zionist organizations, which were organizations for adults, there were other organizations, as well. For example the Habonim, which was a social democratic youth organization I was a member of in my childhood.

The organization pleaded for the necessity to create the Jewish state, and the regime had to be a social democratic regime. Its main activity was to propagate the Zionism, the necessity for the re-

creation of the Jewish state, as it was once, to protect the Jews against one's will and pleasure in the dispersion, and to prevent the Jews from being the scapegoat every time.

Just like the poem [folk speech] says: 'Haboru volt, ehseg volt, pestis, / en okoztam ezt is, azt is.' [War, famine or plagues may be / all of them are caused by me.] There always had to be someone people could point with one's finger: these are the reasons of their misery, there is no welfare because the Jews are sucking your blood.

There were presentations, monthly or weekly papers were edited, there was the Uj Kelet [New East] 10 and the Mult es Jovo [Past and Future] – I remember the cover of the latter, it was a lithography, black figures on pink background, some oriental pattern and two or three palm-trees. There were programs on each Chanukkah and Purim. The Purims were especially nice.

My mother wore shawl only when she went, very rarely, to the synagogue, mainly on high holidays. My father's dressing was very orderly, but he wasn't a gentry type, he was far from it.

He had very elegant shirts, I have stolen many times shirts from him, and when he saw me, he used to ask: 'So, where is this shirt from?' He knew where from. He taught me to tie a tie. I was fourteen and half, fifteen years then. I have many nice memories of my poor late father, because he was an example.

After the wedding my grandfather took my father into his business. His sons, Adolf and Karoly, also worked with him, but he liked my father best. My father was a skilful and richtig [accurate] man.

They kept the cattle usually near the distilleries – I was in Nagyiklod, Szamosujvar and Szentgothard, my father used to take me sometimes with him when he went there, because the stillage, granulated corn that remained after they distilled the spirit, was there, and they fed the cattle with this because it was very fattening.

It was still hot when it flowed into the feedbox, and the cattle ate it with pleasure. There was a large piece of salt hanged beyond each cattle, because the cattle licked the salt, ate the stillage and then, of course, they had to drink water.

The cholesterol didn't exist [as a problem] then. The cattle had to be large and heavy. I had a photo that proves there were oxen up to one thousand kilograms. I remember my father said it had a thousand and fifty kilograms.

After my grandfather went bankrupt, my father partnered Samu Teleki and they continued trading cattle. Teleki provided the financial part, while my father was the expert.

Teleki was originally Herskovits, but he had a problem with a member of the Teleki family and he said: 'Just you wait, I'll show you I will be a Teleki too!' And so he became Teleki.

At least I heard so. He was a great landowner. He was famous for his philanthropy. On holidays he prepared meat – pork meat – flour, sugar, oil and grease for his employees, and he also gave some to the poor of the town.

He had three sons, they have been summoned to forced labor to Ukraine, and three daughters. One of his sons, Jeno Teleki, was a good friend of my father. Jeno's son, who was a very, very good

dermatologist in Ramnicu Valcea, was named Samu after his grandfather. I still keep in touch with him.

My younger brother, Jeno Eisikovits, was born in 1921 in Szamosujvar. He finished middle and high school, and he also studied in the cheder. After that he had to work. He worked for the same company where I worked for a while, where they repaired and sold ironworks and small machines.

He worked there from the age of 17 until 21. In 1942 he became forced laborer. As forced laborer he got to Bohemia, and from there to Germany. After the war he was employed at the Joint. He came back in 1945, and he found out that his girlfriend, a Fisher girl from Szamosujvar, Baba Fisher, got to Sweden from Auschwitz. He dropped everything and went to Sweden. They met and got married there.

My younger brother specialized himself, he worked for a company that made jewelry and trinkets [everything not made from precious metals]. They pressed and colored rust-proof metals and they made various trinkets from it. They appreciated my brother, but he set up for himself, they made and also sold the products.

He sang in the choir of the synagogue from Stockholm. I want to say that they even perform religious songs based on Max Eisikovits' music. They released albums, they have the proper equipment there, there is a rich community in Stockholm.

He had two children, they were born around 1950. The son, David, is a full professor, he teaches religion science in Stockholm. He has a sister, Mary, who is a psychologist, I think she lives in Malmo.

My sister, Hermina, was born in 1927, her Jewish name is Chaja. She graduated middle school in Szamosujvar, and then they took her to Auschwitz. When she came home, she got married. If I was at home, I would have made her continue to study because she learnt very well. Her husband, Mauriciu Leb Mose, was a farmer, his father had an estate in Nagyiklod, and he inherited approximately 70 acres.

They emigrated to Israel in 1951. He had to go, because he was declared kulak, and they persecuted those who owned estates. My sister worked at a hotel in Haifa, she did some administration work there.

She had two daughters, Miriam – she was born in Romania and was very small when they emigrated – and Gila. Gila had three children, one of them is an army officer, the other one is a police officer, the third is still in school, in Israel, of course. My sister died in 2001, her husband is alive, but he is very old, around 86-87.

I, Mihaly Eisikovits, was born in Szamosujvar, on 11 January 1920 in an orthodox Jewish family. When I was 4, I already knew the morning prayers we had to say as we wake up. I finished elementary school in Szamosujvar, in the Romanian Jewish school. I learnt Yiddish and other disciplines they taught us step by step, beginning with the most elementary things.

In the morning we went to the teacher, his name was uncle Izrael, he was Romanian. There were seven grades in the Jewish elementary school, I finished four and then I entered the Petru Maior

high school. I finished a few grades there, but with difficulty, because there was a teacher, called Sigheartau, who didn't like Jewish pupils at all.

For example he told me: 'Cum te cheama? [What's your name?] Eitico...' – he couldn't read my name properly. 'Eitico..., mai, Itic ii mai simplu, hai, Itic la harta!' [Eitico..., hey, Itzik is easier, come on Itzik, to the map!] Talking of that I like to say that I wasn't the only Jew who couldn't take anymore the Romanian high school from Szamosujvar. It was the atmosphere.

The headmaster himself, Precup, wasn't really digging the Jewish pupils. When they needed money, they sent the Jewish pupils home to bring the school fees, because we had to pay for school then. And they established the school fees in accordance with the income.

The Jews always had to have money, they surely had money even under their skin – this was the idea – so they established high, hard school fees for us. The other children had to pay as well, everybody had, but there were pupils who paid in other forms, they found other methods.

The pupils from the villages paid very small fees, they brought instead food for the house: potatoes, onions, this and that. I know that some pupils paid the fee this way. We paid it otherwise...

We used to go often to the grandparents from Nagyiklod. For example, as soon as we got the vacation, we immediately went to Nagyiklod. We could take out our shoes there, we could go barefoot. We could go to the Szamos riverbank and we could steal sunflower and corn, we roasted it, and we came home looking like devils, smudged with coal.

I was together with my sibling, my cousins from Iklod and some Romanian boys from the neighborhood, we were on good terms with them. Iklod was separated in two parts: Nagyiklod and Kisiklod.

The Romanians lived in Nagyiklod, the Hungarians in Kisiklod. Kisiklod is on the right side of the Szamos, on a slope, it is a very good fruiting county. Nagyiklod is on the plain, there were long, large melon beds.

Iklod had the most delicious melons! Well, we also went into the melon beds. Because one of my uncles, Mendel Rosenfeld, had melon beds, as well – my poor late father was also an expert in melons.

This uncle loved doves very much. He made a one and half floor high dove cot in front of his house. He had doves by the hundreds. When he came out to feed them, he carried the corn with a bowl, and the doves rushed at him. He was expert, he separated them, there were hen birds, and he knew the breeds. I can still see it even now! I was a child, around 5 or 7.

My father demanded from us to be tidy, to wash down to the waist every morning after we woke up, and we had to clean our shoes, as well. We had a maid at home, a Romanian maidservant.

I was in the third grade of high school or older, I don't know exactly, I did an essay at home and I said to the maid: 'Lenuta, ada-mi un pahar cu apa.' ['Lenuta, gimme a glass of water.' in Romanian] My father was in the other room and he overheard this.

He stood up and said [in Romanian]: 'Lenuta, mind your own business, mind your own business! If the young man is thirsty, he knows where the water is, where the cup is, let him drink!'

He came to me: 'Listen – he told me in Hungarian – I don't want to hear that you put the girl to serve you!' After that, before going out, I had to brush my brother's coat, my brother had to brush my coat, he came and looked at us: 'How do you look? Let me see. And your shoes? And the heel?'

I'm not boasting, I just want to tell you how a Jewish family looked like, what fairness, honesty and respect they had for the society. For example, we, the children, were allowed to take to school only a piece of bread and dripping with a few slices of radish. It was out of the question to take a cake [cookies]! If mom baked some cookies, we had to eat it at home.

'As long as there are children who don't even have bread, I won't let my child eat cake in front of them.' I remember what my poor late father taught me: 'When you meet an elder person, incline your head, and if he gives his hand, only then you will give yours.'

It shows bad manner when you, as a child, give your hand to an older person, as you see today. There is a kid, a young man, he just graduated the university, he came to me and gave his hand. They don't know [the good manners], no one taught them.

There were two synagogues in Szamosujvar: a great synagogue and a smaller one, the school called Talmud Torah was near this. There was a chief rabbi and another rabbi in the town who fled Poland from the pogroms.

We called him 'the rabbi from Kolomyya', [Editor's note: Kolomyya is under Ukrainian authority today, the period mentioned refers to the Galitia before the World War I with an area of 78.5 square km, (1910), populated by Polish and Ruthenians.

According to the census, the Jews appeared as Polish or Ukrainians. In this province there are 871.9 thousand Jews, 10.9% of the population. 76.2% of the population of the eastern provinces of Galitia (Drohobycz, Kolomyya, Sambor, Stanislau, Stryy, Tarnow, Tarnopol) are Jews.] and everybody supported him because he was an old man.

He was a Hasid rabbi – by Hasid I mean the strict observance of the religious rules. His look and clothes were quite different. He wore beard and payes, a long caftan, which wasn't black, but faint blue with roses – otherwise this was the clothing of the Polish rabbis.

I never saw him with hat, instead he wore that small cap [kippah] and apart from this he had a cap with marten, usually worn by Hasid Jews. He had his own yard, followers and he had a separate prayer-house. I don't know exactly, but some of his followers also came from Poland.

Because there were so many pogroms! I don't know anything else about them, my younger brother was here in the summer, I heard from him that this rabbi from Kolomyya had daughters, but I didn't know them.

I celebrated my thirteenth birthday, my bar mitzvah, in the great synagogue from Szamosujvar. How does such a celebration takes place? First of all they call up the young boy to the bima, in front of the crowd, and the rabbi announces that from today this young boy is an adult, and he tells an address [speech] in Yiddish – there are some places where he tells the speech in Romanian or

Hungarian – in order to arise your consciousness and sense of duty. And then, you, as a young man, have to prepare yourself.

You have to deliver a speech, in which you thank your parents that they raised you, and thank your teachers that they taught you. They call up you, they read part of the weekly pericope in your presence.

The Torah is divided into 54 parts, there is one section for each week, and according to the law, the first part of the section must be read in the presence of a Kohanite, the second part in the presence of a levite, and the third, fourth, fifth and sixth parts in the presence of a Jewish man.

On these occasions they say a blessing, and next the one who lead the whole praying reads out the adequate part (Not the mentioned persons read it out, they only said the blessings beforehand, because not everybody could read.)

[Editor's note: Generally the people called up are not only praying, but reading out, as well. For reading out the first part a kohanite is called up, for the second part a levite, while a yisrael does the others, that is a Jew who is not kohanite or levite. They call up 7 people altogether and the maftir, they read out a small part from the last section for the Maftir, who then reads out the haftara from the Books of Prophets or from the so called Holy Scriptures.]

On this Saturday you are the first Jew for whom they read out the part for the Jews. [Editor's note: They coach the boys who had the bar mitzvah for the weekly section, and theoretically they can read it.

Furthermore, according to the general custom, the boys are called up as maftir, that is, last, and they read out the haftara, and there are places where he reads out the section from the Torah as well.

This became a custom because some of the boys would like to celebrate the bar mitzvah on the Saturday before their 13th birthday, and they can't be called up for the other sections because those can only be read out by adults (who have turned 13) and who are full members of the community.

At the same time it is possible that in the interviewee’s community there were other traditions.] Then they invite those present in a hall, where they serve diverse drinks for the adults and cookies for the children. After that the family and the friends continue the celebration at home.

Beginning with that day you have a tefillin what you have to fix on the forehead and your left arm during the prayer – to keep it facing your heart. In addition you get a tallit, this wasn't mandatory, but the parents who have money usually buy it. I got one from a man called Schonthal, a good acquaintance of ours.

He used it in his childhood, but he had no children, he was an adult, and adults wore a larger tallit. Today, some modern adults use a very small, collar-like tallit, but that is not a genuine tallit.

[Editor's note: As a matter of fact tallit refers to these, but the orthodox Jews don't consider it adequate. The traditional tallit is more like a prayer veil, because it covers almost the whole upper body.]

In the meantime, my parents who were wealthy, were reduced to poverty. This affected me as well, because when I was 15, I was already working. There was a hardware dealer in Szamosujvar who had a workshop beside the store where they repaired sewing machines, bicycles and other things like this – I worked there, mainly during the holiday. I earned some money, which came in useful then.

Later it went bankrupt and then I got to Marosvasarhely. I was an employee at a firm called Diamantstein and Company there, and I was living alone. This company was a great building material and hardware warehouse.

I was assigned to the bookkeeping department because I was able to hold a pencil. Suffice it to say that I worked there, I worked hard and they proved they were pleased with me.

The craftsmen from Marosvasarhely were famous. I remember there was one called Oroszlan, he had a tinsmith workshop, and there was another, Brambir, and Goth, who was plumber. Everyone had his own watch, a gold watch with lace.

They were very elegant on Sunday, sometimes they went to the synagogue, and after the mass they went to the 'zona'. They called 'zona' the fact that they went to the restaurant, ate some odds and ends like neat liver with onion and they drank a bottle of beer.

This was their hobby. It was famous among the craftsmen who thought of well of themselves – not among the hedge craftsmen and botchers. There were nice restaurants in Marosvasarhely, one of them was the Surlott Gradics [Scrubbed Doorstep], where they used to go.

[Editor’s note: The building is situated in Mihai Viteazul street no. 3, which was Klastrom street then. The citizens of the town considered the shingle-roofed cook-shop an elite place, which got its name from its doorstep that was scrubbed every day.]

There was this Meszaros alley, and this was the restaurant of the butchers' union, which was famous for the good meal people could eat there. [Editor's note: The butchers' union built up in part the ground between the Main square (Rozsak square) and the Iskola street, the 'Butcher green' in 1897, and created the Meszaros alley.

They built their center in new baroque style in 1888, and they built flats and workshops in the alley. On the ground-floor of the two-storied center (Rozsak square 13) they opened their common store, which sold fresh meat and was called Nagymeszarszek [Big butchery]. This functioned until 1948, until the nationalization. The restaurant mentioned by Mihaly Eisikovits was probably in the neighborhood.]

In the meantime I got into a very good circle, dominated by the progressive [communist] conception. I was a kid and a beginner, but through my Eisikovits relatives from Marosvasarhely, I won their trust. I was all eyes and ears.

There was a Jew called Simon Fuchs among them, he was the manager of the Revesz library. He was a self-educated, very intelligent man. I remember the first time I went to the library, I asked him to give me this and that.

He didn't, but put some other books in front of me and told me: 'You should read this instead!' The first book he gave me was Egon Ervin Kisch's book entitled 'No Admittance'. I will never forget this.

This Simi Fuchs got married. Before the great [state] holidays, let's say with a couple of days before 1st of May, they jugged them, I don't know in which prison, not to make some movement or something like this, but they release them immediately after the event. He met a girl there. That girl, Magda Simon, was the daughter of a bank manager from Marosvasarhely, but she was a communist.

When Simon, the manager, found out that his daughter married this Fuchs, he disinherited her. He was a capitalist, his daughter a communist, so they couldn't get along. And Magda Simon reconciled to her destiny. I was at their place, they lived in a small, modest flat with two rooms and kitchen.

So Simi worked in the library and Magda sewed at home. What kind of clothes did she sew? She gathered the scraps [of cloth] from the factories and made children's wear from them. And they sold these clothes. But they said: 'No matter how hard life is, the parents will always spend money on children.' So this was what they were doing, they did this for a living.

In this circle I learnt many things in terms of world view, I saw the life of the Jews there, they informed me. They spoke about Hitlerism, Stalinism, but I found out afterwards that Stalinism was more concealed, people didn't know quite everything about it.

Because Hitler said: 'I'll kill them, I'll destroy them! The future of the German nation depends on the elimination of the Jews!' and other things like this. So this [hatred] was evident. The Stalinist propaganda said 'Come, we will save you.'

I was listening on a Saturday afternoon to the cultural broadcast in Yiddish on the Soviet radio, and the announcer said 'Jews, take notice that the Messiah will come, but not the dead Messiah, but the red Messiah!'

Thus it is natural that no matter whether you are Hungarian, French or anything, if one says he would kill you and the other that he'd save you, you don't have to be an ideologist, you to whom says he'd save you. Those who fled to Russia didn't know the Stalinist attitude towards Jews.

They only took notice of what they trumpeted. Those who fled there were put in camps, and many, many of them never came back from there, although the Jews didn't got to Russia as enemies.

- **During the war**

I was in Marosvasarhely from 1937 until 1941 when I was summoned for forced labor. I had to join up in September 1941. I received the summon for September by accident, because the everyone who was born in 1920 received it for October.

The company where I worked had to lay off a Jew, because the law [numerus clausus in Hungary] 11 said that each month they had to lay off a Jew and employ a non-Jew. I received the summon approximately in July, so I was already aware I had to join up, and so was my company.

Thus, if I had to join up in September, I was already free from August, and I moved to Szamosujvar, to my parents.

At the beginning of 1942 they enrolled my younger brother in that marching company that was taken to Ukraine. In this company there were the Telekis, the Lajters, the Blums... There were many decent Hungarians as well, so was my brother.

The sergeant was called Karcsi [Karoly] Kristof, he respected very much my father, he liked him and my father knew Karcsi Kristof, too. As a civilian he had the same occupation as my father, I think he was a butcher.

Anyway, when he was there and he saw my brother is in the group, he stopped him: 'Hey, come here! Now beat it, go home and don't leave the house!' So he survived with the Karcsi Kristof's knowledge.

My father continued the cattle trading until the Hungarians came in [Editor's note: Mihaly Eisikovits refers here to the so-called 'Hungarian era' that began in 1940] 12. They withdrew the licenses from the Jews. It wasn't allowed for Jews to work as merchants, craftsmen or lawyer [due to the different anti-Jewish laws]. At the beginning of 1942 they took my poor father to forced labor.

Although it wasn't necessary, but there were people in Szamosujvar who took him in. I met him once as forced laborer, here, in Nagybanya, and later in Bekas [Becas in Romanian, 30 km far to the North from Szekelyudvarhely].

They put them to make terrible things! And only to take them away from home and not to let them stay at home. For example their activity in Nagybanya looked like this: they were taken to the creek, and everybody had to carry two stones for some 5 km.

They were, let’s say, two hundred people. Each of them had to bring two stones, because the barrack from Nagybanya was already built, but there wasn’t any plumbing there. Not to mention the roads, if it rained, there was ankle-deep mud. So they had to do this to bank up the roads, and they made old people do this, these kind of nonsense things! It was fascism then, hatred.

When I was in Bekas, a forced laborer company of old men arrived once. And guess who was there? My poor father. And interestingly, they were quartered in the same village as we were. Because the village was along the border, they took away the Romanians, so the village was empty.

Thus, I wanted to say that their sergeant in charge was also Karcsi Kristof. In one part of the village there was our company, in the another part my father's. Even though it was restriction, Karcsi Kristof came and took me there and thus I could meet my poor father.

I don’t know how he managed it, but he always had a half or a quarter of a bread, he probably didn't eat it so he could give it to me. I will never forget, we ate always cabbage there, and my late father said once: 'My son, if I escape from here, I will never plant cabbage, well maybe in a small place, for stuffed cabbadge, but not more!'

After a few months they released him because he was old, but he was quite weak then. After he came home they lived in misery, because Jews were given any possibility then, and in the end they even threw my parents out from their house.

In Szamosujvar we lived in an acceptable apartment – three large rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom – we had a yard, too. In 1942, when the soldiers came in, some six motorbikes with these side-cars came into our yard, and they brought their equipment as well.

Then an officer came to see how his soldiers were accommodated. My poor father come out from the apartment, he saw the officer and he invited him into the house. Because he thought this is normal.

The officer came in and took a look around: 'Wow, what a nice apartment, this will be just fine for the officer's mess!' My father said nothing. After three days they got a notice to leave the house within two days.

My father went to the mayor with this notice: 'Sir, I'm here, this and that, I was also in the Austro-Hungarian army, I was a prisoner of war, etc., etc.' 'Were you? Alright then, you have three days instead of two.' And they got an apartment with one room and a kitchen, and a small vestibule.

We never regained our apartment. My brother came back, but he emigrated to Sweden, he lives there even today – I came home only at the end of 1948. When I went there, the house was sold, although my father bought it.

But they made a big mistake, my father bought it from his friend, an Armenian called Kiraly. Everything was paid, they didn't make an effort to write a contract, the word meant more than a contract. But after a while there were no registrations made for Jews.

Normally, when someone buys a house, one goes to the notary, he make the transfer, and based on that in the land registry the new owner of the house from the given address is recorded, so the house is registered under a new name.

At that time some people adopted Hitler's attitude, other winds were blowing then, even the Romanians didn't make registrations for Jews [Editor's note: Mihaly Eisikovits refers here to the Iron Guard] 13 and the Hungarians did the same, of course.

In the Hungarian era they weren’t even allowed to buy bread! They weren’t even allowed to buy boot-sole! The Jews had such restrictions they were only allowed to get out from the house between 11am and 13pm.

If they caught someone after 13pm, they took them to the police and after that to Kistarcsa or other similar camps. The Jews from Szamosujvar were lucky, because Szamosujvar was a small town, they knew very well the people from the countryside, and the peasants brought some food for sale or on credit.

Otherwise they couldn't obtain it officially. I don’t know, but if officially the allocation for a coupon was half a kilogram of sugar, the Jews got only one hundred grams. So there were laws like this.

After that, in March-April 1944, they took the whole family to the ghetto from Szamosujvar. About ghettoizing, I want to draw attention to the following: if somebody watched the groups which were driven to the ghetto, he could observe that the majority were old men, old women and young women with children.

The men between 25 and 40 were missing. Why was this? Because those were taken to forced labor from the early 1940s. There was nobody to revolt against them, to slap a German soldier, although those were shot instantly.

They took away the Jews, but no one made them feel that this was an organized thing, and they took care about the elimination of the Jewish power in time. The ghetto from Szamosujvar was actually in the brickyard, which was in the outskirts of the town, they got them into the drying rooms.

The drying rooms had wood pillars at two, two and a half meters from each other. On these pillars there were cross beams with a roof built on them, in order to allow only the wind and hot air to touch the bricks, and not the rain, by any means. They put the Jews from Szamosujvar in these places.

I can say that when the ghettoizing took place, the citizens from Szamosujvar dragged out the Torah scrolls from the large synagogue to the road, they tore them to pieces and they threw pig waste on. I think they set on fire the Hasid prayer house, perhaps some people burned in.

I want to mention that there were people who were very nice to the Jews in the period of restrictions and ghettoizing. They brought some food, curd, eggs.

My sister related for example, because she was there, that there was a man called Ioan Roman from Szamosujvarnemeti [Mintiu Gherlii in Romanian, approximately 3 km far from Szamosujvar] who came to the cattle-truck and said to my father: 'Dezso, leave your daughter here with me, and I will guarantee you that when you come back, everything will be alright.'

Well, my poor father didn't know then, they didn't presume that this kind of things could happen in the 20th century, and he answered: 'Thank you, but we want to stay together. Everywhere we are.' There were such people, who faced the risk. Because if the gendarme noticed he was hanging about there, he surely would take him and put him into the cattle-truck.

At the end of April they moved them to Kolozsvar, where they were entrained immediately and taken to Auschwitz. [Editor's note: There were six entrainings in Kolozsvar: on 25th, 29th and 31st of May, and on 2nd, 8th and 9th of June.]

A very interesting thing happened in Auschwitz. A very interesting, extremely interesting thing. My mother – may she rest in peace – was together with my sister. My sister was around 15, but she was well developed, so they suggested her to say she is 17, because then they could arrange for her to work.

All those under 17 were put in the children's group, that is exterminated. So my sister remained with my mother. Once my sister got sick. My poor late mother felt miserable because she knew that those who got sick and discovered would be killed.

After work she came out, she stopped near the barrack and she was all in tears. And a German prisoner came by [Editor's note: Mihaly Eisikovits repeatedly says German prisoner, although the person was Austrian] – because for example there were German communist prisoners as well – who went frequently over to the other camp, and he saw my mother crying.

He said in German: 'Warum weinen Sie?' Why are you crying? My mother answered: 'Don't I have a reason to cry?' The German told her: 'Now then stop crying, because this will not help you, on the contrary, etc., etc.' And the German took his toolbox and walked away.

He was a political prisoner who was taken to Auschwitz because he was Austrian. But these prisoners had some advantage over the Jews. Mostly they were in diverse maintenance groups, for example he was put to check the wiring.

When he came back, he found my mother in the same place. He stopped and said to my mother: 'Don't cry, it makes no sense. Otherwise, where are you from?' 'I'm from Romania.' 'Romania, but where from?' My mother said from Szamosujvar.

Then the German said to my mother: 'From Szamosujvar? I have a very good friend there.' 'Who is your friend?' – my mother asked.

'A man called Dezso Eisikovits.' My mother looked up: 'He is my husband!' The doctor said then – because he was a veterinarian: 'Tell me, lady, your husband had a brick-red leader beaufort [morning coat]?'

This is a kind of a waistcoat, with leather front, knitted back and arms. And indeed, my late father had a morning coat like this, it had four pockets, two on the top and two at the bottom, the front was made of deerskin, with buttons, and had knitted arms. It wasn't very thick, but very delicate.

The German proved with this that he knew my father. And when he said he had a friend in Szamosujvar, called Dezso Eisikovits, I can imagine that my mother gasped for a moment.

My mother said: 'Yes, he had.' 'I'm that veterinarian who received the cattle from Dezso Esikovits for the Henkel company.' The Henkel or Senkel company, I don't know exactly, but in any case they functioned in Vienna, was the partner of my father, for which he delivered cattle, and this man was the veterinarian who received the cattle and verified them hygienically.

He asked: 'And where is your husband?' 'I don't know, they separated us.' My mother told him then that her daughter is sick, she caught a cold. Then the German walked away, and when he came back, he brought some aspirin, a piece of bacon and bread.

They were getting packages from home, this was allowed for the Germans. And with that aspirin and bacon my sister got well and survived. My sister related this to me.

My father was shot in the head in Auschwitz. They were emptying the camp, and they took them to another place. My father was around 50, he weakened and he couldn't stand the pace, so he fell down.

As soon as he fell, an SS shot him in the back of the head. I know this from eyewitnesses, among others from Samu Leb from Nagyiklod, he was the brother of my former brother-in-law, who near my father. He came home sick, and he died shortly after. He is buried in Nagyiklod

I joined up in September [1941] and I ended up in Nagybanya, because the battalion of the forced laborers was there. We were transferred from there after a short while near Kolozsvar, to Szamosfalva.

[Editor's note: Szamosfalva, Someseni in Romanian, is almost integrated with the north-eastern part of Kolozsvar.] We walked from there on foot to Kolozsvar every morning and we were there all day long, and in the evening we went back. We cut slabs in a high-school yard.

In Kolozsvar the walls of the police building are not plastered, it is paved with slabs – we cut out these slabs. We did this for a while, and then they moved our company close to the Romanian border, to Bekas.

There was no telephone line connecting with the [Romanian] border, we had to lay down cable and we had to dig a ditch near the road for laying cable. It was a very hard work, because we had to dig a 60 cm deep ditch and mostly we had to draw apart stones.

From Bekas they took us to Monosfalu, to the railway construction between Deda and Szeretfalva. [Szeretfalva is situated in north-western direction from Deda, the distance between the two places is 45 km.]

At that time, [in 1940] when the Hungarians received [Northern] Transylvania [following the Second Vienna Dictate] there was no railway between Deda and Marosvasarhely.

[Deda is situated in south-western direction from Marosvasarhely, the distance between the two places is 56 km,] because the territory near Szekelykocsard [today Razboieni in Romanian] belonged to Romania, so between Beszterce and Deda the people could circulate only by car. And then we had to build this railway, where we worked in hard conditions, 12-13 hours daily, even in cold whether.

Our company commander was a man called Kalman Mordenyi, who as civilian was the warden of the prison in Vac. Now, when there was a war, he was also summoned and he tried to be a very severe leader. His second in command was lieutenant Alsopatyi, who ordered us to assemble on 1st January 1942, while being drunk.

As we were standing there, he noticed I wore a muffler. ‘What’s this?’ he asked me, then grabbed it and ripped it off me: ‘No Hungarian honved [soldier] wears a muffler!’ And the next minute - he had enormous hands and large leather gloves - he smacked me in the nose with such power my blood began to flow and my two front teeth moved.

After working for approximately one year, our company was reassigned to Sepsibukszad, a village near Sepsiszentgyorgy [32 km far from Sepsiszentgyorgy]. There was the largest stone-quarry in Transylvania. It’s still there, but there are different conditions now, everything is mechanized.

But then the drilled a hole on the stone, placed some bauxite in the hole and detonated it. Then we wedged them apart with iron bars, carried the blocks with a wheel barrow to a certain place where we had to smash them to plate-size pieces using a five kilo hammer, then to one kilo pieces to be used for the railways.

This Kalman Mordenyi established such work loads for us we were unable to comply with under no circumstances. Moreover, there were people from the surrounding villages working there, who were already doing this for years and had some experience, and they were able to exploit some one cubic meter per day.

Kalman Mordenyi wanted us to produce two cubic meters, and, moreover, to weigh and load it on the trucks! This was impossible. We were working15-16 hours. Then Mordenyi decided not to give us any meal, the so called coffee and a piece of bread, in the morning, until we didn't do at least part of our work load.

Only then we got the first portion of meal. That meant a piece of bread, some marmalade and this wash. Then, in order to increase the productivity and to enable us to work in the dark, he brought carbide lamps. But not some of these hand lamps, but of the size of a barrel.

There was no regress until the work load was not completed. So we were just hitting the stones for them to believe we were working, but there was no way we could work, and what they were demanding was inhuman.

Later he realized this whole thing is nonsense, they couldn't ask for something like that and the situation turned somewhat normal then, so we were able to somehow produce the one cubic meter and even load it. We were dressed in our own civil clothes, we were forbidden to wear uniforms, we only had that military cap on, but the [honved, Hungarian soldier] emblem was removed from them.

Then in the fall of 1943 we got back to Nagybanya, and from then they transferred us to Czech territory. First we went to Aknaszlatina. Aknaszlatina is on the other side of the Tisza, now it belongs to Ukraine.

There we had to unload and load rails. Many accidents happened there because we had to load very large rail sections on freight cars. I don't know where they brought the rails, and we had to load them from trucks to freight cars or from one freight car to another one, which were sent then to Germany.

From there they took us to the Polish border, but I don't know exactly what town. They gathered us there and then destination Ukraine. This was already at the end of 1943. So in early 1944 we were already in Ukraine, following the route Shumsk-Shepetovka-Dubno.

There we had to build roads, do lumbering and things like that, they made us do it. The army needed roads because some parts of the roads were destroyed with bombs and they needed them fixed.

But it was very hard and due to two reasons: we had no proper cloths and didn't get enough food. Those who managed to trade some potatoes from the locals for a needle or anything, they were able to stand it.

Once, after these and similar kind of works the Ukrainian partisans beat us up and we scattered. We were some 240, but when we dispersed I ended up with one of my mates. And we were hiding because we didn't even know where we were.

We were afraid to go deeper into the forest because we would get lost, so we went through the forest having the road in sight, without drifting too far. We only knew we were going towards the Czech Republic [that is, west-about]. And slowly we regrouped.

Once we saw two people coming. One was helping the other one. As they came closer, we recognized them, they were in our company. On another occasion, after a few days, we saw two people coming with two horses. As they approached we recognized them.

One of them was a coachman, he unharnessed the horses and they used them to carry their backpacks. So we regrouped, we were six or seven from the company. We had to be very careful whom we were contacting, because there were Ukrainian partisans who didn't like the Germans and the Russians, and also hated Jews. We knew that and we were hiding.

But it was impossible to be outdoors all the time because it was cold, the nights were particularly cold. It was winter and heavy snow. So how could we find our way around? Because when the snow is white and everything's white, that's very hard. We waited until it got dark and for people to light the lamps in their houses, and when they did, we went in that direction.

On several occasions we got to creeks we didn't know we would encounter, so we crossed them or went along them until we found a footbridge or something. And we went in the direction of the houses.

I will tell you a story now, but there were several such situations. I learned somewhat better Russian than the others, I had a gift for languages. I told the other ones to wait for me at a certain distance and I went to the house.

We usually spotted the houses that weren't in the center of the village, but at the edge of it. So I went to the house. I knocked on the window and suddenly a face showed up and asked me: 'Kto tam?' - Who's there? I told them 'Dobriye lyudy' - kind people.

I continued with we would like to ask for a place to sleep. This was an old man, and while I was talking to him through the window, the door of the house opened and someone ran away.

The old man said: 'You can't sleep here, partisan...' 'I want to sleep here anyway!' Then he came out and I told him I'm not alone and we would leave at dawn. So I signaled the others, we went into the house, the old man went out and brought two large trusses of straw, put them on the floor, and we fell asleep instantly, including me.

Suddenly the old man [it was still at night] came and woke us up. As I woke up, it was already light. He told me the neighboring house is on fire. But I was so tired, honestly, that I told him I couldn't wake up, as long as the straw I'm sleeping on it's not on fire, I wouldn't move.

So I laid down and fell asleep. We woke up early in the morning. The old man went away and brought us a loaf and some white milk in a black cup.

We tore the loaf apart, split it among us and drank from the milk until we consumed it. In the meantime the old man's daughter got down from the top of the stove - the Russians used to build the stoves so they made a place to sleep.

We didn't see her before, but we presumed the man who ran away from the house the evening before was visiting her. Then we set off. We walked about this way for a few days and we had similar conditions in the evening.

One time we got to a place, and we asked them to look after the horses too. In the morning, when we woke up, the horses already disappeared. The household saw that we didn't need horses. Now, walking in the forest, all at once we came upon, perhaps they saw us too, some Hungarian front guards. 'Who are you?' 'We are forced laborers' 'And what are you doing here?'

'Our company was routed...' and we told them our story. 'So come with us!' We went with them, they had some kind of a barrack, built from wood and beams. The leader [chief] of the barrack was a Swabian corner-man, a lieutenant: 'Jews? Damn bastards! Put them in a separate place!' They put us in a separate place.

Later the soldiers brought some kind of pasta with jam or something like this, God knows, and they gave it to us. But in the morning, though, they put us on a [local] train, on a platform, and took us to a railway station, where there was a regular train service.

A freight train arrived, which was going to Germany, and they put us on it, with an escort, of course, and they took us to Debrecen. In Debrecen they took us off and got into the hussar barrack from there. We were in good hands there also! First they put us into a cellar.

An officer come down to us, who said the following: 'Hah, Jews in the cellar? Is to hot there. Took them back! Up to the loft!' They took us to the loft. But there were straw trusses, so we wrapped ourselves in straw, it was good after all...

We ate what remained – there always remained some scraps. But they ordered us about: we had to jump on one's hunkers, covered a distance, got back from there and jumped over obstacles. The soldiers had to complete these tasks gradually, but we had to jump over the highest obstacles [straightaway]. And we jumped over them, we pushed ourselves over them. I got injured then, I probably split my bone, because I couldn't step on my heel for three months. From there we were taken back to Ukraine, to a disciplinary battalion in Kalush, they regrouped the remains of our company there, and we became a company again. We were not 240 people, but around 180.

In the meantime here in Nagybanya, where there was a Jew exterminative company, that's why Mordenyi and a lieutenant called Alsopatyi could behave as they did, a new colonel has arrived. The new colonel put an end to the on-going mistreatment.

This colonel was called Revitzky [Imre]. He was very humane! He got to the point where he sent an investigation committee comprised by three officers to Ukraine, to see what’s up with us: how were we treated and supplied?

When the investigating committee arrived, there was an arm banded sergeant from Szamosujvar among them, called Bela Racz, who was a former employee of my grandfather David Weiss.

He came to me: 'Mr. Mihaly, how are you?' 'Well, I said, what should I do?' I was ragged, covered with lice, but I surely wasn't the only one in this situation. 'Well, I said, I manage.' 'How are you getting on?' 'Well, I said, if at least they would give food every day, it would be bearable.'

'Why, don't they give you food?' 'No, they don't.' 'Who is in charge with your supply?' I said a private fist class called Farkas, a guy from Budapest, I know about him that he was collector on a streetcar.

'Where is he?' 'He must be around somewhere. If he is sober...' In a word, I want to say briefly that they found him [the individual], and after that we were treated differently. While the Jewry glorifies Reviczky, our company commander, Karoly Mordenyi was executed in Hungary after the war.

Reviczky put himself at risk, he didn't take care and stopped certain wretched treatments used until then. Reviczky was the standard-bearer of the kindness, honesty, courage and humane feelings.

He saved many people, including myself, because if this change never happened, I thought we wouldn't survive the war. And such terrible things happened with other forced laborers! In the swamps of Pripet

[Editor's note: It is the largest swamp in Europe, covering Southern Byelorussia and Northern Ukraine. On 12th August 1941 6,526 Jews accused of theft were shot there. They wanted to sink the women and children into the swamp, but it turned out it wasn't swampy enough. www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/Pripet.] and at the execution place from Dorosics for example.

Dorosics was a locality where the Hungarians gathered the typhoid patients from the forced labor companies. They put them into hangars, into different buildings, next to each other, they nailed the doors on them, they poured gasoline around and set them on fire.

There were people with 42 degrees fever, those burnt, who had only 39 degrees were able to get away. But outside machine guns awaited those who got out. [Editor's note: the interviewee refers here to the Ukrainian locality Doroshits.

On 30th April 1943 many forced laborers were massacred there.] So this happened with the forced laborers who were taken to Ukraine. I had an acquaintance from Szamosujvar who managed to escape from there. His name is Bernath Blum, we called him Beri Blum.

He lives in Israel, we still keep in touch because we spent together four years as prisoners of war. This man, Blum, was healthy enough to get away from the burning building and he ran away. And there were others as well. But I know him.

In 1942 they took him to the swamps of Pripet, later to the Don bend, where most of them froze to death because they went there in summer rags and tatters, and they didn't get other suits.

But neither did the Hungarian soldiers, and many of them froze to death, because they were sent there to die as heroes. And other similar things happened.

We were lucky because our then company commander was a guy from Budapest, called Szanto, who came in the same period, and first lieutenant Szanto seemed to be a pro-Jew after all.

And why? Because his father worked in a board warehouse in Budapest, owned by a Jew. And when Szanto finished high school, his father went to his Jewish boss: 'I have a son, I don't know what to do with him...' 'Bring him here!' The boss employed him, but he didn't put him to work because he saw the boy could hold a pencil, they taught him to measure up.

So Szanto saw the Jews are not so bad after all, how people said. He allowed us to provide for ourselves. Before that there were two-three day periods when they didn't give us anything.

From time to time they drew our rations, that is they brought the food from a place, from the ELMO, the food-supply warehouse, and the skeleton crew sold our supplies to the Ukrainian people for tzuika [Romanian kind of spirit] and for other goods.

They didn't give us the feedstock [from which the forced laborers could cook] because they would have to give us pasta or lentil or bean to feed us when we came back from work. But they didn't give us anything. They weren't concerned. They didn't care. All this ended after that.

Even Jews were allowed to get their ration. The soldiers, the army got it [the food] from there. The Jews got as well, but lesser quantities. But at least they gave that ladle of soup or the half ladle of meal. This went on for a while.

There was an organization in Hungary during the war, called OMZSA [Orszagos Magyar Zsido Segito Akcio - National Hungarian Jew Aiding Organization]. This OMZSA helped the Jews in need, sometimes packages from OMZSA even got to Ukraine. And if the Jews were very, very lucky, they even got them. But very often and many times they were confiscated.

The war became harder and harder for the German troops from Ukraine. The Russians dropped bombs on the main roads, they couldn't retreat through there, so they had to search for secondary roads to retreat.

They used the old forest-paths. But they couldn't use them for cars and tanks, so we had to enlarge them, and build a road paved with wood. We had to cut the trees to a four and half meters wide road, so that some of them had to have 20 cm in diameter on one end and 12-15 cm in diameter on the other end, and we had to put them next to each other.

The engineers worked also, but we had to bring quickly the lumber. I got injured there. But others were injured as well. I was injured when we cut down a tree. A branch cut my arm and my face in four places, it is still visible.

There wasn't any bandage, there was nothing, but there was a doctor among us, called Herskovits from Kolozsvar, otherwise he was an X-ray specialist. He told me: 'Mihaly, my friend, only God can help you here. I don't have anything.

I have some medicine against scabies, it contains alcohol, I'll try this and we'll see.' They gave me some bandage made of paper, it was like toilet paper. But not fine toilet paper! And I survived.

We had to go to the workplace! Well, I went out to the workplace: when I had no boots, I went barefoot, I trod the mud and snow between my toes. There were such periods, but fortunately only for a short while.

The Hungarian soldiers took care of us, but there were also some German guards, and the Germans were interested in the building the road because they had to use it to retreat.

The spring came, and they took us to a new place, Ozeryany, to build roads there, too. The distance between Kolomyya and this place could be 50-60 km. We worked there in different groups

and one day, sometime in June 1944, the Russian pressure became very strong.

The Russians blocked a large territory with an offensive, and our company was caught there, too. And the different parts of the company fled to different places.

After a while I managed to get back to the village we were accommodated, in a barn. And I waited. I went every morning to the forest, the forest was some one and half kilometer away from there, not more, and I went back in the evening just to spend the night outside the forest.

The Germans already withdrew their troops from there, those who were captured were captured, those who were not left, but the Russians didn't occupy the territory yet.

One morning, when I went out, I had to pass through a potato plantation, actually some bushes, but nicely aligned, I heard from a distance that: ta-ta-ta-ta ta-ta-ta. They tried to shoot me with a machine gun, I didn't know who they thought I was, but I swear the bullets hit the ground 10 cm from my foot.

If the shooter held the machine gun one centimeter higher, he would have shot me down, considering the distance. I threw myself to the ground and I crept until I reached the forest. In the evening I came back.

The next dawn the Russians came in. I thought this meant I escaped. But it wasn't that easy! I didn't know Russian, they didn't know either, they were all Kirghiz and Uzbek soldiers. They had a sergeant who knew Russian (I didn't know his rank but I learnt it afterwards). He pulled out his gun..., but fortunately the housekeeper saw this and she ran out and told the Russian what I was.

He told me to go back into the house and stay there! But I didn't want to remain there, because this officer allowed me to stay there, but if another one came, he could shot me first and then ask who I was. I was alone.

On the next day, when I went to the forest, very slowly, I didn't know exactly where I was, I saw two Hungarian soldiers together with a Russian soldier, and they were talking in Ruthenian. And I told them: 'Hungarians!' The Russian soldier was an old soldier. The Hungarians have realized I was a ragged forced laborer and they tried to explain to him.

'Now, come with me!' and he took me to a temporary prison camp, where there were approximately twenty thousand people. I didn't see other forced laborers. There were Hungarians, Romanians, Germans and Italians, as well. All kinds of people were coming all the time, and later some forced laborers arrive there, too.

Once, I will never forget, when I was searching the forced laborers, I saw one approximately 200 meters from me. Right next to the wire fence. It was raining and he was standing there in the rain. I went to him to see who he was.

When I got closer I saw he was a man from my town, called Bumi Waldman. He was in such a shape, that if he remained there alone, he would have gone mad. He was older than me, and he was totally demoralized.

A had a few cigarettes, and I bought from the newly arrived soldiers and prisoners who had a place inside the building, because it was a school within the camp, but not everybody had a place inside, two tent flaps for three or five cigarettes. They only had to give their gun and waist-belt, they kept the rest of the equipment, and they didn't need the tent flap.

I made a tent from the two flaps in the yard, because I was only able to find a place there. For tree cigarettes they gave me a blanket, I put it on the mud, I took my friend and pushed him inside. We spent there seven days, and he slept all the time.

I woke him up only to drink the soup, because the Russians were giving us two rations of soup and a small piece of bread every day, but after that he lied down again and continued to sleep. After seven days he recovered. I am positive I saved his life.

We walked for 21 days on foot from there. We passed through the town of Kolomyya and we ended up in some locality. We were quite lucky we took with us a tent flap, because it kept us warm during the night and we could sleep. But by then there were many forced laborers there.

There were forced laborers who were brought there in 1941-1942. They were so ragged that when the Russian officers saw them they said: 'Now, you will go home immediately.

You will be liberated.' We were in such bad shape, and our facial expression reflected our condition. [But they couldn't come home though, but they continued the march.] After 21 days they put us on freight cars.

We continued to walk for six more days, and then we got to Zaporozhe. This town is situated on the banks of the Dnepr river, it is a large industrial town. We were almost ten thousand people in the 1st camp.

There we worked together with German, Hungarian and Romanian prisoners of war, and they made no discrimination among us. When they saw who we were and how we looked, they promised they would liberate us, let us go home, but they completely forgot what they promised.

From the end of July 1944, it was summer anyway, we worked in Zaporozhe in construction until 1946. They always told us 'skoro damoy' [home soon], which meant they would let us come home soon.

My master engineer was a from Kolozsvar, his name was Polifka. There was a large aircraft factory, the Russians blew it up when they retreated to prevent it from being taken over by the Germans, and we had to rebuild that.

We also went to work to a quarry, where we had to extract stones from the rock, mainly with an iron bar, we put it in the cracks and forced it open. We had to put these stones in mine cars, and the mine cars carried the stones to the stone-mill.

In Sepsibukszad we broke the stones into small pieces with hammers, here we had to work on the larger stones. But it was very hard. Especially pulling the mine car was very, very difficult, it was very inefficient. There was a Russian master, but he wasn't an expert, more of an outsider, he only saw that the work is progressing very slowly.

He was together with us all day long, and he called us Fritz, the Germans used to be called Fritz, and he said we didn't want to work and other things like this. One day he picked on me, and he started with Fritz this and Fritz that.

By then I was a wrongful prisoner of war for two years already. I told him in Russian: 'Firstly I am not a Fritz, I am a Jew. And don't you swear at me, don't you swear at my mother, because I will kill you instantly.' I didn't think about what rubbish I just said, but I said it.

After that he walked away, and I considered the affair closed. On the next day a colonel from NKVD came and asked 'Who is Misa?' Because they addressed me as Misa. 'I am.' Than he told me: 'What happened yesterday here, why did you threaten the master?'

I remembered and told him there were no proper conditions for work, and we couldn't fulfill the work load, and how hard this work was. I asked him to take a look to the rails, to see there were no bolts, we had to bind the rails with wires, and the hammers were in such condition we couldn't use them.

The hammer had to be sharp and had to be maintained, the handle of the hammer must not break the worker's hand. I said I worked already in a quarry and I knew how the work had to be done. In such conditions [circumstances] and with that meal it was impossible to produce [perform].

He looked at me and said: 'You know what? We take away the master, you take charge and I guarantee you will get one more portion from the canteen.'

The quarry had some kind of a canteen there, where the workers and clerks could eat, but it wasn't very distinguished The Russians lived very, very hard after the war, and this was the situation all over Russia, especially in the parts affected by the war. I said: ‘What do you mean? Giving me one more portion?

We can only perform if everyone gets food, only then we can make arrangements, create a forge, because there are skilled people and possibilities. We can't do hard work with the meal we are getting.’ After a long bargain, he came back after three days and said: 'How many are you here?'

'We are about one hundred people.' 'Well, you will all get half a portion more.' Well, I thought to myself, the food we were getting from the camp and this half portion was enough to do something. And they began to bring us bolts.

At the end we achieved the maximum performance, 126%, instead of the daily 40-45% before. Everybody fulfilled one's duty, there was a carpenter who took a man to help him, they made the handles, there were two blacksmiths, a German and a Hungarian, in a word the work started to progress.

In the camp, where they recorded the results of the different work-groups, was striking that in the quarry, where the production was usually 40-45%, achieved 70-80% and later even 126%.

The group leader from the Russian part, because always Russian soldiers received us, they escorted us to the workplace and they brought us back, was a boy called Szajnuro.

I will never forget, he was a boy from Siberia and his face was scarred by smallpox, but he was a very, very affectionate, a very kind guy who never shouted at us, and if he wanted to say something, he called me: 'Misa, idi suda.' [Misa, come here.] He told me to tell to the others not to hang around there, because there was a limit we were allowed to leave the workplace.

On time, when we started off to the workplace, Szajnuro said to me: 'Misa, you have to remain in the camp. The 'upravlenya', that is the management of the camp gave order [instruction] to leave you in the camp.' I didn't understand the reason.

We were simple minded, we got there from here [Transylvania], we feared only the Arrow-Cross 14 men then, that is the wretches. When everybody got out [from the prison camp], they called me to the management and asked me if I spoke Russian.

I said yes, I learned. 'Where did you learn?' 'I learned here, at the workplace.' They said this was impossible: 'Nye mozhno [it is not possible] You had such a good accent, that...' I said to them: 'Sirs, I came from Transylvania, from beside Kolozsvar, from Szamosujvar.

I have never seen a Russian in my entire life, I never heard any Russian word, there are no Russians in our county.' 'Well, if this is true, you are skillful, >>molodyets, molodyets<<.' He told me: 'Now hear us out why we called you.

Here we allocate the food to the prisoners in accordance with the Geneva Convention. [Editor's note: The treatment of the prisoners of war at the turn of the century was regulated at the First and Second Peace Conferences at The Hague (1899, 1907).

The provisions of the two conferences was reformulated at the 1929 Geneva Convention. The convention included detailed rules concerning the transportation of POWs, the POW camps, the provision of the sanitary conditions, the work of POWs, their payment and supply.

The convention was enacted in Hungary through the Law no. 30/1936. The regulation was in force until 1949, when a new Geneva Convention created new provisions.] We have a suspicion that the allocated food ends up somewhere else, at least not the whole allocated quantity gets into the boilers.

We thought we will send you to the kitchen, to be there and check whether they are cooking the allocated food and they distribute it?' I remained silent. It was alright. I couldn't say thanks for the job, I didn’t know Russian that well, and I realized afterwards that it would have been nicer that way, but I didn’t think about it then.

Already on the next morning, after 5am, I had to go to the pavilion that accommodated the kitchens. It was so much steam there, I was only able to see a yard far. They just changed the utensils then after distributing the morning soup, and they began washing the boilers with hot water.

At least 90% of the cooks were Germans, and suddenly I heard the snappy voice of the commander [their leader] speaking in German. I told myself: ‘Well, just what I needed. I wish I wasn’t here.’ It was still early in the morning, my group was just going out, so I sneaked in between them and I went with them to the workplace.

At least there I wasn't surrounded by wire, the air was fresher and time passed by differently. This suited me. First of all I was amongst the people I spent so much time together with. On the other hand we were getting the camp meal and another half a meal there. So I remained at the quarry and I have forgotten that I was sent to the kitchen.

One day, it was after work, one of the officers of the political department of the camp came to me, who spoke very good Hungarian. It was a large camp, there were almost 10 thousand people there, mostly Germans, but many Hungarians, as well, and also some 100 Jews.

I saw her, greeted her and she greeted me, as well. 'How are you?' 'Well - I said -, fine, thank you. Now that we achieve 126% each day, and have a decent meal and...' 'And where do you work?' I told her in the quarry.

'Wait! Are you working in the quarry? Weren't you assigned to the kitchen?' 'Well, I was - I said -, I was there for one and a half hour, but I don't liked that, I'll rather go to the workplace outside.'

She was surprised because other would have ceased the opportunity, but I didn't want to fatten up like the men from the kitchen - they were all looking like prize-fighters.

By the way, after World War I there was an exchange of prisoners between Hungary and Russia, and some officers of Bela Kun have been set free, who were in the prisons of the Hungarian Government, and the Russians liberated in exchange some Hungarian officers who have been taken prisoners by the Russians in World War I.

[When in July 1920 the so-called commissar lawsuit began in Hungary, the Soviet Union suspended the transport of Hungarian prisoners of war home, and some 1000 Hungarian officers were interned.

In exchange for the officers they considered hostages they requested the commissars to be handed over. After long negotiations, the two governments agreed on the 'prisoner exchange' on 28th July 1921 through the Riga Agreement.

Hungary contributed to the emigration of 400 political prisoners, and officially suspended any legal action taken against them, but deprived them of their citizenship. In exchange, the Russians allowed the interned officers and another several tens of thousands of Hungarian prisoners of war to go home.

(Katalin Petrak, Magyarok a Szovjetunioban 1922-1945, Budapest, Napvilag, 2000, 21-56.)] She was the daughter of one of these officers, so she went to Russia as a child, and she spoke very good Hungarian, and this is how she ended up in a camp where there were some 2000 Hungarian prisoners.

But there were other officers at the political department who were Germans, German communists, and they were in charge of the German prisoners, because there was some propaganda going on in the camps.

I got weak and I was taken to a prisoner hospital. There was a person called Kremer and another one called Lori Rosenfeld, who was a corpsman. These two, in order to keep me away from the crowd, put me into a small room with two guard-beds - two beds patched up from board -, on one

of theme there was a German moribund, and they put me in the other one.

They gave me two thin horse blankets. This hospital was built so that the windows were 60 cm from the floor, in order to keep warm. It was full of rats. As soon as the night fell, rats began to stroll around , so covered my head with the blanket.

But one rat bit my toe, and I felt that pain for quite long. Lori Rosenfeld brought me some rice in a bowl [pot], quite a lot of it. I tasted the rice, and I thought I was dreaming because it contained butter, sugar, vanilla, everything nice. I fell to it and finished ate it up in three minutes.

Then I licked the platter for I don't know how long, until Lori came and brought me half a liter of tea, with sugar. I never even imagined it existed in the whole of Russia. And he also brought a piece of bread, white as paper, and a piece, it had to be half of the size of a matchbox, of butter on it.

So, I ate that too. So they stuffed me, because there was always something left in the kitchen and they gave me some of it.

When I recovered and strengthened up, because the meal was very, very good, they hid me for a while, as much as they could. Because selections took place once in a while, and those who recovered somewhat was sent back to the labor camp to work.

After a while they assigned me to the kitchen to clean up and help out. But what happened? There were some one hundred patients, but each night 5-8 of them died. The bread and butter ration, and generally the meal was for the headcount reported on the previous evening, so there always were rations left.

One time I saw a small, bulky limping boy, he was hospitalized, too, because he was weakened, but he was quite a character. And since there was some soup and bread left, I gave him some. And he helped me, I helped the distributor and he helped me, that is logrolling.

Then I saw another one, a tall, slim, lost weight, with a more gentle face, but seeing his features I realized he was a different class. When he came for his ration, I asked him: 'Who are you? What's your name?' I clearly remember his honved jacket.

He told me his name was Laszlo Csillag. 'Wherew are you from?' 'From Budapest.' 'How did you end up here?' 'I was a forced laborer.' 'Are you Jewish?' 'Yes, I am a Jew.' So I gave him some of the meal, bread and marmalade, butter that was left.

Dr. Laszlo Csillag, corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy, who still lives in Budapest, became my spiritual friend. We were thrown out from the hospital together. Well, we couldn't stay there for ever. We both ended up in an oil factory and marched together to work.

He loved chemistry, and he became a chemist. I became attached to his whole being, he was very neat, he always tried to keep himself tidy. This Laszlo Csillag, as I later found out, made friends with this officer lady from the political department.

If the leaders of the camp found out about this, they both would have ended up in Siberia. But they didn't. Laci [Laszlo] came home and later this lady arranged so that she also got to Budapest.

They met, but Laci was already married by then, but they remained good friends, and he always talked about her with great respect. She remained in Budapest and died there. This I know from Laci Csillag, whom I looked up in Budapest, and we still write letters to each other. He even wrote to me on the internet.

When I came out of the hospital, we had to eat again this bad meal, and it all started in the spring with nettle soup. We had nettle soup in the morning, nettle soup for lunch – this was a bit thicker - and nettle soup in the evening.

Those who were working got an extra 200 grams of barley-water, boiled in water, and I think they put in it some oil. When the nettle became like birch [very thready], they began to give us cucumber.

But the soup wasn't made of small cucumber, but large yellow ones, and they also made dish from it. This went on until cabbage began to grow. From then on we ate cabbage, right until nettle began to grow again. Bean or something similar was out of the question.

There were people who arrived there way before me. If someone weakened so much it was impossible for them to be used for work anymore, they sent them home. It didn't matter whether they were Germans, Hungarians or Romanians. I have a story related to this.

A group was formed from these patients. There was a Jew among them, his name was Bumi Meister. He was originally from [Nagy]Varad, and he was the oldest of us, he was 51 or 52. In the last minute he was taken out of the group. He came to me. He was terrified, and he came to me because I had a gift for languages.

I was a prisoner of war for almost two years then, and I pattered in Russian. So he came to me: 'My dear Eisikovits, I beg of you...' He asked me to go to the camp management and ask them why weren't they sending him home. I said what could I lose, so I went to them and tried to do my best.

So I went there. But there was no free access into and out of the camp! I went to the guard in the post and told him I wanted to see the camp director. He looked at me. 'Yes, I want to see the camp director!' When he saw I was serious about it and told him in Russian, he let me pass.

I went to the management and told them: 'Gospodin. Gospodin nachalnik [Director sir, chief sir.] – I couldn't say 'tovarish' [comrade], because we were not comrades, we could only say 'sir'. Why don't you let this man go home? He is the oldest of us.

He is ill. Is it because he is Jewish? Well, let me say that this man never fought against you!' He looked at me, I don't remember what he said, but Bumi Meister was put back into the group and he went home. This was sometime at the end of 1945. We were still in Zaporozhe then.

After two years they entrained us. We were hoping we would go home. But instead of going towards West, they took us towards north-east, via Moscow, to the area of Kalinin (Tver in Russian), and from then they took us to a place called Novistroy [Novostroyka], that is new construction.

There we worked on disforestation and construction. There, around Kalinin, we were some 1500-2000 people, some 300 of them Jews. We organized a strike there. We said they were treating us unfairly and immorally.

I was together with those [Germans] who persecuted me and ruined my youth. And the Russians were treating us the same way they were treating them, who fought against them, massacred etc.

Because the German SS was there, and the Wehrmacht was and the German officers were there, as well. We were hunger-striking for 5-6 days, at least those who could endure it, but some of us collapsed on the third or fourth day.

The outcome [of this protest] was what I expected - 200-300 Jews are no match for Russia -, they dispersed us and sent us to different places to work, in gourps of ten or twenty people, and some of us even have been imprisoned.

In the end, in July 1948, they finally gathered the prisoners of war. Before they sent us home, the Russians gave us clean shirts, in some cases white shirts, and a jacket, as well. There were Russian and German jackets, anything they had. But they were all clean, disinfected and even washed, I think.

They gave us a coat, I got a Russian one, to keep us warm and prevent us from getting sick. At the end of August we were already at home. So we had to endure four years [in Russia]. I was a prisoner of war for a total of four years and some one and a half month. All in all I was away for seven years, I was a forced laborer for three years and another four in captivity in Russia.

From our group who as forced laborers were held captive by the Russians only three of us are alive. One of us is Laszlo Steiner, in [Nagy]Varad, he was in other camps, he was taken with another group, but we came home together.

The other one is Bernat Sauber in Marosvasarhely, and he is the president of the Jewish Community there. [Editor’s note: Centropa also made interview with Bernat Sauber.] I was with him as forced laborer until the Russians smashed us.

Then he ended up in Odessa, while I was in Zaporozhe, but he too came back when I did. We didn't really keep in touch, and I last met him in Des, when they commemorated 60 years from the Holocaust.

- **After the war**

First I went to Nagyiklod, because I knew I had a sister there. But she got married in the meantime. So I came to Kolozsvar, I had an aunt there, my mother's younger sister Jolan, who survived. Her husband, Jozsef Rosenfeld, was taken to Ukraine and came home with the highest grade invalid.

That was in 1948, around September, when I came to Kolozsvar. In Kolozsvar, in the main square, on the left side of the statue of King Matyas, I met with Bumi Meister. 'Eisikovits, my dear Eisikovits, this and that, how grateful he is etc.'

He opened his wallet and wanted to give me ten thousand lei. I said to him: 'Bumi, don't do that. I don't need it. I can't...' 'But are you aware of what you did to me?' 'Of course I know. But that was my duty.'

I didn't accept a dime, I was happy to see him, and I asked him what was he doing for a living and what was he doing in Kolozsvar. He said: 'I have a small workshop where I repair syringes.

Because they have a plastic tube and after sterilization these get spoiled, but their metallic part remain and I restore them. And I just brought my order for I don't know what hospital in Kolozsvar.' That's why he was in Kolozsvar. Otherwise he was living in [Nagy]Varad. I don't think he is alive.

Also in Kolozsvar I met one of my friends from childhood, Sanyi [Sandor] Nemes, who was originally from Magyarlapos. Previously I met him as forced laborer in the Ukraine. I was barefoot then. When he saw I was alive in 1948 [he was very surprised]!

Because they buried me long before, because one who didn't come back in 1945-1946 or 1947, and showed up only in August 1948, it was just like they were coming from a different planet. 'So what brings you here?' And I told them I just came home. 'And whereto? What's on your mind?' I said I didn't know.

'Come to Des, because I was appointed commercial manager at a company and I will hire you.' Thus I ended up in Des, and I worked as clerk for about one and a half year, when I was transferred to Moldova [Eastern part of Romania is called this way by the Romanians].

The first thing when I came home was to learn and to finish school. In the end I finished high school in Iasi, and I got married while I was studying. I met my wife Bianca in Iasi. Her maiden name was Pitaru.

This means baker, her great-grandparents were bakers once. She was born in 1933 in Iasi. She was the only daughter of a Jewish family. She was very pretty. They were in a quite miserable situation when I got acquainted with them, because her father had some land, and a house in Iasi, but they have been nationalized.

She entered medicine school, but she was thrown out shortly after because her social origins weren't adequate – 'origine sociala necorespunzatoare' in Romanian. She had a brother who emigrated to Israel very early on and studied electro-mechanics. He became a famous expert in the field of plant energy supply. In Israel he changed his name to Paz Amnon.

I even visited him once in Rishon Le Zion. He had a workshop and materials warehouse as large as one of the waiting rooms of the railway station in Kolozsvar. Unfortunately he died around 1999-2000.

My wife was a very skilled woman in her profession. She was an accountant. I had an acquaintance I helped a lot once, and he became the principal of the school for deaf-mutes.

I went o him and told him: 'Dear Mr. Barbu..., dear Mr. Barbu... – this was his name –, look, I want to help my wife in getting a job. Can you help me?' 'Domnu' Eisikovits..., Mr. Eisikovits, of course I can help you. please send her over, and...' So she became a chief accountant there.

My work wasn't appreciated at its true value, so I don't like to talk about it. I started working at the local council of Iasi, but then I was appointed manager of the commercial department of the region.

[There was a territorial reorganization in 1952 when Romania was divided to administrative regions.] 15

I wanted to turn it down because I knew what commerce was, I learnt it in Marosvasarhely before. But here it was built on a very different foundation, everything was turned upside down, like an inverted pyramid. [Normally] market determines the course of industry, but in the past regime the industry determined the market.

So they manufactured products for which there was no demand. Or they made so much, and so primitively, none needed them. People were very unhappy then.

Those who worked in commerce were previously evaluated [by the official authorities], and they all were speculators. And I wasn't willing to be a manager in such circumstances.

But I couldn't tell them this, instead I told the president of the local council, some guy called Constantin Nistor: 'Mr. president, this is too difficult for me, I will not be able to live up to the expectations.

And I don't want to compromise myself and to make you angry with me.' 'What are you talking about? Don't you think we know you?' 'Please, allow me some more time to think about it.' I already made up my mind, but I couldn't tell them 'I won't.'

So I had to explain somehow that I couldn't do it. I knew, however, the structure of the Jewish families. There were still some Jews left in commerce. In the Jewish families the husband used to maintain the family, while the wife used to stay at home and look after the children, educated them etc. But in the past [the communist] regime it wasn't like this. Everyone had to work to be able to sustain themselves.

In 1957 I became the manager of the city management company. But there were some Jewish employees there, engineers, building engineers and accountants, who submitted a request to the police so they could emigrate to Israel. Normally I should have removed them from their positions.

But I didn't, I wouldn't know about it. They used to come to me and tell me discretely: 'Comrade manager, I submitted the documents for emigration, because my family...' 'Have you told this anyone else?' 'No.' 'Then just do your job.' After a while this came out and I had to move here to Transylvania.

I wasn't a member of the party from the beginning. When I was appointed head of department at the local council, the vice president came to me – I will never forget this episode -, and said: 'Comrade Eisikovits, aren't you a member of the party?' I told him I wasn't.

So he told me to go quickly and have my documents made and join the party. I did, and then I told the party secretary – who incidentally was a Jew – that I was sent by Balaban, the vice president, and I asked him to draw up my file so they could accept me into the party.

I swear on my mother's grave it happened so! And I was a member of the party, of course, when I was the manager of the commercial department of the region. But no matter whether you were a member of the party, or anyone, when they wanted to fire you, they did.

A trend for replacing any minority from the leading positions already began to appear in the 1960s. First they excluded all the Jews from the Central Committee [Comitetul Central in Romanian].

Then they threw out the Hungarians and Serbs, saying that they were Tito's followers.Then they excluded the Jews from the army, the secret services, the ministries, and it wasn't allowed to have Jews in the leading position at certain departments or sectors 16.

But I had another episode. One time I went to Bucharest, together with my driver. In the morning someone knocked on my hotel room door. 'Sunt capitanul cutare cutare, caut pe tovarasul Eisikovits. Dumneavoastra sunteti?' ['I'm captain This or That, and I'm looking for comrade Eisokivits. Are you comrade Eisikovits?' in Romanian] 'Yes.'

This was a captain in the secret service. He said: 'What are you doing here, in Bucharest?' 'What am I doing here? I have some business here, because I'm the manager of a company and we have some problems here.'

He said: 'Well, let's forget these problems. We spoke with the party secretary in Iasi and we told him we need you, and he told us we can use you.' He told me to go with him, because we had to go to a certain office.

When I was leaving, I told my driver – Anti Endes, a very nice Hungarian guy from Iasi – 'Anti, I will have to go now, but wait for me here, because I will come back.' So we got into a large, black Volga. There was the driver, this captain sat next to him and two more officers sat beside me.

They were wearing civilian clothes. I was sitting in the middle. So we started off. I asked them where we were going. He told me 'not too far.' Suddenly an iron gate opened and we went in. They took me to an office and told me to wait there.

There was only a desk and two chairs in this room. I had to sit on one of them, while a certain guy on the other one. After a while, when I saw no one was coming, I left the room. An officer saw me. He told me to go back because a comrade major was supposed to come there in a few minutes. In deed, after a few minutes, a major came in. He asked me whom I have connections with.

I told him the name of the company, the Ministry, and I told them everything. But then he asked me what connections do I have with the bank. I told him I don't have any. 'But nevertheless, you went to the bank.'

Then I remembered that I was at the bank after all. one of the bank managers was a guy called Noti, who was the uncle of the wife of my uncle Moshe Eisikovits. He asked me what I was doing there.

It happened right after I arrived in Bucharest, and I went there because there were no vacancies in the hotels due to the congress. So I went to Noti because the bank had some kind of a boarding house and I asked him to allow me to stay there.

'Anything else?' I replied 'Nothing else.' 'But there is, you were at the bank several times.' I told him 'Yes, I think I was there twice.' 'And what have you discussed with comrade Noti?' 'We had no discussion.'

'But where do you know each other from?' I told him from Des. How come? I told him he is the uncle of my uncle's wife. 'Alright then, and what kind of people are they?' I said they are honest people.

'Honest people!' I said 'Yes, I know they are.' Next he said: 'Well, he's not that honest after all.' I told him 'I only know he was an illegalist communist, and nothing else.' 'But still, think about it!' 'Sir, I don't have anything to think about.'

Then he told me: 'Well, the pure fact that you are a Jew and he is a Jew...' I replied 'comrade major, I don't know who could teach the other in this matter!' God is my witness I told him this! I had nothing to be afraid of, because he was nothing compared to me. I was a manager for ten years and did my job honestly, and there came this man with this nonsense.

'He didn't do a too nice job at the bank.' I said: 'If he didn't do a good job, I'm not surprised.' 'What do you mean?' 'Do you know he is a tailor? And you made him bank manager. The man who assigned him there is to blame. Comrade major, if you put him in charge of a co-operative or the Ucecom, he would have done a good job.'

[Editor's note: Ucecom is the abbreviation of Uniunea Cooperativelor Comerciale, that is the Association of Commercial Co-operatives]. 'But the man who put him in charge of money issue, he is to blame. I'm positive he didn't do anything wrong on purpose.'

Suddenly the door opened and a lieutenant-colonel came in. 'So, how is all going on?' 'Pai, nu coopereaza' ['Well, he does not cooperate.' in Romanian] Then I said 'What do you mean I'm not cooperating? What kind of cooperation do you expect, comrade? I can only say I saw some classic Marxist and Leninist works.

I'm positive he wasn't able to use them because he wasn't competent enough. But he kept them there, because...' He wrote this last part down. Anything nice I said he omitted. This I only found out later.

Later I thought this non cooperation was one of the reasons I was fired in 1968, after a period of 12 yeasr as manager. But it fair to say that my other mistake in their opinion was that I didn't fire the Jews, and did not cooperate, and my friends told my I should leave [Iasi].

I had a former classmate called Laci [Laszlo] Fisher, who changed his name to Florian after moving to Kolozsvar, and became the manager of the economic department of the secret service. I met him, as well, and told him 'Look what happened to me.'

He told me 'Leave there, man! You'll never know what these bastards could come up with. And you'll wake up at the channel [the interviewee refers to the Danube channel, where the political prisoners were taken to forced labor.] as Zionist leader.'

I wasn't able to move right away, but I was appointed in a new position as amnager of a constructions company – Cooperativa de constructii [Construction Co-operative] –, but I wanted to leave because I wanted to be in a more calm situation.

I chose Nagybanya because my aunt Bertuska, one of my father's sisters, was living here. Here they asked me why I came. I told them I'm from Transylvania and I wanted to return to

Transylvania.

From 1971 I worked here in Nagybanya, and my work was appreciated. I got an appartment from the start and a decent salary. I took over the management of a construction company and worked there until 1975, when I retired.

In 1986 I moved to Kolozsvar. I inherited a house there with a garden of two hundred ten square meters, a yard of eighty square meters, including the building. I should have repaired the house, but I had no money so I sold it for 27 million. In 1998 I came back to Nagybanya and bought my present home for 16 million, and I spent another million on repairs.

I have two daughters, the elder one is Livia and she was born in 1953, while the other, Rodica, was born in 1959. Both of them are certified English teachers. In the meantime I divorced my wife, because back then a problem has arisen because I had different thoughts about my daughters' future, while she insisted on emigrating to Israel.

Then I haven't thought it was the momewnt for such an action, because the girls were still in school, one of them was in ninth grade, while the other was in the second year at the university, and both of them had very good results.

I didn't want to pull them out, because who knows where we would have ended up? Who could guarantee me I would have been able to afford to pay for their studies? Because school in Israel costs. She emigrated anyway with her whole family. And she thought I would hurry for her.

I told her I was not able to go, because of the situation. 'you'll see, you'll come too. I have to go. My mother is very sick, Iunica is very sick and someone had to go with them.' I told her: 'But you have a family, honey.

You have a family here, and children, as well.' 'But the children are healthy and...' She emigrated in the 1960s, I don't know exactly when. It doesn't matter anyway. She is retired now. She was an accountant all her life in Qiryat Ata, where she lives now. We are on good terms, we spoke on the phone yesterday.

So I remained here with my daughters. The elder was already a bride, the groom's father was a doctor in Iasi. Both girls graduated university in Iasi and became English teachers. The younger emigrated to Israel in 1974-1975, while the elder emigrated to America a year before that.

It happened that she and her husband managed to get some tickets to Yugoslavia for a summer vacation, and they just walked over the border to Italy, it was a one-day or two-day trip. They went there and forgot to come back. They remained there and worked.

My son-in-law worked at a garage, while my daughter washed the dishes in a restaurant. But no one knew English, so when they had English speaking guests she was asked to talk to them. One time, when they had such a group there, she spoke with a lady who asked her who she was and what was she doing there, and she told her the whole story.

Then this lady said: 'Listen, when you arrive in New York, look me up!', and gave my daughter her card. And in deed, when they go there, she looked this lady up and she was hired right away in the Tiffany jewelry store. Now she's working at another company, on the computer. Her husband, Silviu

Salamon, is a construction engineer. [They don't have children.]

My younger daughter's husband is Eduard Matis, an architect. He is originally from Romania, as well. They were already married when they emigrated. They have two children. Roni, the elder one, was born in 1981, while the other, Eden, in 1995, and she is in third grade. Roni lives in Qiryat Bialik, this is almost part of Haifa now, but he works in Haifa and sells cosmetics.

Before 1989 the Jews who were members of the party were not usually allowed to have contacts with foreigners, even with their relatives. But the relatives from Israel were an exception because the party considered they survived Auschwitz.

So if my younger brother was in Sweden, I had an indirect contact with him, through my younger sister from Israel. I had information about my elder daughter through her husband's father, who was a doctor in Iasi.

In 1968 I decided I would go to Sweden. My brother sent me an invitation, because this was the only way. I went to the police and submitted a request for visiting my brother, who was living in Sweden.

Well, after 10 days I got the answer: 'Nu se aproba.' ['Request rejected.'] As soon as I received this notification, I took a sheet of paper and wrote the following on it [in Romanian]: 'Comrade commander, Hitler and Horthy destroyed my family.

Miraculously me and my brother survived. He is living in Sweden. I think the Socialist Republic of Romania is compelled to help me meet my brother after 26-27 years, and not to stop me. I sign this in hope of a favorable solution to the above.' No yours sincerely or something similar [as an ending to the letter].

After one week they called me and gave me my passport. Why do I know it was in 1968? Because I started off and when I arrived in Budapest, the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia. [The interviewee refers to the Prague Spring.] 17 The train stopped and no more trains were going anywhere.

I had nothing to do, so I met one of my friends in [Buda]Pest, called Tibor Frank. We were prisoners of war together. He came to the station and I went to his place, and on the next day there was a train coming to Romania, I took it and came back. When things calmed down, I went to the police again to request a permission to go.

'But you already were there, weren't you, comrade?' 'Yes, I was, but look how far I've got! Considering the events, I thought my place is with my family.' They approved it in the end and I managed to go to Sweden.

To tell you the truth, I was offered to emigrate to Israel already in 1948, shortly after I came home. another friend of mine, Bumi Waldmann, the one I saved his life, called me to emigrate to America.

He did and became a very wealthy man. But I thought I would not emigrate. I was very tired, I walked about for so long, and they told us here that if you work honestly, you would be appreciated.

Well, I didn't think I was dishonest or lazy, so I have no reason to leave, to run away. I would stay here. I was born here, this was my mother tongue, I finished school here, here I was feeling at home. This was my opinion then, so I stayed.

Then I got married, worked at a state enterprise, then I had children, I was able to educate them without money [Editor's note: they went to public schools, which was free], and I wanted to provide them a diploma and a decent living.

I wasn't sure I could do if I emigrated to Israel. Because Israel a capitalist country, at least that's what I thought, and everything had to be paid for. And I could only work honestly, and I didn't know if that was enough there. This is what I thought then. I was wrong.

Moreover, it takes more than just honesty and hard work. I was managing a company that was growing and had some concrete results, a fact they appreciated because I was always getting bonuses. I received bonuses a rector was getting, and only a very few had such luck every three months. I was.

I visited Israel for the first time in the 1960s. What do I think about it? Well, to be honest, everything I've seen was beautiful. But most of all I saw the beauty in having a place Jews could call their own. I didn't have this opinion at first.

Back then there was no radio, TV, they showed us nothing, they wrote what they wrote – everyone from their own perspective or according to their interest –, there were very few objective journalists.

I almost believed that the problem of the Jews would be settled by international law. Then I realized we were very far, as far as Mars. And I also realized that peoples had to have their own home and each of them should organize their home according to their best interests.

They should take into consideration the world that surrounds them! I can't say we can become independent, and I don't care, everybody should do as they please, and I'm doing just that. Interdependence (and not independence) should prevail, but, of course, as naturally as possible. But if you think this is not important, cut it.

When I saw how the construction works was carried out there and what vigor they had in every field! They showed me places that were a desert before, and by now they made banana fields and date fields there.

They have such forests, such beautiful things! People breed turkey by thousands here, while there, a man called Klein, originally from Szamosujvar, had 70 cows and told me the cow that does not give at least 35 l of milk is not a cow anymore, they don't use it on the dairy farm.

When I saw how they milked them! In other words the people others [Nazis] said are no good, built homes and agriculture. When I saw the food market and how it looked, that abundance!

This is done by a Jew with payes, that by a haberdasher, another one by, say, a wheeler. Then I thought to myself this has its magic, after all. And apart from that most of the people learned something after World War II.

Because that's the key to it! For us, including me, the important thing is not to cry and make you pity us. Don't pity us, don't! Take not of what happened and they should never happen again!

This should be told to Feri, Pista, Vasile, Lenuta, Marika [fictional Hungarian and Romanian names], and everyone should understand we should live in different circumstances, without any prejudice, but in mutual respect.

But I don't want to seem biased, because even though Israel has its beauty, but they have their wretches, as well. I know, I'm sure of it. Because even among the Jews there are, and unfortunately not in small numbers, people whom I would surely whip, and I would not stop after 25 lashes!

Because Jews are just like any other people. There are honest, talented people, but villains, as well. Therefore if one says Jew, but one doesn't see the human being behind the tag, one has already made a mistake.

I visited a beautiful little kibbutz, not too far from Haifa, called Dalia, as the flower. Once it was an agricultural kibbutz, but it became one of the largest chemical factories, and they make different chemicals, such as the best detergents and materials required for painting.

Joska Heisikovits [our paternal grandfathers were brothers], one of the founders of the kibbutz, told me once: 'Do you see this forest?' 'I do.' 'When we came here, it was a desert, full of rocks.

We gathered the rocks.' - and he showed me how they gathered the rocks in a pile, and then they made a long, almost endless fence from it. 'Back then we lived in wooden barracks.

Now imagine living in wooden barracks in this hot weather. There were scorpions and snakes everywhere. Now, as you can see, there's forest everywhere.' We walked towards the forest, and before we got it there was a beautiful large building. 'What's that?', I asked. 'That's a concert hall.' 'A concert hall?' 'Yes. From time to time the different philharmonic orchestras play here.

On those occasions we inform the surrounding kibbutzim and they come to the concert.' And then I saw their apartment, and how a kibbutz apartment looks like. The dimensions of the house depends on how large the family is. There are even four-room apartments there.

The smallest are the two-room apartments with a vestibule and a bathroom. Then he showed me the daycare and the elementary school. I saw the gymnasium. It is so big it can accommodate international competitions.

After I've seen all these things, we went to have lunch. It was a large restaurant-like building. There were different types of menus, and people from the kibbutz are assigned each day to serve and to do different things. Since then I was four or five times in Israel. I was there this year, as well.

The thought of emigrating to Israel came to me very late, only after I retired. In the meantime different things happened, such as family problems that prevented me from thinking about it earlier. Moreover, I even have the permission to settle there.

The state of Israel provides a free airplane ticket to anyone willing to emigrate. As soon as you arrive there, you are given the citizenship or you get a certain amount of money until they figure out what category they should assign you as retired. It's difficult for me to move there, though.

I was very afraid of the heat, I can't stand the heat. I don't know where would I move to, but I would have liked to be close to my daughter and sister. I saw the home for the older immigrants. Take my ex mother-in-law, for instance.

I visited her, he got a one-room apartment with vestibule and a bathroom in a hotel-like home not far from Naharyya, and she has a free meal, of course. There is a common dining hall where they eat in groups, the Hungarians, the Romanians or the French. Because Jews from 81 countries came there.

I had a discussion with a lady who came back from Israel. She was visiting her sons. Her husband was a chemist here and they are doing well there. She said: 'You know, there is something I don't like there: people are divided into Hungarian Jews, Romanian Jews, Russian Jews, or, for that matter, German Jews.'

'Look, dear lady, you are right if you don't like it, but you have to understand that a nation cannot reborn overnight, even if they are living in the same home. Because some come with a Spanish experience, customs, meals, while those who came from Hungary tend to favor the Hungarian taste, don't they?

Those who came from Ethiopia eat different meals and have different habits than those coming from Morocco, who are half-Arabs, and have Arab customs, clothing, are speaking a different language and eating habits.

But their children, the children of the Romanian Jews, the Hungarian Jews and any other Jews will attend the same school. They become friends, they can even fall in love, and they too can have children who will only speak Hebrew or English. And this is how the new nation will form and born again.'

In the past everyone used to celebrate at home, with their family. But now, my brother related me, because there are many old people's homes, they used to organize common dinners, as well.

And here in [Nagy]Banya there are common dinners organized at the Community. And what can I do at home [by myself] on a holiday [like Pesach]? Nothing. And there are others into he same situation, some twenty people. So we gather – guided and covered by the Center [the Association from Bucharest], and we all eat at the Community for seven days.

On Pesach there are eight free meals, the first one is in the first evening, and on the following seven days. And occasionally, on Saturdays, we have a snack after we come out from the Synagogue.

What does it include? There is a place at the table for each of us, and a glass of palinka, and some sandwiches, this and that. Then we have the traditional Jewish meal, the egg with onion - but not only eggs and onion, but with some oil and spiced up - and bread, then a glass of wine or beer, a cup of black coffee and some cookies.

This happens almost every Saturday. For example, two weeks ago I gave [on my own account] this to the people gathered there [the other members of the community]. It's not mandatory, but anyone who wishes to will announce the community in due time.

By the way, I introduced this custom here. And others are joining in, as well. On these occasions, if there is a leader who knows parts from the Talmud or [Jewish] history, and anything applying to the current situation, he may talk about it. But unfortunately we don't have such a person, they all died.

But they are happy if they receive the blessing called Kiddush. I'm doing this [common meal] at least four times a year. This costs at least five-six hundred thousand lei [13-15 Euro]. Because we are not many. In my case there is a very charming, nice lady, our warehouseman's wife, and she knows I live alone and offered to do all these things.

I just give her the money, bring the palinka, sugar, coffee, and sometimes even bread. But I'm buying caviar and prepare a slice or two of bread with it for everyone, and I also bring some processed cheese. So everyone gets around four slices of bread after the palinka. Anyway my intention is not to fatten people, but to create a nice atmosphere.

Here in Nagybanya there is a religious organization called Pro Iudaica. Its leader is a Hungarian man who graduated the theological college. His wife is Romanian. He is a very charming man.

Since they are Pro Iudaica followers, they sympathize and are familiar with the Jewish religion, and they organized a very, very nice performance based on the Esther story, and they once had the idea to invite the community to celebrate Purim.

They came to the president of the community, Shalik Nachman, but he was reluctant. But incidentally he asked my opinion. I said: 'Look here, Mr. Nachman, if nowadays someone reaches out a hand, you should grab it with both hands.'

They invited us to such a celebration – we don't have the means to organize such things, because we are lacking young people. So we had a reason more to go. And it was very nice. It was such a lovely performance that, I swear, I was moved to tears when I saw those little or bigger children in the choir singing Jewish songs.

How could it be? How could something like this happen? Because children were inoculated with anti-Semitism from birth, and here we had people doing the exact opposite, acknowledging these people.

Two weeks ago [around mid October 2004], on a Sunday, I heard that on the wall of the catholic church located at the entrance of the 'Nagyvarad park', they put a memorial tablet dedicated to the deeds of colonel Reviczky. That church was built by Jewish forced laborers.

Reviczky, in order to prevent them from being sent to the Ukraine, he tried to put people to work. I held once a photo in my hands, on which there were some forced laborers digging the foundation and removing the stones.

Reviczky saved lives! In the true meaning of the word. Therefore it should have been a street named after him here in Nagybanya, or at least a memorial tablet put on the house he was living in long ago. But they wouldn't do it.

I feel I have to say that it's a mistake to condemn the entire population. During World War II there were people like Reviczky, for example a man called Bela Racz, and many others.

And there are the anonymous heroes noone knows about because they were just villagers like that man from Szamosujvarnemeti. In 1946, after those Jews who were under his command as forced laborers came back, began to look for Reviczky.

They found out he was in [Buda]Pest and works on a coal-depot as worker, because as former officer his rank and rights weren't recognized. When these people found out this fact, they went straight to the Hungarian Communist Party, I don't know who was their leader then.

They considered this situation abnormal, and explained them this was an unfair treatment, because this man behaved entirely differently [during World War II]. Then he got back his rank as colonel and his apartment.

First they brought him here to Nagybanya, Nagyvarad and Kolozsvar, and celebrated him. In Israel, in the so-called 'Garden of the Righteous' [Yad Vashem] they even planted a beautiful tree as a homage to him. In addition, he received a monthly salary from the state of Israel.

He is not the only one. Naturally, anyone they know helped the Jews receives an allowance and appears in the records at the Yad Vashem, and in the 'Garden of the Righteous' there are pathways where trees were planted in their memory, and they received a monthly allowance so they could live decently.

So there were these kind of people, and one has to distinguish between them and those who were hitting, beating up or shooting Jews without any reason. Jews and non-Jew both must know that. One has to understand them and appreciate these deeds!

- **Glossary:**

1 Kulak (Chiabur in Romanian):. Between 1949-1959 peasants in Romania, who had 10-50 hectares of land were called kulaks, those who owned more than 50 exploiters. Their land was confiscated.

They were either expelled from their houses and deported to the Baragan Steppes and the Danube Delta, where they had to work under inhuman conditions, or they were discriminated in every possible way (by forcing them to pay impossibly high taxes, preventing their children from entering higher education, etc.).

2 Imre Reviczky (has to be translated from Hungarian):

3 Emigration vawe from Romanan between 1919–1923 (has to be translated from Hungarian)

4 Agrarian reform in Romania (1921): Specific laws were implemented by the Romanian agrarian reform for each region.

In Transylvania the corporate bodies serving public interests (congregations, foundations, universities, convents) as well as the absentees (those living in Hungary who owned Transylvanian lands) were dispossessed according to the 6th paragraph of the Transylvanian law.

In addition all the estates over 50 and 100 Hungarian acres (1 Hungarian acre is 0, 57 hectares) in mountainous and hilly districts, and over 200 acre in flatlands were expropriated as well.

5 1929 World Financial Crisis Financial Crisis: At the end of October 1929, there were worrying signs on the New York Stock Exchange in the securities market. On the 24th of October ("Black Thursday"), people began selling off stocks in a panic from the price drops of the previous days – the number of shares usually sold in a half year exchanged hands in one hour.

The banks could not supply the amount of liquid assets required, so people didn't receive money from their sales. Five days later, on "Black Tuesday", 16.4 million shares were put up for sale, prices dropped steeply, and the hoarded properties suddenly became worthless.

The collapse of the Stock Exchange was followed by economic crisis. Banks called in their outstanding loans, causing immediate closings of factories and businesses, leading to higher unemployment, and a decline in the standard of living.

By January of 1930, the American money market got back on it's feet, but during this year newer bank crises unfolded: in one month, 325 banks went under.

Toward the end of 1930, the crisis spread to Europe: in May of 1931, the Viennese Creditanstalt collapsed (and with it's recall of outstanding loans, took Austrian heavy industry with it). In July, a bank crisis erupted in Germany, by September in England, as well.

In Germany, in 1931, more than 19,000 firms closed down. Though in France the banking system withstood the confusion, industrial production and volume of exports tapered off seriously. The agricultural countries of Central Europe, were primarily shaken up by the decrease of export revenues, which was followed by a serious agricultural crisis.

Romanian export revenues dropped by 73 percent, Poland's by 56 percent. In 1933 in Hungary, debts in the agricultural sphere reached 2.2 billion Pengo. Compared to the industrial production of 1929, it fell 76 percent in 1932 and 88 percent in 1933.

Agricultural unemployment levels, already causing serious concerns, swelled immensely to levels, estimated at the time to be in the hundreds of thousands. In industry the scale of unemployment was 30 percent (about 250,000 people). (from Zoltan Kaposi, The History of 20thCentury Agriculture, Budapest, Dialog-Campus, 2004).

6 Barisia: Zionist youth organization under the rule of the Erdelyi Zsido Nemzeti Szovetseg (Transylvanian Jewish National Federation), which organized the Jewish youth without taking into consideration any ideological differences.

The Aviva girl-organization, the fellow organization of Barisia operated in the same way. Following the Transylvanian and Romanian example, other European countries founded their own Aviva and Barisia groups.

In 1939 the Transylvanian Barisia had 23 local organizations and 1,564 active members. Unlike other Zionist youth organizations, based on the idea of chaluc-training (chaluc means emigrant), Barisia emphasized the cultural and social aspect.

7 Hatikvah: Anthem of the Zionist movement, and national anthem of the State of Israel. The word 'ha-tikvah' means 'the hope'. The anthem was written by Naftali Herz Imber (1856-1909), who moved to Palestine from Galicia in 1882.

The melody was arranged by Samuel Cohen, an immigrant from Moldavia, from a musical theme of Smetana's Moldau (Vltava), which is based on an Eastern European folk song.

8 Keren Kayemet Leisrael (K.K.L.) in Romania: Jewish National Fund (JNF) founded in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel. From its inception, the JNF was charged with the task of fundraising in Jewish communities for the purpose of purchasing land in the Land of Israel to create a homeland for the Jewish people. After 1948 the fund was used to improve and afforest the territories gained.

Every Jewish family that wished to help the cause had a JNF money box, called the 'blue box'. They threw in at least one lei each day, while on Sabbath and high holidays they threw in as many lei as candles they lit for that holiday. This is how they partly used to collect the necessary funds. Now these boxes are known worldwide as a symbol of Zionism.

9 Aviva: Zionist youth organization under the rule of the Erdelyi Zsido Nemzeti Szovetseg (Transylvanian Jewish National Federation), which organized the Jewish girls without taking in consideration any ideological differences.

The Barisia-organization, the fellow organization of Aviva operated in the same way. Following the Transylvanian and Romanian example, other European countries founded their own Aviva and Barisia groups.

In 1926 the Transylvanian Aviva had 62 local organizations and 740 active members. Unlike other Zionist youth organizations, based on the idea of chaluc-training (chaluc means emigrant), Aviva emphasized the cultural and social aspect.

10 Uj Kelet (New East): Transylvanian Jewish political daily in the period between 1918-1940. The paper was published under the direction of Erdelyi Zsido Nemzeti Szovetseg (Transylvanian Jewish National Federation), and promoted Jewish nationalism, Zionism, culture and interests. It has been published in Tel-Aviv since 1948.

11 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.

12 Hungarian era (1940-1944): The expression Hungarian era refers to the period between 30 August 1940 - 15 October 1944 in Transylvania. As a result of the Trianon peace treaties in 1920 the eastern part of Hungary (Maramures, Crisana, 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 to 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 9th March 1945 when the Romanian administration was reintroduced in all the Western territories lost in 1940.

13 Iron Guard: Extreme right wing political organization in Romania between 1930 and 1941, led by C. Z. Codreanu. The Iron Guard propagated nationalist, Christian-mystical and anti-Semitic views.

It was banned for its terrorist activities (e.g. the murder of Romanian Prime Minister I. Gh. Duca) in 1933. In 1935 it was re-established as a party named Totul pentru Tara, 'Everything for the Fatherland', but it was banned again in 1938.

It was part of the government in the first period of the Antonescu regime, but it was then banned and dissolved as a result of the unsuccessful coup d'état of January 1941. Its leaders escaped abroad to the Third Reich.

14 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 October 15, 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.

15 Territorial reorganization in 1952: The new constitution adopted in 1952 declared Romania a country, which started to build up communism. The old administrative system was abolished, and the new one followed the Soviet pattern: the administrative partition of the country consisted of 18 regions ('regiune'), each of them subdivided into so called 'raions'.

In the same year the so-called Hungarian Autonomous Region was founded, a third of which was made up by the Hungarian inhabitants living in Romania.

The administrative center of this region was Targu Mures/Marosvasarhely, and it was subdivided into ten ‘raions’: Csik, Erdoszentgyorgy, Gyergyoszentmiklos, Kezdivasarhely, Marosheviz, Marosvasarhely, Regen, Sepsiszentgyorgy, Szekelyudvarhely.

16 Party clean-up in Romania (new, is not written yet)

17 Prague Spring: Designates the liberalization period in communist ruled Czechoslovakia between 1967-1969. In 1967 Alexander Dubcek became the head of the Czech Communist Party and promoted ideas of ‘socialism with a human face', i.e. with more personal freedom and freedom of the press, and the rehabilitation of victims of Stalinism.

In August 1968 Soviet troops, along with contingents from Poland, East Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria, occupied Prague and put an end to the reforms.