

# Jozsef Farkas

Des, Romania

Interviewer: Eموke Major

Date of interview: July – August 2005

*For the interview, I met with Jozsef Farkas at the headquarters of the Jewish Community in Des.*

*Since March 1996 he has been the president of the Jewish Community, and goes to work conscientiously every morning at 8am.*



*From the first meeting he seemed to be a calm, patient man.*

*I associated kindness to his white hair and small stature, and he confirmed these features during the interview.*

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## • My family background

I didn't know my family from my father's side. My grandfather's name was Alexander Farkas. My paternal grandparents had passed away before I was born. From what my father related about them, I think they lived in Jaravize [50km north-west of Torda], and their children were also born there.

My father had many siblings: they were four brothers and four sisters. One of the four brothers, Armin Farkas, lived in Torda, where he was a carrier, and had a lorry. He had three daughters and a son, but after my father died in 1945, he immigrated to Israel with his family and we lost touch. Another brother was Hermann Farkas. He lived in Lupeny, but I didn't know him. The fourth brother was Gero Farkas. He immigrated to America after World War I, in the 1920s, with his four sisters. As far as I remember their names were Veronka Farkas, Gizi Farkas, Vilma Farkas, and I don't know the other one's name. I never met them, and I don't know anything about them.

I remember after the war, when the whole country was in rags and tatters, and my American uncle found out that his brother, i.e. my father, had died, he sent some winter clothes for us. Back then, immediately after the war, it was possible to send packages from America, as there wasn't any communism yet. There was a winter coat in the package. I remember that because I wore that coat for at least 30-40 years, it was in such a good condition. It was dark blue, very smooth, made from fine material, and a genuine English product.

My father, Mendel Farkas, was born in 1889 in Jaravize, and age-wise he was somewhere in the middle among his siblings. I think Gero and two of his sisters were older than my father. But I don't know exactly, because I didn't know them. My father fought as a soldier in World War I <sup>1</sup>, and after that he came home and got acquainted with my mother, but I don't know anything more about their situation. Besides my few positive features, well, I have several bad habits. One of them is that I never ask questions. Anything people say I memorize, but I never ask questions.

My maternal grandparents lived in Torda. My grandfather, Jozsef Deutsch, died around 1928-29, before I was born. As a tribute, all the boys in the family were named Joska [Jozsef]. He's buried in the Jewish Cemetery in Torda, right beside my father. I knew my maternal grandmother, Regina Deutsch. She was quite religious: she observed the kosher rules and always made sure we didn't bring any treyf things into the house, such as bacon or other forbidden things. She didn't cut her hair, and tied it up with a muslin shawl only when she went to the synagogue. She lived with her daughter Edit's family. She did the housekeeping until she was physically unable. After the war my grandmother went to Marosujvar [Ocna Mures in Romanian, 24km south of Torda] to Lajos Deutsch [one of my mother's brothers], and she died there. My father died on 6th March 1945, while my grandmother died two days later in Marosujvar.

There were three brothers [in the family]: Lajos Deutsch, Kalman Deutsch, Samu Deutsch, and they had a younger sister, Edit Deutsch. Lajos Deutsch lived in Marosujvar, he married the daughter of a Jewish miller and, since he was the man, he managed the mill. His wife was Mancsi, and they had a son and daughter. The daughter's name was Noemi, but I don't remember the boy's name. They were both younger than me. After World War II they immigrated to Israel, the children settled there. Later, Lajos Deutsch came back to Torda and he died there in the early 1950s.

Kalman Deutsch had a liquor or wine warehouse in Szekelyudvarhely. He lived there with his family: his wife and two children, a daughter, and son whose name was Joska. They were deported to Auschwitz [today Poland] and none of them came home. Samu Deutsch lived in Torda, and his son's name was also Joska [Jozsef] Deutsch. After the war he immigrated to Israel with his wife and son, and died there.

Edit Deutsch was the wife of Jenő Hertzlinger, a Jewish pharmacist. They lived in Torda, close to the place where we moved during the war. They had a son, who was born on the same day as me, and his first name was Joska, too: two mothers gave birth to sons on the same day, and gave them the same name. They also had a daughter, Lili, who was three years younger than me. Joska ran away from his parents in 1945 and immigrated to Israel. He changed his name to Josef Shanani. He's still alive. Israel doesn't compel one to keep their name. When people made mass aliyah, it was even possible for people to change their birth date. They recorded whatever people said. When one arrived there, and he wanted another name, he could change it.

Here too, in the Jewish cemetery, the first name of the deceased is written in Hebrew on the gravestone, together with the first name of his father. For example, my first name is Joska and my father's is Mendel. Then my name would be something like Josef ben Mendel, and not Josef Farkas. This rule also applies to the girls. Sarah, the daughter of Menachem is Sarah bat Menachem. And based on this rule, in Israel it was possible to register whatever name one liked. For example, I had a girlfriend called Kirschenbaum who immigrated from Torda. It was pretty hard to register the name Kirschenbaum in Israel. And she registered herself as Duvdevani. This means Kirschenbaum,

cherry tree, in Hebrew. Lili Deutsch lives in Israel too, in Rehovot. She's Lili Huszar, after her husband, and they have a daughter.

My pharmacist uncle, Jeno Hertzlinger, was an illegal communist. He went mad when he saw the deceit of communism. They tried to organize the communist party then [between the wars]. There were a few illegal communists in the alkali works from Torda, but in the glass factory as well. After 23rd August 2, they promoted my uncle and he became an activist. They transferred him to Kolozsvár, and then from there to Felsötómos [Timișu de Sus in Romanian, 20km south of Brăso], where he became the manager of a 'casa de odihnă' [holiday home] of the 'Comitet Central' [Central Committee]. From there he was transferred to Bucharest and appointed executive manager of the Elias hospital. A man called Elias owned this hospital and he donated it to the Romanian state. It was a large hospital, and before 1989 it was the exclusive hospital of the communist leaders. Once the mother or father of some big shot died, and since there was nobody there, they called my uncle to go with the man. They entered the dissecting-room and could hardly recognize the corpses.

Accidentally, my uncle showed him a different corpse. So they started searching and finally found the right one. The Central Committee found out and fired him. That was why he literally went mad, and became schizophrenic. In a few words, communism was cruel. As noble as it was in theory, just as cruel was its implementation. My cousin, his son, Joska, came home from Israel and visited him in the hospital, but he didn't recognize his son. He spent some time in the madhouse, as well, but he was mainly taken care of at home. He died in Bucharest around 1985-86, and after that his wife and daughter immigrated to Israel, in 1987. My aunt, Edit Hertzlinger, died approximately five years ago [around 2000].

My mother, Fanus Deutsch, was probably the eldest among her siblings. She was born in 1893 in Torda. My mother had a good sense of humor. She was a very jolly person. My mother told me that after she got married, and I don't know in what conditions, her husband couldn't take it anymore and they got divorced. This happened during World War I. My parents met after my father demobilized from the army after World War I and came home, and they got married around 1918, because my elder sister was born in 1920. My mother took care of and raised all their three children, my elder sister, me and my younger brother. She gave us everything she had. She had beautiful handwriting, not like mine, much more beautiful. She finished only four grades of middle school [i.e. she finished four grades of elementary school and four grades of middle school].

My sister, Eva Farkas, was born in 1920. She became Eva Marton after her marriage. She finished elementary school in Torda, and then graduated from the commercial high school from Nagyvárad, because the confessional commercial high school was there. She was like my father and me: quiet and calm. She got married right after my father's death. Her husband's name was Erno Marton, and as far as I know he was originally from Marosújvár. His parents were timber merchants and he took up the same profession. Since I've known him he's worked in the timber industry. In Kolozsvár there was an office called 'Com Lemn' [lemn means wood, timber in Romanian], which was later attached to the ICRM, and he worked there. My sister was an accountant. They immigrated to Israel in 1958. My brother-in-law's mother died in Torda, and his father and elder sister immigrated to Israel after the war.

My brother-in-law requested a family reunification, and he obtained it, together with my sister, who had no children. They lived in Petah Tiqwa, and they were the employees of a union association. I think my brother-in-law worked as a statistician and my sister was chief accountant until she retired. My sister died on 22nd August 1994. She went by car to the market to do some shopping, and when she got out of the car, no one knows why, she fell and hit her head. They took her to the hospital, but she was in a deep coma. My brother then called to tell me what had happened. With the help of my daughter we immediately managed to get me train and air tickets, and I flew on a Thursday and while I was on the plane, my sister died. I was at her funeral, which was on Friday morning, as there were no burials on Friday afternoons because of the Sabbath. But nobody knew the cause of her death: heart attack, the heat, stroke, fell out of the car, stumbled on something –nobody knew what had happened.

My brother, Imre Farkas, was born on 14th November 1931. My brother was a little bit unruly, like our mother. And he was also incredibly witty. He didn't have too much education, but he wrote more beautifully than me: he had beautiful handwriting. He finished four elementary grades in the confessional school, and four grades in the Romanian middle school. That was after 23rd August [1944]. But he never wanted to study, and became a tractorist, and later he studied the art of a locksmith, and welding. He had just turned 18 when he got married. His wife Ibi [Ibolya] Fisher was two years older than him, she was my age. She was born in 1929. She was 16 when she was freed from Auschwitz, and she came back to Torda.

I know that when my brother went home and told my mother he had gotten married –my mother threw him out of the house. Then they went away and I think they lived for a while in Kolozsvár near the Tranzit house [on the banks of the Szamos River] in a room of a poorly built house. Then, after a while, my mother accepted them in the family house and they moved back to Torda. My brother worked in the fire-brick factory called Proletarul. It was near the cement factory. He worked in the maintenance department. He was a locksmith-welder until 1966, when he immigrated to Israel. They had three children, but unfortunately two of them died. The first child was a girl called Vera. She died when she was four years old. I don't know the cause of her death, she died in the hospital. Then came a boy, who died when he was three weeks old, I know that he got dehydrated, although a famous pediatrician from Kolozsvár treated him. Only the third child, Palika, managed to live. He was born in 1952, he is exactly ten years older than my daughter, and they are the only cousins in the family who keep in touch. Pali has two children: a son and daughter.

Imre had very hard work in the factory in Torda, and with three or four of his colleagues he began drinking. He became quarrelsome, and had many problems. When he came home drunk, he used to say he would take the knife because he wanted to drink 'Valachian blood.' My mother broke down, of course, when she heard all this. She called me on the phone from Torda –I lived in Des already –and she asked me to go to Torda because Imre got drunk again and I was to solve the problem. And I went right away. Then the family decided, after my sister immigrated to Israel, to send him to Israel, because it was too hot there for drinking. And so it happened. He immigrated with his family on 26th March 1966, and they settled in Kefar Sava, 15 kilometers from Petah Tiqwa. My mother immigrated with my brother to Israel because she lived with them [in Torda], and there was the grandchild whom my mother adored. And my mother died in Israel after six months and six days, because she couldn't tolerate the climate. She's buried in Israel, in Kefar Sava. My brother was a blocker, pneumatic blocker in Israel, at the metallurgic department of a factory. He had an

accident in 1981 or 1982. The brake of a relief press failed and crushed one of his hands. After that he couldn't use his hand in his profession as two of his fingers were numb: he wasn't able to bend them. He did easier work until he died. First, I think they hired him as a guard in the same factory, but later he got away from there.

My brother died on 19th May 2002. I went there also, my brother was already buried, but I recited the Kaddish for him and sat shivah, as they called it, those seven days, with my sister-in-law and her son. They put a mattress on a board on which we sat. On these occasions people sit on the ground, not in a comfortable position, and if they had corn-husk [corn-blade] they put it on the floor, laid and covered it, and then sat on it. They don't sit in armchairs or chairs. Relatives and visitors come and go on these occasions. Another strict ritual thing is that if someone dies in the morning, he or she must be buried in the afternoon. And there isn't enough time to notify people. That's why there is the gravestone unveiling 30 days later. During these 30 days they are able to notify everyone, and more people go to the gravestone unveiling rather than to the funeral. I was present at my brother's gravestone unveiling. On this occasion there comes a chazzan who says the prayer and unveils the gravestone. The family lights a candle, and nowadays people bring flowers. This was forbidden before. My mother, brother and sister are all buried in Israel.

### • Growing up

I was born on 4th October 1929 in Kolozsvár, in the Matyas Matyas clinic. I got the name József Sándor after my two grandfathers, Alexander Farkas and József Deutsch. According to our ritual, every newborn boy can adopt the name of his deceased grandfather. We lived in Torda, I grew up there. After my sister was born, my father went to work in America to make some money. This was quite common then. Many people from Transylvania [3](#) went to America. Some of them remained there, and some returned. He worked there for four or five years, and when he got home, he bought the house we lived in. I was born later. Our house in Torda was on Avram Iancu Street, at No. 19. This is the main road if coming from Kolozsvár, before the Catholic Church and theater. It was a family house with five rooms, a kitchen, a bathroom and a pantry. There were two separate small rooms, probably built as doctor's offices. There also was an underground apartment and many cellars. The furnishing of the house was classic. In the bedroom there were two beds, side by side, opposite to them there were two closets. We lived in the same room with my brother, but we had separate beds: sofas. We had a large yard and garden. In the garden we had vegetables, many flowers and fruit-trees. In the yard we had a seesaw. We used to play Nine Men's Morris, and dominoes. I don't remember the other games, I just remember that I had no bicycle, but my friends did. I had always envied them. And in the end it wasn't even possible because my father died. And I used my friends' bicycles.

I became an orphan at the age of 15. The things I can remember, related to my father, happened during those years. He was a much disciplined clerk. He was the chief clerk in the ceramic factory in Torda, called Ceramic Factory of Aranyosgyeres [Industria de lut Giris-Aries in Romanian]. This belongs to Aranyosgyeres, formerly called Giris-Aries [today Campia Turzii in Romanian], and old people call it that even today. My father was a traveling salesman also. He took me along about two times where he was dispatched. The company rented a car, and we roamed here and there. I remember exactly when we visited Des: we even spent a night here. From here we went to Nagybánya, and wherever the factory had a tile depot, we stopped. He also took my brother along. We were very young then. He was very calm and thorough. I probably inherited many of his

characteristics because I wasn't unruly or short-tempered. I manage to keep my cool.

My father was a true Zionist, and I found out later that he secretly sponsored Keren Kayemet Leisrael [4](#). The Keren Kayemet was a money box where people put money used mostly for planting trees in Israel. This money box was always hidden in the house, so that the authorities couldn't find it. A delegate came occasionally and emptied it. After I finished the seventh grade in the Jewish confessional school, the teacher had already told us about it and only then I realized what was going on. As for politics, my poor father died politically independent: he wasn't attracted by the right, or left.

According to the current conditions, my family can be considered as half religious. In a word, they didn't wear beards or payes, but they weren't atheists. The women from the family didn't wear short hair. They covered their heads with a muslin shawl only when they went to the synagogue, because that was the ritual in the prayer house. But they didn't wear a shawl at home or on the street. In our home, especially while my father was still alive, candle lighting on Friday evening was a rule, and so were the Friday and Saturday suppers. They strictly observed the Sabbath as far as baking challah and cooking chulent was concerned, i.e. both in terms of food and candle lighting. For Saturday my mother always cooked meat-soup and as a second dish we ate the meat which was boiled in the soup, and used to eat chulent, as well. At first there was someone who lit the fire on Saturdays in our house, but later my parents did it. My father always went to the synagogue on Saturdays and holidays, and we, the boys, went with him. He had his own seat in the synagogue, it was earned by bidding, and each year one had to buy their seat. My mother had a kosher household until the war, but bit by bit she gave it up. My father died, and then the rituals and kosher household stopped. There wasn't even a shochet after the war in Torda.

Purim is a high holiday, exactly 30 days before Easter. The essence is that a daughter of a king, Esther, saved the Jewry. She pulled some strings around the royal family, because there was a man called Haman who wanted to exterminate all the Jews, but Esther saved them. This is the essence why Purim became a high holiday. On this occasion children used to wear fancy dresses, and when we were children, we used to get together in the yard of the synagogue. Each family cooked and baked, they baked many pastries, and this too symbolized the high holiday.

I remember that we also had that ritual in our family with different utensils for Pesach, and we kept them in a separate fach [Editor's note: 'fach' is a German word. It means compartment or shelf] in the loft. This meant that there was a place in the loft, enclosed with wiring and locked, and we only kept the Pesach utensils there. My mother didn't let anything else be put there. And before Pesach, my mother used to take all the utensils from the house into the cellar, and she brought down the Pesach utensils from the loft. If, by accident, some utensils were missing, she burnt them out in the stove [those we used daily] in order to be able to use them at Pesach. And at the end of the holiday, she gathered and washed them, and we took them back to the loft. The foundation of Pesach was the matzah. It must be started by removing any kind of bread from the house, and during Pesach people are only allowed to eat matzah. While my father was still alive we used to observe Seder eve at home.

Sometimes Aunt Edit and my grandmother were with us, but we had no guests from outside during holidays. We always celebrated it at our home, because our house was bigger. It was part of the ritual that we had bitter herbs, horseradish or parsley. There were potatoes, boiled eggs and some



vegetables, green onion or radish: we had to eat these on Seder eve. And they always gave us a little glass of wine; we had to drink a little wine after each prayer on that evening. They gave the children, as well, but they didn't drink it. Not even the adults drank it, because drinking wasn't a habit in the family, they only drank for the ritual's sake. The children's joy was the afikoman: the adults hid it first [they put it away], then the children had to find it, steal it and then [after the supper] they ate it. We had to wash our hands several times during the supper, there was a bowl prepared for this.

Yom Kippur was the highest holiday. It was a general fast then. In the evening my father blessed the supper, and then we ate. Then we went to the synagogue, came back, and didn't eat or drink anything until the next evening, until the stars came up. And most of the people spent the day in the synagogue. There was a typical Jewish supper the next evening. We had false fish for a side-dish, they looked like dumplings, but it was made from poultry breast. They minced the poultry breast and mixed it with vegetables; it was very delicious. Then there was meat-soup with boiled meat, with chulent.

Nowadays, I could see it, especially because I've traveled to Israel many times, the bar mitzvah has become as important as a hatuna [wedding ceremony]. They make such a fuss about it. In my time it was almost nothing, formerly everything went strictly according to the rituals. I remember we used to go to the synagogue, and I had to read a part of the Torah which I had to learn in advance; the chazzan taught me and that was all. There wasn't any celebration at home. This happened in 1942. This used to take place when the boys turned 13, because according to the Jewish laws, a Jew became an adult after he turned 13, not 18. The Jewish boys were taken to the synagogue for pre-prayer only after they turned 13, to be part of the minyan. I had my own tefillin, my father taught me to tie it, because I had to wear it every time I went to the synagogue after my bar mitzvah.

There was a famous rabbi in Torda [in my childhood]: Dr. Albert Wesel. He later became the chief rabbi of Transylvania. Everyone expected the rabbi from Szatmar to be elected, because it was tradition, but Wesel was a very well-known scientist and in the end he was chosen. [The chief rabbi, Albert Wesel, who, by his wisdom, consideration and noble thinking took the lead of the official regional orthodox organization, i.e. he's the president of the national orthodox organization since 1932, before assuming the leadership of the Transylvanian Jewish religious community, founded an association including ten counties from Transylvania. Machike Hadat, goals: deepening the religious life. He supported the Talmud Torahs of the poorer communities and the religious institutions. Imre Szabo, the Jews from Transylvania, Kadima publishing house, Cluj, 1938, p.224.] He died around 1943-44. He was the rabbi of Torda until then. His son-in-law, Adler, became rabbi after that; he married one of Wesel's daughters. Another one of his daughters, Szarah or Szuri, tutored me in German, but she had a few more sisters and brothers. I used to go to their place; the rabbi's house was in the yard of the synagogue. It wasn't a big house: they had two or three rooms. She tutored several children. There were occasions when we were two or three at the same time. I think her parents pushed here to do this. We had to pay for this, of course.

There was a mikveh in Torda, but we never went there. We had a bathroom at home and weren't that religious to consider it necessary. There was also a kosher slaughterhouse in Torda, behind the yard of the synagogue. We called it 'sakteraj,' and we used to take our poultry there to be slaughtered. It was a classic slaughterhouse, but only for poultry. There were hangers and a floor-drain for the blood. People used to take there all kinds of poultry: hens, chickens, turkeys, geese

and ducks, to be slaughtered. People also used to take their calves. Cattle were slaughtered at the town slaughterhouse, but also by a shochet. We had chickens, geese, ducks and turkeys at home. The servant used to take them there and bring them back [from the shochet's place]. Before World War II my mother always had a help at home: a servant. An older spinster was the servant for a while. She lived in the underground dwelling. There was a period when we had a young girl originally from Gyorgyfalva and she had a special bed in the kitchen. During the daytime it was used as a table, and when it was extended, it became a bed. We had several servants [in time].

There were far fewer Jews in Torda than in Des, but, nevertheless, the synagogue was full all the time. It's true that the synagogue in Torda was much smaller than the one in Des. As far as I remember, there were approximately 400 Jews in Torda. [Editor's note: Imre Szabo mentioned 200 community members in his work quoted above.] But there is no community life now in Torda. They are attached to Kolozsvár, and a more than 90-year-old doctor lives there, and maybe two other people. The sexton from Torda had the most accurate record about the Jewish community there as he knows by name where people are buried and what their occupation was. The sexton is a Romanian man, younger than me, and has a very interesting name. His name is Porcila. He inherited this job from his father. I knew his father, too. There's a rule in the Jewry that they pay for the sexton's house and taxes, and he only pays for the utilities: gas, electricity and water. There are specific rules related to the cemetery, for example, it's forbidden to go to the cemetery on Sabbath.

We had a custom, before the war, of course, which during the war had spread: the Jewish boys who came from the countryside to school in Torda used to eat each day at a different family and they didn't have to pay for the meal. There were two boys who came to eat at our place. One of them came on Sunday, the other on Tuesday. They ate the same food as we did, and they ate well, thank God. We, the children, were on very good terms with them, they used to stay after dinner and we used to play together. One of the boys, Markovits, I don't remember his first name, was originally from Rod [today Reditu, 20km north of Torda]. The other one, Goldstein, was originally from Jara [today Iara, 30km west of Torda].

There were very interesting stories related to this. In 1945, at the age of 15, my cousin, Joska Hertzlinger, who was born on the same day as me, left his parents and ran away with Markovits; the boy who used to eat at our house. And, very strangely, through Italy, I don't know how, by some ships, they got to Israel. That was part of the British Empire then, and they were captured and put in jail. In the end, they were released and my cousin went to a kibbutz, while the other boy joined the army. He had managed to climb his way through the army, it seems that he was a natural at it, and advanced very well and became a general. In the end he became ramatkal: chief of the general staff of Israel. It's a rule in Israel, that every position is time-limited, and when this expires, there is no possibility to extend that. When his term was over, he became the military attache of the embassy in Washington, where Yitzhak Rabin was the ambassador. After he came home, I spoke to him through my cousin. He lived his life in such conditions. In Israel he changed his name to Manachen Maron and he still uses this name.

The other boy, who was originally from Jara, became deeply religious. One time we went with my cousin to Haifa, his wife was employed in a factory there, and we went to see her. Someone rushed to me, 'Hi Joska...' and so on ... I got scared and said, 'Tell me, why do you think we are on such good terms?' He then said, 'Don't you remember that I used to eat at your place every Tuesday?'



He was working in that factory as the meshgiah: ritual supervisor. This position also exists in the canteen in Kolozsvár.

I entered the Romanian kindergarten, and parallel to that I went to the Jewish confessional kindergarten, as well. There was a confessional elementary school there, and this had an office, then there was the cheder, where we learned only Judaism. I attended that, too. I finished elementary school in the confessional school, where we learned everything in Romanian. The teacher was a Jewish man: Uncle Grossman. He was our teacher in all the four grades. He was also the headmaster. I finished elementary school there, in good circumstances. This happened exactly in 1940. Then I took the exams for the commercial high school in Torda, I was in the top four. One of my classmates, the son of a printer, was better than me, and we knew that he had graduated with nine marks. There were four of us with 8.66. But there were two pupils, one of them was the son of a general, and the other the son of a colonel, and they jumped ahead of us with 9.66 and 9.33, respectively. And when they posted the results, there was my result of 8.66, but they didn't admit me because in the meantime the anti-Jewish laws [5](#) had been adopted.

Then they extended the Jewish confessional school to seven grades. If one wasn't admitted to high school, he/she could continue the studies there. A new teacher came, she taught the fifth, sixth and seventh grades. Her name was Magda Frenkel, and she was Jewish. She was a small, short, crippled woman, and a spinster. But she was very smart, and taught all the disciplines. I attended the confessional school for three more years, between 1940 and 1943, so I finished the seven grades. A few parents gathered then, and in 1943 we took the exams for a confessional high school in Temesvár.

We were four, and one of the parents came with us. I remember there was a girl called Eszter Goro, she was older than me, but I prompted her in geography. We stayed in a hotel, went to the high school from there, and they examined us at the school. It took a few days, because we had to be examined for each subject, in Romanian. There they allowed us to pass the examination for the first and second grade of middle school [corresponding to the fifth and sixth grades today].

In the 1943-44 school years I was at home and preparing to go to Temesvár for the examination from the third grade of middle school. But in the meantime the events of 23rd August 1944 took place and they let me pass the examination of the third grade of middle school in the commercial high school in Torda, by extramural studies. And based on that, in the fall I was able to enter the fourth grade, and I finished the fourth and fifth grades in the commercial high school. And after my father died, I had to leave school again, because I started to work. But in the meantime I finished the sixth, seventh and eighth grades of the high school [this corresponds to the 10th - 12th grades today] through extramural studies, and I graduated in 1949.

One of my best friends in Torda was Juliusz Abraham. He was older than me and we had another friend, Emil Taub, who was between us age-wise. Abraham was born in 1927, Emil Taub in 1928, and I in 1929. We did all kinds of dirty tricks together, what else could young people do? We played sports: we used to swim and played table tennis. We used to go to the salt-bath in Torda, which was a very famous, old salt-bath. There was a huge cool water basin there, and for a while there was thermal bath also. We didn't go bathing to the Aranyos River, because we were afraid.

We were afraid especially between 1940 and 1944, because we never knew when we would get a beating. We could have met anyone, and if they felt like it, they could beat us. And our parents

didn't advise us to go to the Aranyos. We used to go to the salt-bath, which was enclosed and people had to buy a ticket to get in, and there were cabanas there as well. Juliusz Abraham became an engineer, and lives in New York. He has a son who is almost 40, but he doesn't want to get married. Abraham laments over this every time. During the time I spent at my daughter's place, I contacted him through the Internet, and later I spoke to him over the phone. Emil Taub immigrated to Germany and died in Cologne, I think.

My mother tongue is Hungarian; we used to speak in Hungarian at home, because both my parents attended Hungarian schools. We [the children] attended Romanian schools, so we spoke fluent Hungarian and Romanian. And in the meantime, I learned Yiddish in the hajder [cheder]. It seems I inherited the gift for languages from one of my ancestors, because when I was a student, I also learned German with the rabbi's daughter, Szarah Wesel. And so I knew German, too. I also studied French in school. And this turned out to be very helpful. While traveling abroad, I was never alone, I was always with a group, and they never had to send an interpreter with me, because I interpreted in French and German for the whole delegation. My daughter has the same gift. She speaks Romanian, Hungarian, Hebrew, English and French. And my grandchild knows almost all these languages, too.

#### • During the war

We lived in Torda during the war. The following happened during the war. At first we lived in our house, but then the requisitions began. They considered we had some places we didn't use. And since these weren't used, they requisitioned them in order to ensure lodgings for the Romanian Army. And they accommodated an army-surgeon in our two small rooms; this happened around 1938-1939. I remember his name was Traian Dumitrescu and he was a colonel. He also had access to the kitchen, and had a private, called 'ordonanta' [in Romanian], who cooked for him. There was nothing we could do, we had to acknowledge all this and stand at attention.

Then in 1940 or 1941, right after the Hungarians occupied Kolozsvar [see Second Vienna Dictate] [6](#), the border was at the Felek [Editor's note: between 1940 and 1944 Torda belonged to Romania, the border was approximately 20km from Torda]. They threw us out of our house because they established the CNR [Centrul National de Romanizare - the National Centre of Romanization] in our house. This organization addressed the problems of the refugees who came back from Hungary. We rented a house on the other side of the Aranyos River. I remember the owner had ten houses: five of them on one street and five on the backstreet, and he rented those ones, so we were able to rent one of them. We stayed there until the end of the war. Right after the takeover, when Antonescu [7](#) came to power, my father lost his job because he was a Jew [8](#). He fell sick then, around 1943. Of course this worried him, and only aggravated his condition.

When the legionaries [9](#) started the 'rebeliune' [rebellion in Romanian] on 22nd-23rd January 1941, the authorities considered them rebels, and anywhere there was any disorder, they didn't hesitate. The gendarmerie from Torda also shot a man dead during the rebellion, at the haymarket. There was a square on the current road towards the Torda Gorge where they shot a man in the head for I don't know what reason. As far as I remember his name was Coman.

There weren't too many legionaries in Torda then, but they tried to do everything against the Jews. They hung printed publications on the stores: 'Atentiune, magazin jidovesc!' [Attention, Jewish store!]. They tortured some people only because they had a beard and payes. There were some

anti-Semitic manifestations. When we went to school, there was always a group of pupils from the apprentice school, coming from or going, and they used to beat us everyday because we were Jews.

After liberation one of them became my friend and I asked him, 'Hey you, why did you beat me up everyday?' He answered, 'That was the custom then.' They had an educator who was an earnest legionary, he made them report how many Jews they had beaten up, and so they had to beat us everyday. So he wasn't hostile at all, but he used to do this. His name was Ioan Ros, and in the end we became friends. But he became a district attorney, then a public prosecutor of Sebes and Szaszvaros, and later the deputy public prosecutor of Deva, and finally the Secretarul Sfatului Regional Deva [Secretary of the regional council from Deva].

I wasn't aware of the Northern-Transylvanian situation because my father fell sick and our only problem was how to save him. My mother treated my father, my sister was at school in Nagyvarad, and we, the two boys, managed the household. We did the shopping, cleaned up, cooked, did the dishes, washed, we practically did everything to ease my mother's burden. My father received some kind of an allowance from the factory, but even then my mother had to sell things from the house. We had very many nice and precious silver candlesticks, and she sold those.

But in Torda we were witnesses to some secret things. Once, when I was ready to go to Israel, this teacher, Magda Frenkel, sent me word to visit and talk to her, because she felt that she was going to die. I always really appreciated her, so I went to Kolozsvar. She moved there from Torda after the war, and lived there in the Gyorgyfalva district. She said, 'Joska, do you remember I didn't let you in that room?' She mentioned a room from the school. I answered, 'Well, miss, I remember, but you know, I never ask questions. You told me not to enter, so I didn't go in there.' Then she said, 'Well, you should know that there was a secret printing shop, where they used to print passports which were taken by others via Ajton [Aiton, 18km north of Torda] from Torda to Kolozsvar, to save Jews. This was the reason why I didn't let you in. 'These passports were smuggled mainly by the people who were working at the Cerc Teritorial [Regional Office]. This is how they called the office where young soldiers were recruited.

Among others, the cousin of my friend, Abraham, called Jakob Abraham, who was older than me, smuggled some of these passports. Every border had to be passed illegally. Once they caught him, took him to prison, they had him before the court and sentenced him to death. He managed to escape because the events of 23rd August 1944 took place, and he was absolved. Eszter Goro, the girl I took an examination in 1943 with, was also involved in saving the Jews. There were two pathways where Jews used to flee: one of them was near Torda Szentlaszlo [Savadisla, 23km south-east of Kolozsvar] and the other near Ajton. There were honest villagers who saved the Jews during the night.

Then they went to Israel via Bucharest.

The actual war began on 30th August 1944, when the Hungarians and Germans came in and reached Nagyenyed [Aiud, 37km south of Torda]. After the Hungarians came in, we had to wear the yellow star [10](#) for 37 days and a curfew was imposed on us. There were no such things before. That period was very tense. People feared each other. First we didn't know who these cock feathered people were, but we feared them very much, and always ran away from them. They were very nasty, if they didn't like something, they immediately began to beat and hit people.

When the Hungarians came in, and the Romanians blew up the Aranyos Bridge, the bridge gave way and the Hungarians built a pontoon bridge. An enormity took place there. The Hungarian authorities sent a squad of forced laborers there to build the bridge. They cut down stumps for the bridge from the park nearby, and one time a big stump tumbled on two forced laborer boys. One of them was 18, and the other 25. And they weren't dead yet, when the commander, who was probably an ensign, ordered immediately to put them in sacks and they were buried right there. They weren't even dead yet. Then, in March-April 1945, a few young men from Torda exhumed them, and took them to the cemetery and buried them there.

Torda was liberated on 4th October 1944. The Hungarians and Germans retreated and the Romanians and Russians came in. They bombed Torda from two directions. The Hungarians and Germans from Kolozsvar, while the Romanians and Russians from Nagyenyed. Torda is in a valley, and the two armies bombed it from above, so Torda was in ruins.

### • After the war

At that time we were 15 and thought that we had been liberated. Until 1947 I was a member of a Zionist youth organization called Gordonia [11](#), with its headquarters close to our house, and we enjoyed our freedom. What did we do there? We sang, danced and went on excursions. I remember there were other youth organizations in Torda: the Dror Habonim [Editor's note: Jewish Zionist organization, mostly active in Iasi, Moldova, and the eastern part of Romania in the 1930s], the Hashomer Hatzair [12](#), and there was another one called Betar [13](#), but I only saw them a few times.

The Hashomer Hatzair, the Dror Habonim and the Gordonia belonged to the left-wing, and the Betar to the right-wing, according to the current views. They organized excursions and entertainments also. And, of course, each of them recruited young people to go to Israel. For example, there were these sheliachs, messengers from Israel, who explained how the youth could educate themselves in Israel. Some of the people accepted these conditions, and others didn't.

In 1944, after the liberation, we moved back to our house, because the former measures had been annulled. The furniture was still in the house, but part of it was damaged, but we repaired it. We had to change the tiles, because the roof fell in. And then, I went with my cousin, who was born on the same day as me, Joska Hertzlinger, to the tile factory in Gyeres and brought a carriage full of tiles. They gave us some because my father used to work there. And we repaired the roof.

Unfortunately, my father perished at the age of 55, he couldn't be saved. We took him everywhere, but before the liberation we couldn't go towards Kolozsvar. [Editor's note: because between 1940 and 1944 Kolozsvar was under Hungarian authority.] We lived in Torda, and after the liberation my mother took him to Szeben, because the hospital for Kolozsvar was in Szeben then. Between 1940 and 1944 the Romanian doctors moved to Szeben, but they sent them back because the diagnosis was stomach cancer, which killed him. He died on 6th March 1945.

After my father's death, they moved another Jewish family into our house. But we were on very good terms with them, there weren't any problems. There's a poet in Temesvar, Adam Anavi, he's around 96-97. His original name was Feri Frucht. And this Frucht family moved in with us. The son moved to Temesvar, one of the daughters moved to Kolozsvar, and the other daughter and her mother, lived in our house until they died. The mother died first, then her daughter, the elder sister of Adam Anavi, and then the house became empty.

After their death my mother continued to live there. Before they immigrated to Israel, they sold the house to a mathematics teacher called Kolozsi, who was originally from Sinfalva. My mother and brother moved into the teacher's apartment. This was in Torda, close to the salt mine, in fact the house was called the salt mine apartment building. They lived there for seven to eight months, until they immigrated to Israel.

After my father's death, my mother tried to do something. She sold some things from the house, and my sister got married in the meantime, but we had no other solution, I had to work after I turned 18. On 4th October 1947, with the help of my pharmacist uncle, I was hired at the cement factory in Torda. I began my career there as a total beginner.

There was a national level measure in 1949, where they picked out a hundred people from the industry and took them to Bucharest, and taught them 'planificare' [planning], and I was one of them. They had this course at the Ministry of Economy and Industry, where they taught us how to organize the companies after they nationalized them on 11th June 1948. And we got a document certifying that we were instructors de planificare [planning instructors].

When I started to work in 1947, the whole cement factory in Torda was private property, and later it was nationalized, and after I finished this course they took me to the planning department, and after a short period of time they appointed me head of the planning department.

I couldn't go to university because after I started working, I dedicated myself to work. Probably, if I was a bit smarter, I would have done it somehow, because many people did it then. But I wasn't willing to lie down on the job. In 1952 I was transferred to the same position in Bicz, to the newly built cement factory. I was there for a year, and in 1953 I was appointed to the Ministry of Construction Materials in Bucharest. This Ministry was separated from the Ministry of Constructions, but the two ministries, the Ministry of Constructions and the Ministry of Construction Materials were in the same building. I had the same position and tasks as the chief of the planning department at the Directorate of Cement Industry. We had to organize the whole cement industry of the country there. We decided on the volume of production, conditions, staff and salaries. We did everything; I worked from morning until night.

I worked in Bucharest when I was young and made it, but housing was a huge problem then. We lived in a residence where three families lived in two and a half rooms. My two colleagues, who had wives, lived in the two rooms, and there was a servant's hall with a washstand, and that was my room. It was very good for me while I was single; the seven square meters were enough for my sofa and closet.

But in the meantime I got married, and we needed another apartment. My superiors, the Secretary and Deputy Minister promised me everything. In that building a one-room apartment became vacant, it was a bit larger than the former one, and we had our separate apartment. They allocated it for me and my wife, and when they gave the allocation, in accordance with the situation then, they allocated it for a cocotte. The former president of the district was a party secretary in the ministry I was working at, and he used to command over the ministry.

So we had to stay in that half room. And then I went to the Secretary and said, 'Tovarasul ministru, eu plec din Bucuresti.' ['Comrade Secretary, I'll leave Bucharest'] 'Mai, esti nebun?' [Hey, are you crazy?] 'Tovarasul ministru, nici un minut nu mai stau.' [Comrade Secretary, I won't stay, not for

one moment more.] They didn't believe me, because I was very well situated, I really made it, and when the managers were missing, the secretary always called me for any problem.

Then something happened in Des, and the Deputy Minister told me, 'Hey, something has happened in Des, I have to tell you.' 'Go ahead.' 'You see, we have to fire the manager in Des. Will you go to Des?' 'I would go anywhere, just to get away from here.' And I came to Des in 1957, I resolved all my things in Bucharest very, very fast, and one of my friends brought my wife from Bucharest a bit later. I sent a truck from the factory where I was the manager, and they put in our things which we had in that small, seven square meter room. This man Jidu Abraham, who lived in Bucharest and helped us to put our things on the truck, brought my wife, too. We were and still are very good friends.

So I've lived in Des since 1957. First they appointed me manager of the cement factory in Des, and I worked there until 1958, when they threw me out from the Party [14](#). I had no problems because of my Jewish origin, because I didn't give them the opportunity to catch me on a mistake. The problem was that I mentioned in my resume that I was a member of the Gordonia. I had some trouble because of that, it all started in Bucharest, and when I got to Des, my General Manager got a document stating that I had been thrown out of the Party.

They made a big fuss, and discussed this case in a party meeting, and excluded me from the Party. The General Manager fired me immediately, because I wasn't a member of the Party anymore, but I remained the head of the production department, with the same salary. When Vajda, the Party secretary-general in Kolozsvár then, later he became Secretary for Agriculture, found out after a few weeks that I had been fired and excluded from the Party, he raised a big issue and ordered them to put me back in my position immediately. So they found me this local industrial company, called Bobilna, and I became its manager.

I didn't complain at all because of my exclusion from the Party. They admitted me when I was 18, and excluded me in 1958, and they accepted me back in 1971. They apologized and said it was a mistake and they took me back. What wrong did I do by joining at the age of 15?

I was a manager for 13 years while 'exclus din partid' [excluded from the Party]. I had no problems at all, because I did my work, and also traveled abroad. In 1971 I was in Belgium at an exhibition called 'Salon International de Arta Menajera' [International Household Arts Fair]. I was in Brussels, in Anvers [Antwerp] and in a city called Izegem, where we had some customers. From there we went across to the Netherlands. We stayed in The Hague, but also visited Amsterdam, Utrecht and Nijmegen. We had commercial relations there, we manufactured and sold small furniture. I was with one of the heads of departments of the Foreign Trade Company from Bucharest [Illexim, Industria Locala Export-Import], called Strungaru, and one of my colleagues, who were originally from Szekelykeresztúr. I was in East-Germany, as well, in 1972, with the General Manager of Napochim in Kolozsvár, Corneliu Crihalneanu, his son is the current Greek-Catholic bishop of Kolozsvár, and with a man called Strungaru, who worked at the Foreign Trade Company in Bucharest. There was a time, during the dictatorship, when we were at the International Exhibition in Leipzig in 1972, and we had to report at the exhibition every morning at 9am, which ended at 6pm, and at 7pm we had to report at the embassy for a meeting. This was a way to check whether we were still there. This took place every evening. And when the meeting ended, we went for dinner, but we didn't get anything, because the other people had eaten already, while we were at



the meeting. This is how things were then.

I joined the Party when I was very young. In theory I accepted the communist ideas at that time, especially when I was a child, it seemed it was a very noble idea. I was an idealist then and believed in these principles. But as time passed I realized that they had all been distorted, and everything was given to the leaders, and all these were nothing but words, I found out that communism was fake altogether because communism is very nice in theory, and promoted very noble ideas where possible. But how they did it was a totally different story.

I remember these things, what happened to me, and what I went through. There were some measures then, which demanded that we had to remain in the factory and work overtime. I complied without further ado and stayed there even for three days and two nights, and I was alright. This wasn't a problem when I was 19, 20, 21, because I was young and full of energy. On the other hand, at the end of 1989, a theory I heard shocked me. But later I realized it was a rule. Among others, we exported things. I had to report this on behalf of the factory, and I had to submit these reports. Every time I took these reports to Bucharest, they always shouted at me, 'Change it, and add something to it!' And I said calmly, 'Do it yourself, if you want it! I won't say anything if you...' 'No' He said, 'You have to write it.' 'I won't write anything.' And they changed the reports as they wanted. Once a counselor visited me and I said, 'Hey, how is it possible that you order us to lie?' 'Calm down,' he said, 'We have been to the big boss, Ceausescu [14](#), and he gave this order: write as much as you want, because what you write will be done, if not on that day, than after a month.' So I started thinking, 'Hey, listen, how did we come to this that we have to do in 13 months what we have reported in 13 months?' 'If Ceausescu wants it this way, what can we do?' We had to report a larger quantity than we produced, and had to comply because there was one instruction, and this came from above.

When I was the manager of the Bobilna factory in Des, Ceausescu came there on his name-day [Editor's note: on Nicolae's, St. Nicholas day, in December], and they made us prepare for it with all kinds of stuff. We tried to do our best, and they checked our results first in Des, and then they sent them to Kolozsvar, where a local committee analyzed them. And there were a few occasions when our report passed through a second verification, the analysis from Kolozsvar, and then it was sent to Ceausescu. But welcoming Ceausescu and all the things were so forced. They took the whole factory two or three times to Kolozsvar, and we went by a special train at 3.30am, and at 6am we had to march to the Clujana [a shoe factory], and from there we marched to the Romanian Opera, and only came back in the afternoon. We were puppets. At Ceausescu's last visit in Des at the Irta, I was appointed, as manager, to lay out the carpet he stepped on when he got down from the helicopter. I had to direct the operation of laying down the carpet, I had to take there twelve carpenters to nail down the carpet to prevent it from being lifted off by the turbulence made by the propeller of the helicopter. And the members of the securitate stood near us, each of them had a microphone on his arm, which looked like a watch, but they recorded everything with that.

I met Ceausescu personally in Des in 1970, during the flood, when the Szamos River flowed over its banks. He stopped at the company and spoke to me. He was very, very scared then, his face was white, he was very frightened. Because the flood was huge, there's an inscription at the railway station, stating that the Szamos was 963cm there. He spoke briefly and very normally. He asked me about the consequences, if we had any victims or damages. I told him we had no victims at the company and he told us if there were any victims, we first had to save them and only after the

properties. He said this, and I felt he was concerned about his workers. The flood claimed seven lives in Des then. As he went on, one of his men began to shout, 'Luati masuri imediat, incepeti productia!' [Take measures immediately and start the production!] This was despite the fact that 70 percent of the factory was under water. I said, 'Da, am inteles.' [Yes, Sir.] I wouldn't argue with such a person.

I had no problems with anyone during my career, due to my origins, or anything else. Once I had an inconvenience when I was young, while living in Bucharest, because I scolded a typist. I asked her to do something for me, because the secretary called me and I had to submit them something urgently. She began to explain something to me and I scolded her. And within one week everyone knew that I had scolded her. They weren't accustomed to scolding. This happened around 1955-56. And, by the way, the typist was a Jewish girl. In 1989, when the revolution [16](#) took place, nobody hurt or mocked me because I was the manager of the factory, but there were others [leaders] who had problems. I had no problems at all, they automatically extended my retirement age to 62 when I was 60.

- Later life

My wife's maiden name was Lili Balogh, she is Lili Farkas now, and was born in 1935. They were genuine Kolozsvár inhabitants [originally from there], they lived on Emil Zola Street No. 9. I was in a delegation in Kolozsvár, I visited my sister there, and when I started to come back to Bucharest, she said, 'Wait, I'd like you to meet a nice girl.' Lili worked as an accountant at the former Metropol, there was the ICRTI – Intreprinderea Comertului cu Ridicata Pentru Textile si Incaltaminte [Textile and Shoes Wholesale Company]. My sister was the accountant of some similar wholesale company; they met each other this way. We went on Horea Street, because my sister worked on Dacia Street, before the Urania, and this girl, my future wife, went to buy bread right then. My sister stopped her, and we were introduced.

We kept in touch, we got engaged in March 1956, and we got married on 19th May. By the way, our wedding took place on 19th May and my brother died on that date, three years ago. We had a civil marriage. There weren't any misunderstandings between our parents, none of them tried to force his religion on the other, and we closed this matter. We went to the city hall in Kolozsvár, formerly the city hall was where the prefecture is now, we had to have two witnesses then, and I remember that a man called Roman was the registrar. And after that, one of my mother-in-law's neighbors handed her apartment to us, to organize the dinner there, our family, one of my friends and one of my wife's friends were there. We were approximately 35 people; we didn't have this custom with the envelopes and everything that goes. [Editor's note: József Farkas referred here to the regional custom, according to which the guests give presents and envelopes with money to the young couple.]

My father-in-law, Albert Balogh, was a mechanic at a railway workshop. And my mother-in-law, Berta Balogh, was a housewife. My wife had a twin, Bandi [András], who was older than her by a quarter of an hour. He lived in Kolozsvár, had a family, finished a technical school and worked as a technician in the power-loom factory called Unirea. Unfortunately, he died on 21st September 2002, three months later than my brother.

My daughter, Ariana, was born on New Year's Eve in 1961. The wife of my friend was the clerk in the Stanca, and she said, 'Look, I'll register your daughter on 1st January 1962, to be younger by

one year.' And according to the register she was born on 1st January 1962. My mother-in-law's family baptized my daughter according to the Catholic or the Reformed religion, I don't know which one, but it was never an issue for me. Because as far as I remember, my father-in-law was Catholic, and my mother-in-law was Reformed, but this wasn't a problem for us. While she was small, we spoke to her in Hungarian, and when she became a schoolgirl I spoke to her in Romanian. My wife spoke to her only in Hungarian as a mark of esteem for her grandmother, my mother-in-law. But my daughter grew up in our family, and I thank God she grew up so that she is more Jewish than me. We can say briefly that I'm not the fighter type. I do what I can, in silence, but my daughter is a fighter. And she fought for the Jewry, as well. I taught her what I could, and bought her the Jewish calendar translated into Romanian, every year. It contained many appendices, many things, and she learned them all. She graduated from the mechanical engineering department of the technological University in Kolozsvár. She was a member of the Jewish community, and used to sing in the choir and was the member of the choir in Kolozsvár, lead by Katalin Halmos.

She got married in 1982, as far as I remember she had a civil marriage on 5th March in Kolozsvár, and the wedding took place on 12th March in Des. They didn't have a religious marriage; her husband is a Romanian Orthodox, Gelu Suliteanu. It was a very mixed matrimony: I was Jewish, my wife Reformed, my son-in-law Orthodox. His father was originally from Moldova and his mother from Szilagy County [today Hungary].

When she graduated from the university, before 1989, they assigned her to Hunyad County. With the help of my friend, Silviu Opris, who was Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Construction Materials, I arranged to bring her from Hatszeg, an inaccessible place [Hateg, 25km south of Vajdahunyad], to Vajdahunyad. She worked there at the IFET, but she lived in Deva. Her husband worked at the airport. He lived in Kolozsvár, and my daughter in Deva, until she became pregnant. And then we began to collect medical certificates, to spare her the traveling. Their son, Paul, was born in October 1987, but there was some misunderstanding between her and her husband and they divorced in 1989, 1990 or 1991. I had a personal satisfaction that we gathered once and tried to analyze what had happened in fact. And then both of them told me very sincerely that each of them had good and bad habits, but the main problem was that they were headstrong, and didn't look for an agreement, and then they decided to divorce. It was enough for me that they both felt responsible for the divorce. But my daughter and her son remained in Kolozsvár. Right after the revolution she was employed at a company called Royal Loyalty, where they sold TV sets and other electrical goods made in Taiwan. From there she went to the Romanian Railways, to the Regionala [a county center of the Romanian Railway] and was the head of department at the SAAF.

She immigrated to Israel on 30th August 2001, and made it there. She had no problems in Israel, although they check there the mother's origin. She's registered as Ariana Farkas, and nobody asked her about her mother's origin. She didn't work for a year, until she got the stipendia [Editor's note: scholarship] to learn the language. She had a place to live, she had to pay a symbolic amount for meals, but from her stipend she could buy long-range consumer goods in one year rather than in five in Romania. And later she worked in two or three places; she accepted everything just to work. And since 1st January 2005, thank God, she had a very good job, where she even got a contract, and earns more money. She fought for three years for this. She lives in Karmiel, near Haifa. There's an industrial park called Barler, she works there as a mechanical engineer in the Fishmann factory. The factory has 130-140 employees, they manufacture all kinds of thermostats

there: for cars, stoves, trucks, etc.

She has a partner in life now, called Elie Segal, with whom she lives together. The parents of the boy are originally from Braila, but I think he was born in Israel. He knows a little Romanian, but they speak in Hebrew. He is also divorced, just like my daughter, and has children. It's easier if two partners in life take care of the children. He lived in America for seven years with his former wife and two children. The third child was born there. His son demobilized, his elder daughter graduated and only the third one remained with them. His former wife lives in the same city, and there are no problems.

My grandson Paul attends high school, he finished the eleventh grade, and will graduate next year. There's a very interesting system in Israel: starting with the tenth grade, they graduate [pass an examination] from two to three subjects each year. And by the time they finish the twelfth grade, they have those two to three exams from the tenth and eleventh grades, and they cumulate them with the exams from the twelfth grade and become graduates. My grandson is on very good terms with his father, and this is mutual. He is here now, he arrived on 18th July and stays for six weeks, until 28th August. He visits us, too, but he stays mostly with his father, who takes him around. His father lives here, in Kolozsvár, he works at the airport, he's the manager of the dispatcher department, and is on very good terms with us.

Religion is a very relative thing. I have my own theory about this. I consider myself the most honest man in front of God, because I respect everybody's religion. I can't despise someone because one is like this and not like that, or deeply religious or an atheist, because one is orthodox, Greek-Catholic or Reformed. I respect everyone who believes in his religion. One must be very appeasable, in order to be able to respect everyone, and I respect them all, people who carry on with their religion. So I respect everyone, and I don't disturb anyone. But there are some people who only go to church to show the people they are there. Not to pray, just to mark their presence. And this goes for every religion.

I kept the Jewish religion even after my marriage. I didn't go every day to the synagogue, but I observed each holiday and attended the ceremonies, commemorations or any holiday: New Year's Day, Yom Kippur, Pesach, Shavuot, and I was present at the Yiskor services, every time. We didn't light candles for Sabbath. There's an interesting thing that I found out just now, when I grew old. The candles on Friday evening were lit by the women, not the men. And I was scared in Israel when the partner of my daughter didn't light the candle, but he showed his gratitude for the challah every Friday evening, and poured wine into a goblet, and said a prayer for that. After that everyone tasted the wine. In a word I'd like to say that only women light candles, and not the men. My mother lit candles. After she died, nobody lit candles in our house.

I always have my kippah with me. I think I bought it in Israel when I was there. When the men enter the synagogue, they have to wear a kippah on their head. The rabbis say you, the mortal, have to wear a kippah because you are not God's equal. There must be something separating a mortal from God. And the kippah covers the head, the skull, and prevents direct contact with God. The rabbis explain it so. And I believe this, I'm not skeptical about it. [Editor's note: In fact, the covered head is the symbol of respect for God. Jozsef Farkas interprets this fact in his own way.]

The rabbi from Temesvár [Editor's note: Dr. Erno Neumann, the chief rabbi of Temesvár] always used to come to Des for Chanukkah, and after he died, they sent a chazzan from Bucharest. On a

scheduled day, we gather in the synagogue, in the small office. They light candles, one for each day of the holiday that has passed. Because we had to light candles for eight days, one on the first day, two on the second, three on the third and eight on the eighth. [Editor's note: Jozsef Farkas didn't mention the head candle, the shames, used to light the other candles, and they leave the shames to burn out with the other candles.] We celebrate the other holidays only in close companionship. We go to the lobby of the synagogue, not in the main room, and everyone prays as they can.

I had two reasons why I didn't think about immigrating to Israel. Above all, my mother was alive. She remained a widow, and I didn't even think about leaving her alone, because I was her favorite child, beside my elder sister and younger brother, as the middle one. Taking into consideration that she remained a widow, I thought it was my duty to stay with her and not to go away. Not even after I got married in 1956, to a Hungarian girl, whose parents were still alive, and she had the same attitude, she didn't want to leave her parents. We were on very good terms with my wife's family. And we carried on this way, my sister and my brother immigrated, but we remained behind.

I went ten times to Israel: First in 1978, then 1980, 1982, 1986, 1991, 1994, when my sister died, in 2002 when my brother died, and three times after my daughter immigrated. I spent six weeks there this year. My wife was there two times, but she went separately, not with me. I'm not biased, nor with, nor against them, but I can say about Israel and I'm partly proud about it, that this small country managed to catch up with America in 57 years. Israel is a small America. There is everything in Israel; they even manufacture things that America buys from them. They buy much fewer things from the Americans. Not many were able to achieve this, but they [the people from Israel] did it, because they worked for it. I'm very impressed with Israel. Every time I went there starting in 1978, I found more and something new. Not to mention that when this high-tech picked up, I saw how this new technology has emerged in Israel just like in Silicon Valley in America.

How are the people in Israel? I have to tell you how they are, because there is an essential difference of opinion between me and my wife in this matter. My wife is noisy, but the people from Israel are noisy, too. And it is very hard to reconcile the opinions of noisy people. I'm used to it, and it doesn't bother me. This is in their nature. They have gone through so much. There's a Jewish proverb: if something happens, Jews won't let themselves be massacred, or something, but they won't let each other live when they aren't fighting. In a word they are always quarrelling; this is how they live.

The things I can say about the changes after 1989 are almost the same I can say about communism. I was very excited in every respect that now a new historical era comes. I don't say categorically that it was a revolution or a takeover. It was a huge upheaval. But unfortunately, and this is probably the saddest part of it, the former communists and Securitate members remained in their positions and are flourishing. I'm positive. Most of them became businessmen, they had the best businesses. They knew when they could go with or without a passport, when they could bring in everything on earth tax-free in 1989-90. And they became the big shots, and, accidentally, I know a few names.

I can positively say that I achieved a good level, a certain standard as a young man. And even when I worked, I was still at a medium level, although I was a manager for more than 30 years. I had an average salary, and all kinds of allowances. And I had this status even after I retired. It

wasn't low, but it wasn't high, either. And this is what I'm trying to tell my spouse, that we have nothing to complain about, because next to and around us there are so many who suffer, and we have altogether around 300 Dollars in pension. I worked for 49 years, my wife for 38 years, i.e. we worked for it. And she tells me it's not enough. Of course it could be more. Recently, on 1st July 2005 there was a recalculation of the pensions and I realized I got less, because my leader's allowance wasn't included. But I'm not willing to look into it.

I think that as long as God let's us, because this is how I think, I'm sure our summons are already filled in, but haven't been sent yet to tell us when we are due to leave. On weekdays I usually go to the community, I go home around 1pm for lunch, take a nap, then I read for two to three hours, watch the news, and, since there's a nice yard behind the apartment building, especially now, when it's summer, I spend some time there, there are some benches there. I enjoyed visiting my daughter, now I'm enjoying the presence of my grandchild. I can enjoy anything; I don't have any problems with anything.

- **Glossary:**

### **1 KuK (Kaiserlich und Koeniglich) army**

The name 'Imperial and Royal' was used for the army of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as for other state institutions of the Monarchy originated from the dual political system. Following the Compromise of 1867, which established the Dual Monarchy, Austrian emperor and Hungarian King Franz Joseph was the head of the state and also commander-in-chief of the army. Hence the name 'Imperial and Royal'.

### **2 23 August 1944**

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

### **3 Transylvania**

Geographical and historic area (103 000 sq. kilometre) in Romania. It is located between the Carpathian Mountain range and the Serbian, Hungarian and Ukrainian border. Today's Transylvania is made up of four main regions: Banat, Crisana, Maramures and the historic Transylvanian territory. In 1526 at the Mohacs battle medieval Hungary fell apart; the central part of the country was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire, while in the Eastern part the autonomous Transylvanian Principality was founded. Nominally Transylvania belonged to the Ottoman Porte; the Sultan had a veto on electing the Prince, however in reality Transylvania maintained independent foreign as well as internal policy. The Transylvanian princes maintained the policy of religious freedom (first time in Europe) and recognized three nationalities: Hungarian, Szekler and Saxon (Transylvanian German). After the treaty of Karlowitz (1699) Transylvania and Hungary fell under the Habsburgs and the province was re-annexed to Hungary in 1867 as part of the Austrian-Hungarian compromise (Ausgleich). Transylvania was characterized by specific ethno-religious diversity. The Transylvanian princes were in favor of the Reformation in the 16th and 17th century



and as a result Transylvania became a stronghold of the different protestant churches (Calvinist, Lutheran, Unitarian, etc.). During the Counter-Reformation and the long Habsburg supremacy the Catholic Church also gained significant power. Transylvania's Romanian population was also divided between the Eastern Orthodox and the Uniate Church (Greek Catholic). After the reception of the Jewish Religion by the Hungarian Parliament (1895) Jewish became a recognized religions in the country, which accelerated the ongoing Jewish assimilation in Transylvania as well as elsewhere in Hungary. After World War I Transylvania was given to Romania by the Trianon Treaty (1920). In 1920 Transylvania's population was 5,2 million, of which 3 million were Romanian, 1,4 million Hungarian, 510,000 Germans and 180,000 Jews. According to the Second Vienna Dictate its northern part was annexed to Hungary in 1940. After World War II the entire region was enclosed to Romania by the Paris Peace Treaty. According to the last Romanian census (2002) Hungarians make 19% of the total population, and there are only several thousand Jews and Germans left. Despite the decrease of the Hungarian, German and Jewish element, Transylvania still preserves some of its multiethnic and multi-confessional tradition.

#### **4 Keren Kayemet Leisrael(K**

K.L.): 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.

#### **5 Statute of the Romanian Jews**

Decree no.2650 issued on 8thAugust 1940 referring to the rights of Jews in Romania.The statute empowered the authorities to reconsider and even withdraw the citizenship of Jews, and legalized their exclusion from universities and other public educational institutions.According to the 7thparagraph of the law, Jews were forbidden to practice any public-related profession such as lawyer and professor.They were excluded from the board of directors of every company and had no right to carry on trade in villages, trade with alcohol, be soldiers, own or rent cinemas and publishing houses, be members of national sport clubs or own any real estates in Romania.Jews were prohibited to marry Romanians or to assume a Romanian name.

#### **6 Second Vienna Dictate**

The Romanian and Hungarian governments carried on negotiations about the territorial partition of Transylvania in August 1940. Due to their conflict of interests, the negotiations turned out to be fruitless.In order to avoid violent conflict a German-Italian court of arbitration was set up, following Hitler's directives, which was also accepted by the parties.The verdict was pronounced on 30thAugust 1940 in Vienna:Hungary got back a territory of 43,000 km<sup>2</sup> with 2,5 million inhabitants.This territory (Northern Transylvania, Seklerland) was populated mainly by Hungarians (52% according to the Hungarian census and 38% according to the Romanian one) but at the same time more than 1 million Romanians got under the authority of Hungary.Although Romania had 19

days for capitulation, the Hungarian troops entered Transylvania on 5th September. The verdict was disapproved by several Western European countries and the US; the UK considered it a forced dictate and refused to recognize its validity.

## **7 Antonescu, Ion (1882-1946)**

Political and military leader of the Romanian state, president of the Ministers' Council from 1940 to 1944. In 1940 he formed a coalition with the Legionary leaders. From 1941 he introduced a dictatorial regime that continued to pursue the depreciation of the Romanian political system started by King Carol II. His strong anti-Semitic beliefs led to the persecution, deportation and killing of many Jews in Romania. He was arrested on 23rd August 1944 and sent into prison in the USSR until he was put on trial in the election year of 1946. He was sentenced to death for his crimes as a war criminal and shot in the same year.

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

The first anti-Jewish laws were introduced in 1938 by the Goga-Cuza government. Further anti-Jewish laws followed in 1940 and 1941, and the situation was getting gradually worse between 1941-1944 under the Antonescu regime. According to these laws all Jews aged 18-40 living in villages were to be evacuated and concentrated in the capital town of each county. Jews from the region between the Siret and Prut Rivers were transported by wagons to the camps of Targu Jiu, Slobozia, Craiova etc. where they lived and died in misery. More than 40,000 Jews were moved. All rural Jewish property, as well as houses owned by Jews in the city, were confiscated by the state, as part of the 'Romanisation campaign'. Marriages between Jews and Romanians were forbidden from August 1940, Jews were not allowed to have Romanian names, own rural properties, be public employees, lawyers, editors or janitors in public institutions, have a career in the army, own liquor stores, etc. Jewish employees of commercial and industrial enterprises were fired, Jewish doctors could no longer practice and Jews were not allowed to own chemist shops. Jewish students were forbidden to study in Romanian schools.

## **9 Legionary**

Member of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known as the Legionary Movement, founded in 1927 by C. Z. Codreanu. This extremist, nationalist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic movement aimed at excluding those whose views on political and racial matters were different from theirs. The Legion was organized in so-called nests, and it practiced mystical rituals, which were regarded as the way to a national spiritual regeneration by the members of the movement. These rituals were based on Romanian folklore and historical traditions. The Legionaries founded the Iron Guard as a terror organization, which carried out terrorist activities and political murders. The political twin of the Legionary Movement was the Totul pentru Tara (Everything for the Fatherland) that represented the movement in parliamentary elections. The followers of the Legionary Movement were recruited from young intellectuals, students, Orthodox clericals, peasants. The movement was banned by King Carol II in 1938.

## **10 Yellow star in Romania**

On 8th July 1941, Hitler decided that all Jews from the age of 6 from the Eastern territories had to

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

## **11 Gordonia**

Pioneering Zionist youth movement founded in Galicia at the end of 1923. It became a world movement, which meticulously maintained its unique character as a Jewish, Zionist, and Erez Israel-oriented movement

## **12 Hashomer Hatzair**

Left-wing Zionist youth organization, started up in Poland in 1912, and managed to gather supporters from all over Europe. Their goal was to educate the youth in the Zionist mentality and to prepare them to emigrate to Palestine. To achieve this goal they paid special attention to the so-called shomer-movement (boy scout education) and supported the re-stratification of the Jewish society. They operated several agricultural and industrial training grounds (the so-called chalutz grounds) to train those who wanted to emigrate. In Transylvania the first Hashomer Hatzair groups had been established in the 1920s. During World War II, members of the Hashomer Hatzair were leading active resistance against German forces, in ghettos and concentration camps.

## **13 Betar**

Brith Trumpedor (Hebrew) meaning Trumpedor Society; right-wing Revisionist Jewish youth movement. It was founded in 1923 in Riga by Vladimir Jabotinsky, in memory of J. Trumpedor, one of the first fighters to be killed in Palestine, and the fortress Betar, which was heroically defended for many months during the Bar Kohba uprising. Its aim was to propagate the program of the revisionists and prepare young people to fight and live in Palestine. It organized emigration through both legal and illegal channels. It was a paramilitary organization; its members wore uniforms. They supported the idea to create a Jewish legion in order to liberate Palestine. From 1936-39 the popularity of Betar diminished. During WWII many of its members formed guerrilla groups.

## **14 Purges of the Romanian Communist Party**

The building-up of the communist system in Romania involved rivalry between different groups, respectively the "showdown" with each other. Two main trends took shape within the Romanian Communist Party, which seized the power over the country, and the main struggles for power took place along these lines. One of the trends (the so-called Muscovite faction) consisted of those party members, who left for the Soviet Union between the two World Wars, then returned to Romania after WWII (Anna Pauker, Laszlo Luka). The so-called local faction consisted of those who stayed in the country. In 1948 Gheorghiu-Dej, the leader of the RCP, making use of the anti-Semitism spread out from the Soviet Union, started to purge his political adversaries, first of all the Muscovites. His first victim was Lucretiu Patracanu, the charges brought against him being nationalism and rightist deviation; he was executed in 1954. Patracanu was followed by Laszlo Luka (he was sentenced to life imprisonment), then Anna Pauker was expelled from the Party. The purge of the Party aimed at

not only the highest leadership, but it covered the circle of simple members as well.

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

Communist head of Romania between 1965 and 1989. He followed a policy of nationalism and non-intervention into the internal affairs of other countries. The internal political, economic and social situation was marked by the cult of his personality, as well as by terror, institutionalized by the Securitate, the Romanian political police. The Ceausescu regime was marked by disastrous economic schemes and became increasingly repressive and corrupt. There were frequent food shortages, lack of electricity and heating, which made everyday life unbearable.

In December 1989 a popular uprising, joined by the army, led to the arrest and execution of both Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, who had been deputy Prime Minister since 1980.

## **16 Romanian Revolution of 1989**

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