

## The Fulop Family



This family picture was taken behind our parents' house in Aghiresu, beneath the kitchen window, at the beginning of the 1940s. In the back row, from left to right: my sisters, Bella Fulop and Margit Szinetar, Jozsef Szinetar, Margit's husband, my sister, Iren, and myself, Elza Fulop; in the middle row: my brother, Erno Fulor, my parents, Maria Karolina Fulop and Moricz Fulop, and my brother's wife, Regina; in the front row: Tibor Szinetar, the son of Margit and Jozsef Szinetar.

We were a family that stuck together. As children, we did have our shortcomings, like any other children: sometimes we argued or fought. But there was always this sense of integrity, of togetherness, of love. We may have criticized one another, or fought one another, but, every time one of us was in danger, we would turn into beasts, like they say and we would defend one another. In short, we were a model family, and we were respected not only by our relatives, but also by our neighbors, and - I dare say - by the entire village. We set an example by the way in which we had been raised.

My mother made sure we didn't go soft. She used to say: 'If you're lucky to end up living a life of plenty - and luck is something a mother cannot give her children - you will have servants, so you should know how to run them. If you should spend your life in poverty - and this is something I cannot guarantee it won't happen - then you must be prepared, so that you wouldn't find things too difficult and would be able to cope with hardships.' This is why she had us do any kind of work.

My life unfolded like any youngster's life: with its ups and downs; I had my share of love and of hardships. I got engaged in 1939. He was such a handsome lad, that any girl of my age would have fallen for him. I didn't have enough experience to seek his inner qualities; I was blinded by the exterior. So he was handsome, and I was inexperienced, and I was very much in love with him. But I was in for a big disappointment, so I had to break the engagement. What I learned from that was never to say what you shouldn't say; it's better to keep your mouth shut, and, whatever you do, you mustn't lie.

My sisters and brother got married, so I remained the only one who didn't have a spouse. I stayed home for a while, but I got tired of a housewife's life and decided to build a future for myself. My mother didn't approve of my going to work for at a hospital. She was afraid I would become immoral. Back then, rumor had it all the nurses were hooked up with the doctors, so they were safe in case something unwanted happened? It's no wonder my mother was afraid. But I gained a different reputation. Doctors would say to one another: 'The little one will never fall for that.' I was a savage creature, because, you know, I had been raised like that.

In the old village, my parents were generally very popular. When the Legionary movement began, regional support movements were organized in our area too, even before 1940. The very leader of the local movement said he would evict all the Jews of the village and kill them, all except my father, who had always been humane and honest. I had to mention this because I wanted to emphasize who my parents and my entire family were. And in case you wonder why my voice shivers, well, you know, it doesn't feel good to remember these things. Of course, what came afterwards cannot be compared to the Legionary movement. The Legionaries didn't have the guts to resort to really dangerous deeds. But they were the beginning of the sufferings of an innocent people.