

Tibor Salgó

Mr. Salgó and I didn't meet to talk in his home but in the studio of an acquaintance of mine instead. At first I thought this behaviour, that we don't meet in his apartment, was a survival strategy and that Mr. Salgó would not talk much about his Jewish background, and Jewish religion and traditions, as much as he lives them. It turned out that my conclusions were premature – what I experienced and what turned out was not what I'd expected. In reality, Mr. Salgó is the typical sort of person who origins are Jewish, but his life, destiny, culture are Hungarian. Mr. Salgó has strong ties to where he lives and considers himself a local of the XI. District of Budapest.



I've mentioned many times how adventurous my life was to my friends. It's quite colorful and varied, and I usually always say that the good lord was with me. Because at the crossroads, I usually always wound up on the good road. I was lucky. Of course, there are a few aptitudes, as well as my health, that meant an exceptional amount.

I never knew my paternal grandparents – I only know one story about them. My dad told me, that they were here in Pest, and they didn't dare cross the Danube! They were taken across in a handsome-cab! [low, two-wheeled, closed carriage] That's all I know about them.

My mother's parents I barely knew. Except for Grandma, who lived with us. Her name was Mrs. Adolf Wagner, and she was born in the 1860s in Pozsony [Bratislava]. Her maiden name was Lina Frankfurter. Grandma knew some Hungarian, but they mainly spoke German. German stuck with me because of her. She lived in Budapest, and was a housewife. I don't know anything about how religious she was, I only played with her. We drew with a piece of chalk on the table and then we played. It was like 'Malom' ['Nine Men's Morris', a simple strategy game from ancient Egyptian around 1400 B.C.] is for our kids. I don't know anything about her siblings.

She lived here on the Korter [Moricz Zsigmond Square in Buda]. Then when she got weaker, she moved in with us. I'll never forget it, I was playing with building blocks on the floor and Grandma was sitting in the armchair. I was about three or four. I looked over and Grandma wasn't moving. Oh, my! I got a mirror and put it in front of her mouth. It didn't fog up! I ran out, "Mommy, I think, Grandma is dead!" I wasn't in school yet, I was playing on the floor. She really died in that armchair. But I was very small, I don't remember the funeral. I don't even know where her grave is, nor for that matter, if she's in Rakoskeresztur [buried in the Jewish cemetery there].

My maternal grandfather was called Adolf Wagner. I don't remember when or where he was born. I never knew him. But I do know that he worked with some kind of chemical thing, with paint, and supposedly, he invented some kind of fast drying oil paint. That's what I heard. He had a factory. But I never saw him, since by the time I became aware of myself, he was no longer living. All I

know is that he lived with Grandma here on the Korter. He must have died in about 1915, because I was born in 1914.

My mother was born in 1884 in Budapest. Her maiden name was Aranka Wagner.

My father was born in Mezokovesd in the 1880s. In 1901, he Magyarized his name to Salgó. His original name was Sprerlinger. I don't remember what degree of education he got. But he could read and write well. He was pretty religious, his parents had intended that he become a rabbi, but he never did. He left his parents house at the age of 13-14 years old, and came up to Budapest. At that time he was strongly bound to religion – he spoke Hebrew excellently! Papa sure could jabber away in Hebrew. But he didn't become a rabbi. His brother had a porcelain shop on Ulloi Street. All I know about him, is that he had siblings, there were eight of them, who likewise were all merchants. The war wore it down [their religious practice]. My older brother in America didn't keep the religion, just like me. Not because he was ashamed, but social expectations are different, life is different.

My father was an extraordinarily courteous downtown merchant, who worked in a fashion clothes store. He was the kind of merchant who stood in the door. When a customer came, he greeted them and asked them what they would like. He'd take them to the assistant. When they'd leave, he'd ask them if they found everything they were looking for. If not, then he'd take them back, to try this on or perhaps that. In those times, the Karady collar was fashionable – which is oval, wide, and made of big tulle or some translucent material, a little stiff, and long, today we'd call it a scarf collar – and turbans. He was expressly a gentleman merchant. I know that my father always dressed elegantly for work.

Father worked in a few shops in his life. The first, when he was young, in the 1920s, was Herzfeld and Zole on Kristof square. Then he worked in the S. and Company store on Deak Ferenc Street. His partner had the capital, he had the name. This closed for some reason, then Dad found a position, and became the manager of a textile store in Petofi Sandor street [all these places are on or near the fashionable Vaci street shopping area in downtown Budapest].

The following thing happened to my father. When he had a shop in Deak Ferenc street, there was a sign that said: Salgó and Company. In 1919, when Communism broke out [Hungarian Soviet Republic] ¹, they stuck these posters on the glass of the display window. [sic – This cannot be the shop his father was partner in, unless perhaps he also had a shop in Deak Ferenc street at this earlier date.] He told the apprentice, "Go take that down!" He took it down. Soon after, the police of the time came and badgered him: "Who did this?" He replied, "I did". They took him away. They took him to the Gellert Hotel, the Communists were there then. Dad had a relative, who was also Jewish, but was a high-ranking medical officer, called Uncle Dobo. Through him, they got him [Father] out of there, nothing happened to him. He just went back to work. That's all I know about that Communism.

I had two older brothers, Gyuri and Imre. There were three of us. Three boys. I was the youngest, Imi [from Imre (1911-2001)] was the middle one, and Gyuri [1908-1994] was the oldest, and there was exactly three years difference between each of us.

My mother was a housewife. We still had a maid servant then, also. Her name was Fraulein Tilda. That's where my knowledge of German comes from. I was about ten years old, then Dad sent her away. They couldn't handle it financially. My older brother Gyuri knew German better than I. He had three more years than I did to learn it. The only other thing is that Tilda took us here, to Menesi Street, took us three children to the Chapel on Sundays. My parents had no objections, didn't say anything, we were kids, we stayed for the whole mass, that's it. The building is still there today, if we go straight up here, it's there on Menesi Street.

Mother lit candles on Friday evenings. She mumbled what you're supposed to then. I distinctly remember that from my childhood. But religion wasn't talked about at our house. When Dad started working, then he went less to temple. Not on Friday nights or Saturdays. I don't know much else. Mom didn't go to Temple, while we were young, Dad and I went, and if I remember right, Imi was with us. We went here to Bocskai Street. There weren't many other Jewish obligations. In school, I was always very attentive when the religion teacher told us the history. For me, it's history – that's how I remembered the Old Testament.

We went to the beach here in Buda to the salt spa, that was where the Tetenyi Hospital is. Every year for summer vacations, Mom and us three kids rented a little room in a different town, and Dad came down on the weekends. We went to Budakeszi, then the next year to Kismaros, one year to Nagymaros [villages on the Danube] or to Balatonlelle [on Lake Balaton]. Dad came down there by train on the weekends. He was a loving family man.

I went to the grammar [school] in this area [XI. District of Budapest] in the 1920s. It was such a scene then in grammar [school], some kids came to school in barefeet. They didn't have money for shoes. Later, when I went to secondary school, a really interesting thing happened, which changed my life. I went to the Eotvos Jozsef realgymnasium [a high school (grades 7-12)] in Realtanoda street, and I was in about my fourth year or fifth year when they started a wind instrument band. I loved music, because my father was also a music lover, mother too, both of them. When the band formed, they stuck a trumpet in my hand, a B-trumpet, which is the same sound as the piston in modern music, and is in the same key only you have pads. The school had their 25th Year Jubilee at the beginning of the 1930s. There was a recital in the Vigado, and the school already had a symphonic orchestra. There were twenty-seven of us in the orchestra. I don't remember the program itself. The world-famous Jeno Hubai [Jeno Hubai (1858-1937), violinist, composer, pedagogue, teacher at the Brussels Conservatory and the Budapest Music Academy, director of the Budapest Music Academy from 1919-1934. One of the biggest early performing artists.]. Our conductor was the conductor of the Opera house, and he brought some back-up from the opera for the orchestra. I remember there was a floutist, because the last song was the medley from Vitez Janos ['John, the Valiant' – Pongrac Kacsoh's opera], it was writtten for brass, and there were just two of us trumpets. I was the first trumpet, I had to play the 'Corn Song', that goes, "I was born among the corn...".

We were only given a hiding once, I'll never forget it! We were tykes, and one day we show up at home with our faces painted with decoration paint. Well, Dad saw that Gyuri, the oldest, had made a circus out of us, he'd painted us all up. Dad put us over his knee and thrashed all three of us. I remember I was around three years old. They raised us well. Not strictly, but – I believe – with concern. We were a good family.

I forget my Jewish name, but I had a bar mitzvah. Bar mitzvah meant that I turned thirteen. The Bocskai Street temple [synagogue] didn't exist yet. Instead, my bar mitzvah was in the Ontohaz Street temple, which they prepared me for. I was absolutely deaf to Hebrew, but they taught me. [that is, what he had to say for the ceremony].

We were students before the war [Second World War]. My middle brother, Imre went to a technical school in Nepszinhaz Street [this was a Hungarian Monarchy State Upper Industrial school. There were no 'technical schools' then.] At that time, it was so – it raised you to such a level, just like University. There were classes in the morning and afternoon. My brother was so good with his hands, he had such a head [for it], that University students came to him and paid him to draft these technical drawings on vellum for them at night.

My oldest brother Gyuri was a directing officer in Ujpest before the war, in a suspender-making factory called Reiss and Brett. My middle brother, Imre worked here on Fehervari Road in the Ericsson factory [The Swedish company, Ericsson first opened it's subsidiary company in Budapest before the First World War, which was later taken over – for unclear reasons - by the International Standard Electric Corporation in the 1920s.] as an engineer. He had studied technology, and was the head engineer there. Early in the year 1939, various Jewish restrictions came in [Jewish Laws in Hungary] [2](#). I was a soldier then, my mother told me about Imre: the Swedish Director called the four Jewish engineers in. "Gentlemen, I just got a directive from the government that says, I have to fire two of my four engineers. So it's you and Balazs." My older brother was a bachelor at the time, and said, "Please don't fire him, he's got two children! I'm single, please kick me out instead." And two of them left. My brother was a really good-looking kid. I know, because the girls always asked me about him. He was brought together with a girl who was here from America, to take a husband back to America with her. Well, my older brother, it appears, got together with this American [non-Jewish] girl. My brother got his traveling permit a half a year later, in 1939, around December and went with the last boat to America. After that the ocean was too dangerous because of the submarines. But he just made it out.

My brother was at the mercy of this woman's every whim, though he knew English, but the English that was brilliant in Hungary, was probably quite paltry over there, as I figure it. And this woman nearly locked my brother into the apartment. She didn't let him go out! My brother could stand it for a half a year, then he escaped from her, with ten dollars in his pocket. He met some negros in an underpass, and they gave him a tip. He called a few acquaintances from Budapest, one had a department store chain and bellhop service. Fine, come on over. He went there, this was in New York. He left his wife, escaped from her. They hired him as a troger [sic – laborer]. That's life! It's interesting, he worked with negros, moved furniture, and the like. A negro asked him: 'Don't you have a profession? How can that be? Why don't you go here or there? Have you got an employment agent?' So he went to an employment agency. The employment agency placed him in a factory. They asked him what's his profession. He told them he was an engineer. He went to the factory, they said OK! They gave him some task. Do you know what a dodekahedron is? It's a kind of shape that has a million sides [It has twelve sides]. If he can design one, I'll give you a week, come back and you're hired! My brother didn't have a lot of money, he worked all night, came back the next day, and they hired him. I don't know if it was weapons factory or a military factory. But after a year, he had a hundred engineers working for him. In the meantime, he'd graduated from Columbia University, which is in New York. All I know about his life is that he lived in New York for

ten years, met a woman, but couldn't divorce his wife. They moved out to Reno, which is in the state of Nevada, and there he got his divorce, and married Marion, with whom he lived together for fifty years. I don't know why they didn't have children. His wife was a British-born American woman, who didn't know Hungarian. But she understood some. Imi found a position, if I know well, in what we'd call the local board or city council, as an engineer. He lived for a long time there, from 1947 to 2001. He just died three years ago, we're writing this in 2004, so he died in 2001, at the age of 90. It said 'vice-president' on his business card, so he didn't have any business, he just worked as an engineer the whole time. He had to oversee all the new technical innovations. So the job came with a lot of responsibility. Imre became a member of one of the Freemason lodges.

I know less about my oldest brother, because as a child six years is a big difference. Gyuri only finished his Civils [Civil School] [3](#). I do know that my oldest brother courted his wife from the time he was eighteen years old. Rozsika, who he loved to the day he died. I mean, so much that they even held hands in the street when they were already old. They have one daughter, Evike [from Eva] who is sixty-five years old today and retired, she was born in 1939. She's got such heart, both my brother and his wife are Jewish but they raised their daughter as a Christian. My brother Gyuri was an especially big photographer. He made slides, and has a lot of video.

During the war [Second World War], the family was in the ghetto [Plight of Budapest Jews] [4](#). Gyuri was in work service [Forced Labor] [5](#). Then later, in 1942, he went into hiding. I also know that there was a confectionery shop on the Korter [Moricz Zsigmond Square] whose boss was a Christian, they hid him. In the ghetto, I don't know how, but he worked as a doctor. [sic - Obviously, as a medic or nurse along with the doctor]. His wife was there with my own dear mother, together. First my mother got into a star house [Yellow Star House] [6](#) on 2 Suto Street. From 2 Suto Street, she went to the ghetto and my brother's daughter was with her until the liberation.

Evike's husband is also a Christian. The children, the grandchildren are all Christians. Our relationship is close between my niece and her husband and us. There's really never been any thing like we're Jewish and they're not. Her husband was an engineer at VILATI [Villamos Automatika Intezet] he graduated from the Electrical Technical Academy.

I consider myself an XI. District local. The house where I lived with my parents as a child is here. There was a meadow on the Korter. We played soccer here, us kids, I only found out later, when the Hitlerism [sic] came in that my friends weren't Jewish, but Christians. It came out, when they said what religion is he? No, no! It came out when we were kicking the ball, playing soccer. I still remember that I had black hair as a child, and I was creole colored. They always teased me when the Gypsies [Roma] came down here on Fehervari Road in covered wagons, "Go home T., the Gypsies are going to take you away!" I would run into the front gate, the house was across the street. Yes, they came in on covered wagons then, so did the Milimaris. The area around Buda was filled with Schwab [ethnically German Hungarian] villages, and the Milimaris brought the milk and butter in from there. They had a huge sack on their backs [baskets tied on with scarves], in which there was milk, curdcheese, butter, and they came in here, the customs was on the corner of Fehervari Road, and they went door to door.

In the winter we went sledding. We came down from Gellert Hill on a sled all the way down to the Feneketlen Lake. There still wasn't a streetcar yet on Villanyi Road. The tennis court was here, this is where I went skating. There's a woman who lives on Kanizsai Street who is my age, and when I

meet her she always says, 'T., Don't you want to go skating?'. We used to skate together back then. I entered a dance competition, and I'll never forget it, there was a masked ball also. At that time, the film 'Z. the Black Horseman' was playing. Well, I dressed up like him!. I had an eyepatch. Great! There weren't any differences. [between Jews and non-Jews] I was courting a girl, I was probably about 13-14 years old. The girl was chaperoned by her mother and sibling. The others told me out of envy, that I'm a 'liliomtipro' [sic - roughly, a euphemism for child molester]. I didn't know what it was. 'If you please, m'am, the boys outside told me I was a liliomtipro.' It was quite an embarrassing situation. I was a member of a youth group. I don't remember the name anymore. It was in the building here on Vali Street, probably owned by Jews. It was a Zionist organisation. We danced and sang. In fact, we even put on plays. I remember I had to be the part of an old Jew - since I had that kind of voice - in the flight from Egypt. That play would stand on its own today as well, I sang 'I'm a old Jew with a grey uncovered head...' I had a relatively good voice, I would have liked to be an opera singer. I studied singing for a while.

At the age of seventeen, my father bought a plot of land in Erd, all three of us boys are there in a photograph. We put a wooden cottage on it, it was nearly in the forest. We ate fruits there. One day, on a Monday, because generally we went out there on the weekend, my mother was walking on the street and she met a girlfriend who said, 'Hey, don't you know that your son is at home with a fever of 40 Degrees [C. - 104 F.]?' 'No.' Mother rushed home. There I lay with a 40 degree fever, she called a doctor immediately. They determined that I had stomach typhus. Stomach typhus is a contagious disease. Mother didn't allow me to be taken to the hospital, they put a red notice on the door of our three bedroom apartment that there's a contagious person in the apartment, no entry allowed. We had a separate room, mother and I. Nobody in the family slept there, they didn't even come in, just mother nursed me. I survived.

I can present a simple thing that isn't so connected to religion as it is to my heritage. They didn't just teach me the 'Hiszkegy' ['I believe in one God' - first line of the Apostolic Creed, but here referring to a supplication known as the Hungarian Creed, which continued, 'I believe in one Homeland'. In 1920, the Association of Defense Leagues held a competition for a prayer or expression that would be appropriate for 'the reinvigoration of the revengeful mind'. It was won by Szerena Sziklay Papp-Vary, a 'lost daughter' from Felvidek (the upper lands), a territory that went to Czechoslovakia after the (Versailles) Treaty of Trianon. Between the wars, it was played at every official function, and even schoolchildren recited it daily together before classes, though not the entire fifteen verses, just the first which ended: .../I believe in the eternal justice of God / I believe in the resurrection of Hungary.] They raised us with that, that we were Hungarians. I never experienced discrimination in my youth, nor as a soldier, nor anywhere, except in wartime. They taught us the Hiszkegy, this Magyarism - I heard such talk that it makes tears come to my eyes. I felt so Hungarian and I still am one today. I feel like I'm a Hungarian of Jewish religion. That's why I worked for the Homeland, and if possible, if it was necessary, I always said I was a Magyar. Rabbi Zoltan Radnoti asked me what my Jewish name was. I said I didn't know. True, I went to the realgymnasium, we had religion classes, but I don't know how to read Hebrew, and can only say a few lines of prayer. They raised us differently. But I'm a god-fearing man!. My faith is Jewish, but I'm a Hungarian.

When school finished, I became a helper, then in 1939 they called me up to go to the Karoly base [today, the Petofi Base on Budaorsi Road]. From 1939 to the fall of 1940, I was a soldier in the

Karoly Base, in Budapest, in I don't know what number infantry regiment. But at the time of the Transylvanian Invasion, we went with the 32nd Infantry regiment, I definitely remember that. [Second Vienna Decision] [7](#).

They called us in to active duty. We joined up. I was a Karpaszomany [officer candidate - status was given to those with high school diplomas who were called to active duty and given reserve officer training] in the battalion. There were five Karpaszomany, and two of those were Jews, three Christians. I would also like to say about the service, that as reserve officers we were treated differently, but there was no difference between who was Jewish and who wasn't. Only after we finished training, five months, were the reserve officers taken to officer school. That was in 1939. Of course, then they didn't take us two Jewish candidates to officer school, just the Christian ones. But after that there weren't any problems. For us, as candidates, we didn't have to wash the toilets and mop the floors. But they taught me discipline there. I'll just give you one example. There was a shelf above every bed. Soldiers kept their equipment on the shelf, because there was our practice uniform and our drill uniform. We had to wear the drill uniform on guard duty. We went up to the Castle, for guard duty, there you had to be in that [uniform]. It had to be on the shelf like it was straight out of the box. If it wasn't, the officer came by and swept it off. Night, or day. Once they sent me back from the gate, 'come back in drill uniform', you could leave on the weekends, I lived a short hop away from the base, they sent me back: 'The volunteer gentleman's gloves are not white.' You needed white gloves, black pants, tunic. Fine, I had another pair of gloves in my pocket, so I went down with those, and they let me out. They taught me, and this comes now from a person's inner habits, that you respect people who are older, or know more than you.

In 1940, there was the occupation of Transylvania. We got back Transylvania! I took my trumpet with me, despite the fact that only the national guard had company buglers. As a reserve officer, even if I'd never played the notes, I'd have better known the bugle signals. I was a platoon commander, I'll never forget it. The first big village was Szilagynagyfalu. The company camped there. Then we were regrouped, we went into Transylvania, under the name the 32nd Infantry Regiment. On the main square, as we were getting into formation, us Hungarian soldiers held such a performance, tears poured from my eyes. I felt so much patriotism that we'd gotten back Transylvania. They knew I had my trumpet, and asked me, instead of the bugler to sound the retreat, because they'd never heard that in their lives. Of course on pistons, retreat sounds very different than on a soldier's bugle.

After I was demobilized, I lived a civilian life until 1942, nothing especially interesting. In 1941, Father died in less than a month, at the age of sixty-one in our apartment. Luckily, because at least he never lived through Fascism. They had already treated him for his heart, and they determined, if I know well, that it was his coronary artery. Today they call it, what I also had: a heart attack. Dad is buried in the Rakoskeresztur Jewish Cemetery. I don't remember what his funeral was like.

In 1941 I worked there, where he had been a partner earlier, I was a store manager Downtown. I wound up in his position. In those times, here in Buda, on the corner of Vali Street, where we lived, there was a cast-iron stove in the bathroom. We heated with the business correspondence every morning. So my dad could have some warm water, if he wants to wash up. That's how it was then, we couldn't save the papers.

I was called up to work service [Forced labor] in Domony in March of 1942. Domony is next to Aszod, we were there for about a week. The trumpet saved my life. You must hear this! I'll never forget, I went over to the camp commander, "Please sir, I know all the bugle signals. I've got my cornet at home, can I go get it?" "Like hell! Get someone to bring it in!" My mother brought it in. Then came the time of the deportations. Deportations took place at Aszod. The farewells that happened there, you could write that down. A captain in shining patent leather boots, with shining elegance, had the Jews lined up. "Rotten, stinking Jews! You are now going away, to Russia! Rotten bastards! You, living in this country, will not be coming back home alive." These were his words. And all the while, he proudly beat on his riding boots, like the gentry of the time, with his riding crop. After that they ordered the 'khipis' [Yiddish: search], it's an expression they used for the body searches. Money, cigarettes, they took everything. Into the train cars! Crammed into one boxcar, I don't know how many people fit in. Cattle cars, of course. The train started, suddenly we just stop somewhere, and one from the henchmen is walking along the trains. Where's the bugler? Where's the Bugler? They took me out, and stuck me in a third-class car, where the all the henchmen were. And I remember, in those days the storage compartment in these third-class cars was a flat board overhead, and I slept up there, because I knew I wouldn't catch cold there. The point is, the train stopped in the morning, I had to blow reveille. Then we arrived in the Ukraine, I don't know the name of the place anymore. We stopped in the Ukraine, they took us out, there was a forest, everybody had to sleep there. But I have to tell you one more lucky thing! They split the thousand into two. Half went to a captain named Gecso, into the hands of a bastard rotten to the bone, and my company went to another. A human! [He puts special accent on this word to mention the person's humane character.] I said that was the luck of my life, heads or tails! I had a friend, Laci Jakab, I don't think he's alive anymore. The two of us were lying in a bush. I had a good windbreaker, we put it over my head, over our heads, because sometimes it rained. We slept in a hollow or whatever we were laying on, on the ground. Then we started walking.

We walked, the company went, there was a kitchen with us, it wasn't cruelty. We went across Kursk all the way to Stariy Oskol [A city on the Ukrainian-Russian border, 100 km from Kursk]. That was the farthest we went. I was there for a half a year. That was the end station. From there we just came back. This was about, from the Don, the Don frontline, about 50 or 100 kilometers. [Don River Bend] [8](#) We'd gone through Kiev, walked that way and camped there. And again I was lucky. The henchmen knew that I was a soldier before. They promoted three from the henchmen to be snipers. They only had revolvers for weapons. They didn't understand them. I started to take the revolvers apart, clean them and work them.

One of the sergeants was a human being! I'll even tell you his name, Hanzrik, I don't remember his Christian name. I'd heard that he'd been a building caretaker assistant in Ujpest, but he was a human. And how human he was shows in the following. He took me to be his runner. It's just like being an officer's servant. In Stariy Oskol, when the company decamped, during morning rollcall I had to stay in the sergeant's quarters to make his lunch. And after rollcall, they split up the group to work, half for the Germans and half for the Hungarians, because Stariy Oskol was the supply group for the 2nd National Guard Infantry Regiment. The supply group means that there were boots, shoes, food, everything that the army needed, supplies for the army out on the Don. The boys always came to me, I was the information center. 'Don't shit your pants, kids, we're going home alive!' They went out to the warehouse to work. They split up those who belonged to the

Germans and who belonged to the Hungarians. Everybody wanted to go to the Germans, because the Germans said, 'Here's two boxcars, unpack it, and after you can sit down.' The Hungarians said, 'Unpack two boxcars, then sweep, then pack...' The Hungarians never gave them rest breaks, they always found something to occupy them. The Hungarian supply was the warehouse where the boys worked. And the boxcars arrived, they had to be packed or unpacked.

In Stariy Oskol I was quartered with a Russian family. There was an old lady, and a girl about thirteen years old and a boy about ten years old. We lived there, the sergeant and I, those were our quarters. We lived there for a half a year. We got along very well with them. I supplied them with everything. We worked in the supply group, nobody knew what was happening in the war. Once a Hungarian soldier just showed up, without a hat or weapon, screaming. 'The Russians are coming, the Russians are coming!' The woman, when they said 'Beware, the Russians broke through the Don, the Russians are coming!', she said to me - her name was Borisz - 'We'll hide you.'. She bought me a 'rubaska' [Russian: shirt]. It has buttons on the side, and a high neck. She said, 'We'll supply you with everything, stay here! Nothing will happen to you.' I said, 'I'm sorry but my mother is waiting for me in Budapest, I have to go.' Well, of course, the regiment packed up, and the next day we left to go back. On foot, of course. When it was time to retreat, our dear Hungarian smartguys 'forgot' to share out the warehouse, they burned the whole thing. It was a really hard winter, at least 20 or 30 degrees [below zero C.]. Everything was covered in snow. Of course, on foot, with the national guard in wagons, because there was a camp wagon. And I had to watch the sergeant's loot, which he collected, these samovars, which he'd packed up. He put it on a wagon, one horse, a boy and I went in that, on the road home, two of us, me and Laci Jakab in this wagon. The Hungarian soldiers were a little scared, because they heard that in the Briansk forest there were a lot of partisans. [Briansk was taken by the Germans in the fall of 1941. There were significant numbers of partisans in the surrounding forest until 1943]. Since they knew that I was a soldier, they gave me a sergeant's tunic, to put on if perhaps we were attacked by partisans, so the officer wouldn't come to harm. They'll attack me instead [The national guard ministry decreed in March of 1942 that Jews in labor battalions must wear their civilian clothes, and sew a yellow armband, but many groups had taken uniforms away from Jews by the end of 1941. The retreating army protected their officers by dressing 'work service' laborers in soldiers uniforms.]

The retreat started. When they [Russians] broke through the German frontline, we retreated into the snow by wagon, which was the sergeant's. I always said, I'm going to survive this, I am sure of that! And when my friend sat next to me on the wagon, I always went next to him by foot on purpose, just walked. I was in good condition, no problems walking. The mentality is characteristic of the kinds of people there are. The company caught up with us. I was in a sergeant's uniform, my friend was up on the wagon like a driver. One of the Hungarians - I don't know what rank of soldier - thought that I was an officer: 'Tell me, comrade, why do you let that stinking Jew ride on the wagon?' 'I'd be stupid to ride there', I answered, since the activity kept me a little warm. They went on. There are also these kind of people. What? A Jewish person isn't like any other? I can't differentiate to this day who is a Hungarian, a Croat or a Serb.

Later, along the road I saw people frozen. The wind was the worst. That march wasn't a game. The part of Russia that's between the Urals and Europe, is for the most part a plain. The Russians built cities on the mountains. We came home past Zhitomir and Berdichev [Ukrainian cities]. We're going with the company, we tried to march normally. My horse weakened, because we didn't have

anything to give him, since we fell behind the company. The sergeant was with the company then, that was where he belonged. The company disappeared. There were two of us left, me and Laci Jakab. And yes, the horse was going to collapse. For God's sake, I don't know what a farmer would say to this, but I grabbed the horse's legs and straightened them. We went, little by little, in steps. We arrive at a village. And I have to mention that along the road we met one or two Russian peasants. I learned Russian out there. Not grammatically, but a lot of Russian words. The three or four kilometers, that meant we'd get there by evening. Really, it was a habitable place, one house, empty, we went in. We took the horse inside too. The horse collapsed, we couldn't give him anything to eat. We got something together, we stood him on his legs. We left in the morning. We came out of the house. Just snow. Deep, almost to your knees, and it was mainly cold. We started scratching our heads. Which way do we go? Hungary is west from here, we checked the sun's position, started toward the west. There wasn't a road to follow, nothing. After a day of walking we arrived to some place. I went looking for the 'tarosta' [starosta - Russian: village judge], that's the mayor of the village. I said to him, I've got a healthy horse, it's just hungry. I'd like to exchange it. He said it's possible, except that the Germans took everything. Wait a second, the baker has a horse with lice. I said that would be fine. We got the lousy horse, and kept going, and we left them the other horse. We kept going, and all of a sudden we caught up with the company. They had stopped somewhere to rest. We didn't have food. They'd taken all the food with them. When we caught up with the company, from then on we walked with them, and walked, all the way across Kursk, Zhitomir, Berdichev, Ivnya, Sumi, Tarnopol [today: Ternopol] [all Ukrainian cities] - these are the names that stuck in my head, these are the places, I don't know what order they came in, we went past them. I'll never forget it, we're going across Kursk, what is the Hungarian officer's problem? He stops the wagon of those who don't properly salute him. He adjusts his tunic buttons, they weren't proper. These things come to his mind, when people are dying in Don. We went past Kursk farther into the Ukraine, to [Stariy] Uzhica [a settlement where the Dnyester and the Uzhicarivers meet]. The company made camp here. We went for at least a week, we went, and went and I always arranged housing for the sergeant. I had one idea, because I knew there were a lot of lice, and the alpha and omega out there were lice. Every peasant house had a veranda, a closed veranda, which was square. We slept out there on the wood bench, because I could clean that off. The peasants slept on the 'piechka' [Russian: stove; a large earthenware oven], which here is the part next to the stove, they slept on that. We stayed in at least thirty places in one month. Because the distance from one village to the next was 15-20 kilometers. That took us from morning til evening to do that. There were always horses lying on the side of the road. It's interesting, people could take the fatigue and hardship better than the horses. You saw a lot of horses die, not so many people.

Russian peasants are kind-spirited, simple, good-hearted people, I'll never forget that. In one place, I asked the matron of the house, the old lady, 'How is life as life goes?' She had two children, the Germans took them to Germany to work. I said, my stomach is hurting me terribly. She said, 'Come here.' She took me into the garden, broke off a garlic, 'Eat that' I ate the garlic and in five minutes my stomach-ache stopped. They were pitifully poor people, as are most villagers in general. Especially when I said I was in the work service. There wasn't any discrimination [from Sergeant Hanzrik]. No racial slurs or humiliation or anything. He kept strict discipline, you had to get used to that.

Without exception in every direction, instead of hostility, generosity shone from the peasants. They told us where we should lie down. I told one of the Russian women that even though I'm in a soldier's uniform, I'm a Jew in the work service. And she said, she's got children too, the German's took them, and she really feels sorry for us.

In [Stariy] Uzhica, they housed the company in a school. Yes, but I was still the driver. And the company had five wagons, we took them for food acquisition to the military supply dump, where we picked up the food and took it to the camp. We agreed to sleep next to one another in the upper part of the stable, where there was some kind of hay, so that between us there was at least a meter of space. Because if one of us gets attacked by lice, he won't give it to the next guy. All of us survived.

In the morning, we went in to the company, us five drivers to have breakfast. Every morning the kids who had died during the night were put out, our friends [labor servicemen]. We had to put them on the wagons and take them to Dorosini, to the hospital. Hell, it was hospital! It was a wood shed. There were some whose stomachs were still moving. Some of them were dead, some not, a lot of the dying were stuck in with the dead. Because what did they die of? Flekktyphus [or spot typhus, a contagious disease with high-fever and headache, mainly carried by lice]. The epidemic raged, and it killed at least a third of the Jewish work servicemen [labor battalion]. And this typhus was spread by lice. That's what we did every morning, for at least two weeks, transported the dead. What did they do in the end when we'd almost lost everything? They burned it. There were a couple of doctors in there, too. Also, work service [forced labor battalion] doctors who were treating whomever it was still possible to. Everything inside burnt, they shot anyone who tried to leave! That was the hospital. [Dorosini Massacre: Thousands of forced laborers who claimed they had typhus or really had typhus were led to the Dorosini kolhoz village, which lies west of Kiev. Here there was a makeshift quarantine 'hospital', which was made of a few rooms of a brick building, the majority of the patients were put in open sheds. The quarantine area was fenced with barbed wire. A dozen or so people died daily, the bodies were placed in a stable nearby in piles. On April 30, 1943, the last day of Pesach, the authorities decided to put a final end to the epidemic. They set one of the sheds on fire with about 800 forced laborers inside. The unfortunate patients jumped out of the building like human torches, and then the henchmen opened fire upon them with machine guns. About a dozen wounded managed to escape. As soon as the news of the horrors in Dorosini reached National Guard Minister Nagybaczonyi Nagy, he immediately named a military tribunal, and ordered an investigation to determine the origins of the fire and persons responsible. According to the investigation summary report, no one was responsible, the fire was probably caused by a few Jews among them who smoked. There was no mention of the bloodbath which the henchmen around the shed committed.]

There were searches quite often. After all, there was a camp court. And they found, I'd say, 200 pengo [or 'silver forint' - Hungarian currency until 1946] on me. I hid it, it's good to have a little money. There were about eight of us who hid away something. They took us to the camp court and most of us got a year and a half or two years prison for the charge selling military hard currency. Because we were abroad, not in Hungary where they considered forints hard currency. They took us away, and judged us, then later, when we got home, they put us in prison.

We were in [Stariy] Uzhica for probably a month. From there we could come back to Europe by train. We arrived in Hungary, in the fall of 1943, probably November. Of course, they put the whole company – I don't know how many thousands there were who survived – into quarantine, and it was understandable, in Jaszbereny. Because of the lice. At the time, the Kallay government was in power here in Hungary [Miklos Kallay – Prime Minister of Hungary from March 9 to March 21 of 1942]. The Kallay government was considerably softer than those before them [The Bardossy government]. A high-ranking officer showed up, "File in!". They wrote down which of us was in the quarantine, about 500 of us, 400 maybe. He gave such a speech about how these work servicemen were truly out there for their homeland, and the 2nd National guard – he gave us the whole nine yards. We were relieved, he spoke so nicely. Then there was another interesting scene. Those who didn't get flekktyphus stand aside. I was in such shape, hats off. I was 32-33 and thin. I didn't gain any weight on the Russian front. The ones who were fatter, they died. There were doctors among them, lawyers, I don't know, those who lived better off [before forced labor], they died halfway through the trip. In general, thin people are more tenacious. Now the quarantine is over, everyone can go home. There were eight of us who had been convicted by the military tribunal. Because of the money. There was a prison transport bus waiting for us. We couldn't go home, instead they took us right to Martirok Road, to the National Guard Prison there [the Margit Ringroad Military jail].

They took me to prison, this could have been in the middle of November 1943. The lawyer came in, just like in a normal prison. Bela Zsolt, the writer was in the same prison as me, we talked with him. [Bela Zsolt (1895-1949): writer, journalist. From 1939, he was no longer allowed to work as a journalist due to the Jewish Laws. From 1942, he was in forced labor. In 1944, he freed him from the Nagyvarad ghetto with false papers, and he escaped to Switzerland. In 1945, he returned home, and became the national representative of the Hungarian Radical Party from 1947. His book 'Nine Coffers' (1947) portrayed the world in the Nagyvarad ghetto.] Inside the prison, he collected the youth around him, and held lectures about Communism. I didn't go over there, the same way as I've done my whole life with politics, it didn't interest me. There were ten of us in a cell. And we got lucky again. I say, life is heads or tails. On Miklos Horthy's nameday [Horthy, Miklos] [9](#) it was December Fifth [Feast of St. Nicolas (Miklos) is December 6th.], we were freed in an amnesty for that occasion. Then we could go home! We didn't have to serve our time. I was freed on December 5th, and then I came home. This was in 1943.

The part between work service [forced labor] fell out of my memory. I was a civilian for five months. I lived with my mother, nothing special happened. My mother and I lived in the Vali Street apartment. She made the food. In this period, before I was conscripted to the second work service [forced labor], German soldiers moved into the building next to ours, into the Vali street school. They kicked the Jews out of the house next door – there wasn't a ghetto, yet – they sent the Jews to a star house [Yellow star houses]. I was already conscripted into the work service then. We had to leave our apartment. My mother went with my fiancée's [not the same woman who became his wife, there is no further mention of this woman] parents to a star house, if I recall correctly, in 2 Suto Street.

In March of 1944, I got the next workservice enlistment letter. Luckily, we ended up in a Pest company, in Legrady Street. The task of the company, was to go out to the Rakoskeresztur cemetery to bury the German dead. We had to dig the graves, and when there was an ominous

national guard burial, we had to stand off to the side so the Germans didn't see us. Then we had to bury them, ...etc. This went on for about three or four weeks.

Lucky again! One of my friends was inside one of the central offices, I was a squad leader, and we went by the tram that starts from Nepszinhaz Street out to the cemetery. I remember, his name was Ormain. I said, 'Gyuri, you're in the office, close [to the news]! I know that there are transports [to concentration camps] from Hungary. Tell me if you see they're taking the company to the West, because I know they're going to take us, no matter if we are just burying soldiers. At that moment, as soon as you know they'll be transporting the company, then, please, wait for me here at Nepszinhaz Street at the cross walk, and we'll both take off.' That's how it happened. It wasn't hard, there wasn't too much discipline, I was a commander, I had to watch the others. We skipped out, and spent a night in one of the attics of a building on Nepszinhaz street. From there we went to the star house on 2 Suto Street to find my mother, and his wife. The point is, we had a great time in the star house for one day. There were girls there, us young men looked at the girls, well of course, they were pretty, we flirted a little. There were families, but no men. We were the only two. Yeah, but one of the girls had a sergeant courting her. She said, 'Boys,' - we both went over - 'don't stay here! I've got a 'telach' [Yiddish: fair-haired] company. It's not a publicly known company', she said. 'We've got a kitchen, everything, in Fot. I'll take you there and hide you!' It was probably the remains of a company of Hungarian soldiers who retreated from Russia, they must have broke off somehow. Well, during the retreat the regiments were scattered. [As incredible as it sounds, on the brink of the collapse of the German Army, this could easily have happened in the total chaos.]

The sergeant took us out. The next day they evacuated the house. The people were taken to the brick factory, and from there to the ghetto. The next day we were already in Fot, there we met the others who we hid together with from then on. We wound up in a peasant house. The window was open. Under the window, we laid down on the straw, five of us boys. They walked past the window, we heard people speaking German, German soldiers came and went. We laid there, if I remember, for five days. The peasants left us alone, because they didn't have a cellar. They had gone one street over to some acquaintances where there was a cellar, and hid themselves there. Because at that time there were bombings. If the Germans had opened the door just once - again a lucky thing - first, they'd shoot us because we were military deserters, there was a law in those times that said army deserters will be executed. Second, because we were Jews. One day we hear, 'Davaj, davaj' [Russian: Let's go, let's go]. Are these Russians? We opened the door, the Russian soldiers came in, there were about four or five of them. I spoke Russian with them. Where did you come from? They said, 'From above Vac.' Okay - I told the boys, get dressed, if they leave, we go the way that they came from. The Germans are definitely coming back this way. And I was so right. The Germans took back Fot. There was a time when they came from Buda to there, then went back, then came back again as the battle developed. The next day the Germans came back, then they were kicked out. [The German military command was unsuccessful at stopping the Soviet encroachment from north of the Danube. Balassagyarmat fell on December 9th, and the 6th Armoured Division's left wing reached the Danube at Vac. The capitol was practically defenseless from the north for days. Major General Gunther von Pape, the Feldherrnhalle military group commander decided on an immediate counter-attack. The retaking of Fot became the task of the 2nd Parachute Battalion from the Feldherrnhalle units on the left, and with the help of the Hungarian 10th Infantry Division.

On 13 December, at a cost in lives of ten percent of the armies, Fot was retaken, but on the evening of the 14th it was lost again.] We were so lucky that we went to Vac. I reported there to the Russian commander. We worked for them: I arranged blankets for their housing, the housing of the soldiers passing through. That lasted at least a week. I told them, give me a 'bumaskat' [Russian: piece of paper] that says I worked here. I asked for an identification. They gave it to me. But in the end I really didn't use it.

When we left for Vac, somehow, somewhere on the road, we got a small sled, we pulled it and our stuff was on it so we didn't have to carry it on our backs. I'll never forget it, in Hatvan we went through a forest, and we hear - us, who had been through everything, in Russia, the Ukraine, we were so experienced that we could adjust to anything. And we were young - we hear Hungarian voices. We quickly ran into the forest, and laid down on the ground. We watched. That's when they drove the people from Hungary to the 'malenkij robot' [Russian: 'a little work']. There were officers among them, you could see by their clothes, there were civilians, too. We laid flat in the snow, retreated, we kept going, and came to Pest. We arrive in Zuglo where the railway overpass is. The Russians captured us. They led us away to ballast the rails. We went to work for an hour or an hour and a half. I went up to a Russian soldier, started chatting, about this, that, the other thing, where we came from, where we're going. 'Boys, I've cleared it with the Russian for us to go get lunch and then come back.' All five of us left, and we skipped out. Thank God. We'd been through everything. Then we went home, I found my mother. And my friend, Ormai found his wife. Then came civilian life nice and slow. Like I said, my life is heads or tails.

When I got home, I didn't meet any of my old neighbors, I came across my mother, we got a share-rent house [Share-renting] [10](#). My mother and I lived in a share rent in one room. We share rented with a very decent elderly couple in a two-bedroom apartment, in O street. When they built the pontoon bridge [During the course of the siege of Budapest, the retreating German armies blew up all the bridges over the Danube. During their reconstruction, pontoon bridges served to re-connect the city.] on the Danube, then I went over to Buda, you could go over then, but on foot of course, to see my old apartment. I ring the bell, the door opens, there's a soldier buddy of mine. They had transferred it to him. He was a refugee from somewhere and they moved him in there! But during the war. We greeted each other, I said I had wanted to get back my apartment, but I don't mind [that he stays there], since he has two children.

My wife was born in 1921 in Kaposvar. Her maiden name was Zsuzsa Kaufer. She had no siblings. Before the war, she had been a student. She graduated from Civil School. I also know she studied a kind of corset-making. At that time, corsets were really fashionable for women. I saw her certificate among some old papers, which says that she was a free to be an official corset maker. My wife's parents lived average civilian lives. They didn't go to temple. Before the war, my wife married Robert Braun in 1940, who worked in Csepel at the Egyesult Izzo as a chemical engineer [The Egyesult Izzo and Villamos Rt. (United Bulb and Electricity Co.) never had a factory in Csepel, though its' director, Lipot Aschner, had founded a paper factory there in 1923]. They lived together for about one year and then her husband was called up for work service [forced labor] where he died. That's all I know about him. My wife worked during the war in the Elnok Street warehouse, it was a military warehouse. It was a kind of public service work. Jewish girls did it, they sewed soldier uniforms. [It was forced labor.] She was taken away to the ghetto from there. I know that Zsuzsi was liberated there in the ghetto.

My wife and I met at a conference that the Kereskedok Orszagos Szovetsege [National Association of Merchants] held. I met her there, she was with a tall, grey-haired man – her father. We met there. I went up to their place, they invited me over. And we became friends. In 1947, we got married in the VI. District municipal building. We only had a civil wedding. I don't know where we went for our honeymoon. We don't have any children. We didn't want any. And today my wife definitively announced, thank god we didn't, because to have brought Jewish children into this world would have been a sin.

When I got married in 1947, we lived in a three-room apartment in Aradi Street. The house was very dilapidated, but the place itself was a pretty, streetside apartment. The stairwell looked like, you couldn't imagine it. My wife and I were in one of the rooms, the hall was in the middle and mother had her own separate room. Of course, I corresponded with Imi the whole time. And mother says that when she saw that now my situation is getting squared away, she'd like to go out to Imi, so we submitted a [travel] request and before that exchanged apartments. In those times, if somebody had one room more than they needed, they had to give that room out to a share-renter, that's why we wanted to exchange apartments within a year. In the end, we found one in Kelenfold. We wound up here [they moved out of Aradi Street in 1952], in the beautiful green belt. We continued our lives here. There wasn't hot water, nor cold water, nor heating here, only as much as I heated. It was good. Mom, when she first submitted the request, she moved in with a girlfriend, so that we could exchange apartments, but they refused her. They accepted her second request. Mother emigrated to Reno, and that's where she died at age 88.

Then I had enough of being without water, heating, and we started to look for another apartment, but we looked for a year, until we finally found an adequate place. This is a small apartment, one and a half rooms, hall, for then it was very good. We've lived here since 1952 in the XI. District. I go out front uncountable times, to where we lived in our childhood.

My oldest brother, Gyorgy found a position after the war here at home as a civil servant. In those days, in 1945 it was enough if somebody could write and count. I know that he was a civil servant for the Csemege Nagykereskedelmi Vallalat [Delicacy Wholesale Enterprise] among others. Then he worked as a clerk in some factory. Gyuri was a 'grey soldier' here in Hungary. He worked here, worked there, he had a really good wife, and they have a daughter, who's already retired. She's my last living relative, because I haven't got any children or other relatives. We didn't have children, nobody. She's the only one, who calls every two days.

After the war, civil life started up. Then, still before the Rakosi Period [Rakosi Regime] [11](#), there was such freedom, an interval when half eastern and half western – everybody did whatever they wanted [Coalition Years in Hungary]. I set myself up in business in downtown. I got a little money. I started doing business with an old lady in part of her shop, unfortunately with the same thing (fashion goods) she sold. I didn't last long, I went bust after a year and a half. Others were selling gold, they got rich. The good merchants got rich, I went bankrupt. I wasn't the merchant type, despite the fact that my father had commerce in his veins. My wife's father was a textile wholesaler in Rumbach Sebestyen Street, my wife worked there, and after I went under, I went there [to work].

My wife and I went to drink a 'black' [espresso coffee] in Kiraly Street, there was a pastry shop there. Since I didn't have so much work, we started talking in the pastry shop, we were on good

terms with the pastry chef, and he hired me as his sales rep. He gave me a bag, there were different pastries in it, which I went around the city with – and whatever was left in the evening, we ate at home, of course. Sure enough, then came the nationalizations, they nationalized the pastry shop [Nationalization in Hungary] [12](#). They nationalized me, too. Then they established the Edessegbolt Vallalat [Sweetshop Enterprise]. They employed me there, made me an accounts department director, they knew I had a high school diploma – in those days, they got the qualified people. They gave me 6-7 women to do accounts. We sat at a long table. One was a cleaning lady, and one, even, was an intellectual. They wrote the invoices.

So we invoiced at the Edessegbolt Vallalat. The enterprise gave retail confectioners the invoices. On one occasion, the director came in, he was a very decent person. He came in and said, 'Comrade S., please come into my office.' What do they want with me? I went into the office, there were two men waiting. He introduced me. Then he said the men were here from the tax accounting office, and someone reported the enterprise for having sixteen trucks and the registration and administration of these sixteen trucks ...True, there's a vehicle clerk, but nothing's in order. We called you in, because we know that you have a driver's license. They knew, but I don't know where from. Take it? I'll take it. Why wouldn't I have taken it, there was a vehicle clerk there, but he was younger than me. After that, I got ahold of all the 'Magyar Kozlony' [Official Legal Code Gazette] which were connected to this, I read through them at home, learned it, and at the same time, there was a course the Kozlekedesi and Postaügyi Ministerium [Transportation and Postal Ministry] was starting up, the enterprise signed me up. From then on, I was the vehicle commander. I had to get all the papers and transportation logs in order. I did the registration.

The Edessegbolt Vallalat transportation department was fused with the FUSZERT Szallitasi Vallalat [Spice Transportation Enterprise]. They had 150 vehicles. I was there for a half year. Then the FUSZERT Szallitasi Vallalat was combined with the Belkereskedelmi Szallitasi Vallalat [BSzV-Internal Commerce Transportation Enterprise]. They also had a 150 trucks. Now there was about 300 trucks. Both places had vehicle clerks, but neither had any registration, administration, so naturally, who did they have do it? Me. The Belkereskedelmi Szallitasi Vallalat was on Marias Street. There were five or six places in the country that had transferred departments which had no registration. Never in a million years, would anyone there have said to me what comrade Gecs said when we departed for the Ukraine, that I'm a rotten, stinking Jew. Nobody! My colleagues were the same as me. I mean, there was no discrimination. There were maybe 300 drivers.

They offered me a high function, despite the fact that I wasn't a party member. Keep in mind, that starting from 1946 all the way to 1956, but even after that too, until the regime changes [1989 Political Changes] [15](#), they named special functionaries from the party members. They wanted to give me a function, but I told them, thanks anyway! I would rather remain a 'grey soldier' [an infantryman, meaning one of the silent masses]. I do what I do, and what I don't, I don't do. I didn't need to work myself to death.

Then came 1956 [1956] [16](#). In October of 1956, my wife and I were on sick leave in Parad [a union referred convalescent vacation]. Our two weeks were up, but wouldn't you know it... there was a revolution in the meantime. We didn't know about it, because we were in Parad. But we found out when they opened Recsk. [Recsk Labor Camp] [17](#). Recsk was close to Parad. We couldn't go home, there wasn't any form of transportation. Well, we stood watch, night and day, because we knew

that civil law prisoners were released as well as the political ones. [sic - The workcamp in Recsk was not for civil law prisoners, only political ones. Civil law prisoners were released from different prisons during the revolution.] Our two weeks ran out. They let us stay for two or three more days. Since Parad is in the Matras [the highest mountain range in northern Hungary], the Galyateto Hotel and the other bigger hotels were supplied by the BSzV trucks between Kekes and Gyongyos [Hungarian towns]. We made a deal with one of the drivers, since his family was also in Budapest, to go back with him. November, it's snowing, winter, snow drifts. The truck came for us in Parad, we went down to Hatvan, and from there we came home. It was pretty rough going, plus the driver could barely see [the road] because of the snow drifts. I'm telling you this because of the connection to the BSzV. That helped us out at the time.

In 1956, by the way, trucks from my workplace left for Vienna. The employees took each other out. Among my workmates, whoever wanted to leave, they could leave! [emigrate] At the time, that's how it was - if you wanted to leave, you left. I didn't want to, because my wife was here, my mother was here still, who were everything to me. They took the boys out, those who wanted to go, and the next day the trucks came back. Those who didn't want to be a dissident, they brought the trucks back.

Between 1956 and 1957 an order came that the country's somewhat official truckdrivers were obligated to take the new KRESZ [Highway Code] examination. Well, those that were going to take it, had to go to the Kozlekedesi es Postaugyi Ministerium to do the test. Well, they picked me too, because they already knew my name in the ministry - I was this well-known guy. There were a couple boys from the ministry, so there were eight of us. I went home and studied like a schoolboy. I gave the book to my wife, who knew absolutely nothing about it [the subject] and told her to quiz me. I had to name a few places - just as an example - where you had to drive with extra caution. Sixteen places. For example, in a tunnel, narrow streets. I learned it. We went into the KPM and took the exam, we really had our hopes up. Because I was an enterprise clerk in the ministry, I passed. We took the test and we had to go around the country and give the test to I don't know how many thousands of people in the whole country, which they paid us for per head, and there were only maybe eight of us. Of course, we had to examine those drivers who belonged to the Internal Commerce Ministry, too. That was at least two thousand people. That took a while. Then in 1962, I got an order, like I mentioned already, they knew that this boy had something in his head. I should go into the Ministry. The director said, "Comrade S., we're employing you in the transportation board of directors, as the head clerk.' I wound up in the transportation board in the ministry. That lasted about two years or maybe one. Then they told me that there was a directive saying the transportation board is closing, and a will become a company trust. The director called me in, he asked me, 'T., what do you want to do?' There were two possibilities, stay with the trust where all the Internal Commerce transportation enterprises, food supply plants, light industry was going, or I could get into the ministry.

That's how I got into the Ministry. But I stressed that, true, I'm going into the ministry, but I'm not interested in joining the party. As you know, 98 percent of the employees in the Ministry were party members. I wound up in an office. I had two very sweet colleagues. Naturally, both were party members. When there were party meetings, I could go home. I liked it. They were very decent. Generally, at that time, office back-biting was common. Nobody plotted against me, because in this field, in internal commerce, I was alone. There weren't any rivals. The point is, that I was

responsible for the Internal Commerce Ministries' 140 enterprises, and in all those 140 enterprises, they had one or two cars and one or two trucks. In those days, the Transportation Ministry was the authority in transportation. And they proscribed what kind of registration was needed. They sent them all to me. I held a technical review annually.

Besides work, of course, there was my personal life. But first, my brothers. I can confidently say that I could never imagine not one brother as good as Imi. He helped me. After the war, he was one of the first to send me a package. He helped my mother. He was, in any case, such a generous creature. After 1956, he came here to visit every three years, he always spent part of the time at our house and part of the time in the hotel, up on the mountain, in the resort of the Union of Common Laborers. We were there for a month. It was very comfortable, really good. We went to Balatonlelle, we met them once in Athens, he had arranged a cruise for all of us out in America.

In the 1960s, private persons could already buy personal cars. Not one bigwig came to me (because they knew that I'm familiar with the vehicle park): 'T., we'd gladly give you an honorarium, for example, in Pecs. I like to buy a car for the food distribution plant and one for this and that, because I'm from Pecs. 'I'm sorry, but I don't sell any information to any one.' – I said. Nothing against you, but I just cannot be corrupted. My [monthly] pay was low, on the 20th or 25th [of the month], we always borrowed money from friends, but even so.

Once the head of the department asked me into his office. He said, 'Tibor with the consent of the vice-minister, you are to take over the administration of the AKF, that is the Allami Kereskedelmi Felugyelo [State Commerce Administration] cars and everything connected to it, and, of course, the required training. In the ministry, every year I held a lecture for all the vehicle clerks here in Vigado Street. My second job was training, that means, that I went together with them to the countryside. For extra money. This extra money was good for... So, my dear mother, who was out in America then, knew that I was crazy about cars. She sent me 300 dollars for me to try to buy a car somehow. Then you could buy a personal car. A German car merchant came to Budapest. Somehow I ended up socializing with him. We made a deal that I would have mother send him the 300 dollars from America. So send me a 500, not bigger, just a Fiat 500. Why? Because that has the lowest customs tax. The pay I got from the AKF exactly covered the customs tax. I remember, I had to pay two thousand forints a month. The customs tax on this little car was 24,000 forints. The car showed up in Csepel [large island in the Danube between Buda and Pest] by boat. Well, just a little Fiat 500. We laid underneath it, we laid on top of it. My wife called it 'Pudvinka'. It turned out that there was 75,000 kilometers on the car, and not like I made a deal with the German, that no car older than five years. This one was seven years old. Hey, but it was an amazing thing. Here on the street, when I brought the car home, besides mine there was only one other car. The roof of the car was plastic, and my dear, envious fellow patriots, or I don't know who, how do I say it... Anyway, the next morning the plastic roof was sliced up. The plastic roof was made of rubber, so I welded it back together, but I cried. You couldn't sell small cars for two years, but after that I sold it. After that – I was working in the ministry then – I was due to get a Trabant [A car made of compressed paper with a two-stroke engine. The first Trabant, the P-70, manufactured in East Germany from 1954-1958, went on sale in Hungary in 1956. Three varieties of Trabants were in production until 1964, when the P601 came available and was produced in one variety until production of Trabants stopped 1989. Trabants – as with all types of cars – could be acquired by paying 20 percent of the total price in advance, and waiting – often for 2-3 years – to get it.] Not

four years of waiting later, only a half year of waiting. I was the happiest man on the planet. I was equally just as happy, the first time I could buy a fridgidaire. That was a special pleasure, or [to buy] anything, which made life a little easier or more modern.

My ministry department manager was brilliant. In 1970 he said, 'Tibor, here's the director of the ROVIKOT [Knitwear and Sundries Wholesale Company], and they'd love to take you on as the transportation warehouse manager.' 'Well, since I've got so little work...OK!' It was the darkest point in my life, because there was scheming there. They put me in as the department head in place of another person. And they had liked the other person. I was a completely negative figure [to them], when I wound up there. Then I told the director at the ROVIKOT that if I live to be sixty, I'm going straight to retirement. I've had enough of this!

I retired at the age of sixty [in 1974]. Two or three months later the BSzV informs me that they'd hire me as a retiree to train people. The BSzV had affiliates then in Debrecen, Szeged, Nagykanizsa, Siofok, Kaposvar, and Pecs. I went out there as a retiree, to hold training classes in transportation, and I had a friend who did the commercial aspects. I gave classes not only on the KRESZ [driving code], but one or two on transportation ethics everywhere I went. We went off to these places every quarter year. I did that for fifteen years after I retired, so I was an active worker until the age of 75 at that company. I was registered as a retiree. I made more money than I did when I was an active worker, because I had my pension plus this work. I finally retired for good at the age of 74, that was in about 1989. I idly passed the time since then as an old pensioner. I missed work, and still do today, even at the age of 90. It makes me feel good, if I've got something to do at home.

When the Israeli State formed, it warmed my heart a little, but it never occurred to me to emigrate. Even today, it's a good feeling that the state of Israel exists.

When it was possible to emigrate, in 1956, I didn't go. Even though my brother really wanted me to. He loved me so much, the good lord could have loved me more than he did. But we didn't leave because my wife's parents were still alive then. We couldn't leave the two old people on their own. We didn't go anywhere, we have to stay home. We helped the two old folks a little from our modest salaries. Later, the older gentleman got sick, I took him then to the hospital and around - they called at night that my father in law was doing badly, we went over. My poor mother-in-law, when she was left alone after my father-in-law's death, she so couldn't handle being alone that one time I call my wife in the office where she worked, at a paint and chemical supply wholesale company. 'Hey, Zsuzsi, nobody's picking up the phone over there. I wanted to call your mother to find out what's up.' Both of us got ourselves together in the office and went home. My mother-in-law was lying in the room in bed, unconscious. We quickly called a doctor woman, the local area doctor, a very conscientious, smart lady. She came out and immediately determined that she'd taken pills. They rushed her by ambulance to Felsoerdosor [Street], that's where the hospital for suicide cases was. They pumped her stomach, then we lived for four years with her, and the two of us. She survived of course, but it was clearly very hard for her.

A woman comes over for two hours - Monday, Wednesday and Friday. She cleans and is a caregiver. This Christian woman left us a message last week, when there were the holidays [Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur], that read, 'Dear Mr. T and Ms. Zsuzsi! At this time of year, the Jewish new year just greeted us, and they usually say - she wrote it in Hebrew - that I was written into the

book of life [sic]. A Christian woman! It really touched us.

My wife and I went abroad for the summer by car every three years. [that is, to the West, since there were no travel restrictions for Socialist countries. After 1956, Hungarian citizens got a certain amount of dollars (for many years, seventy dollars) in travel money every three years. If this money wasn't requested (they were invited or went for an official function) they could travel every year.] We were in Italy, in Rimini. We went through Zagreb, then Fiume and then down to Rimini. Our destination was Florence. In Florence, we met my older brother [Imre] and his family. On the way back, we went to Rimini and we were there for a week. We get to Rimini, and the sign on a hotel says, 'Hotel Vienna'. I say, that's brilliant, they know German. I go in and say in German, 'I'd like a room.'. They say, 'Nicht Deutsch, but my husband speaks French.' 'Bring him out!' He comes over, I babble whatever is left over from my French [Tibor Salgó attended a 'realgynasium', where they didn't study classic languages but did have the modern ones – French, English and naturally German.] and I told him what I want. After a week we were really conversing well with each other. It was like that with my German, too. I went to Austria, it was hard to talk, but by the third day, it went well. I've got a feeling for languages, that is, I had one, unfortunately it's gone now.

Once I met Imre and his family in Austria. My oldest brother was there, also. I think, at some lakeside. We were at the Salzkammergut lakes. My older brother, Imi, his wife, Marion and my oldest brother George and his wife, Rozsika, all of us, the whole family had summer vacation there. I and my wife went by Trabant, I'll never forget it. They got into the Trabant, I say, let's go two lakes over. Well, they'd never been in a Trabant in their lives. They didn't laugh at us. It was probably strange for them, but they never said a word that wasn't said in a tone of love.

It was a huge thing to go over the border to Austria then. People today couldn't even imagine what the closed borders during Communism were like, what it meant to go to a free country. That was something! I parked the Trabant somewhere on the street in Salzburg and my wife and I went walking to look around. I come back, and they're standing around the car, the young people. I said to the kids, 'Schon! Auto von Papier! [German: Pretty. A paper car.] They started laughing. It was good, I had no problems. I thought it was funny, too.

Another time, my older brother was here, a year after the death of his wife. We went into the city, and he says, 'Tibor, I don't feel good.' So we stopped at the old Apponyi Square, now it's Ferenciek Square, he had some medicine with him to make him feel better. But it had already started, his Parkinson's [Parkinson's disease – a disease of nerves causing loss of motor-control], and really that's what he died from. Imi died in America exactly three years ago, in 2001. He's buried in Reno in an urn, just a marble slab which is level to the ground, it doesn't stick up. His wife is there, too. Marion wasn't Jewish, and she and my brother didn't live a Jewish life. I couldn't say why they never had children. Marion was two years older than him, and she died two years before he did [1999]. She was a secretary, and did some manager work for a French actor, as well.

My oldest brother [Gyorgy] died in the hospital, in the Robert Karoly Ringroad Hospital. I went in to see him every Sunday, and told him how great it will be, we can go to Sopron in the summer on doctor's orders. We went there for eight years straight, I always got convalescent leave. The next Sunday I went in, and the bed was empty. If we're going out on Vaci Road toward Ujpest, he's buried there in Angyalföld. Properly in an urn, cremated.

My wife got compensation now, along with her pension. She got it, and I get it for the work service [forced labor]. It was arranged in Germany. That's it. I'm not complaining. Praise God, I'm not in any pain. I understand that I'm going to be ninety years old this month. I can come and go, my problem is that my wife is very sick. But the doctors can't determine what the problem is. They say that it's a million various lung, heart... this and that. She was hospitalized twice.

My wife's parent's grave is out there, and my wife's uncle's grave is also out in the Rakoskeresztur Jewish cemetery. They don't reuse the graves in the Jewish cemetery. The grave speaks there forever. The old part, where our relatives are laid to rest, is very overgrown and there are a lot of ticks there, so we only go when it's cold. We're scared of the ticks. My friend was big on excursions, and died of Lyme disease.

I had a heart attack, yes, about fifteen or sixteen years ago. For two years after that, I came down the Gellert Hill every day, because I live here next to Gellert Hill. After two years, I was even going up it. But everyday. It could be that from that time on, even today, at ninety years old, every blessed day I'm on the street for at least an hour or an hour and a half. I go shopping in the meantime, and do this and that. My wife unfortunately doesn't go down to the street for three years now, I have to do all those things. But the rest isn't too bad, they bring lunch, we have all the little things, and someone to help...etc. I already picked out a my gravesite in the Rakoskeresztur Jewish Cemetery. It's guaranteed. Again, that's because I haven't got any relatives, who is going to take care of it? I have to take care of it.

Well, in as much as I'm Jewish, I can only say that I think here in the temple they were probably expecting me to show up. I told them I can pray at home, I can say the same things at home, like I say in Temple.

In the Jewish paper called 'Uj Elet' [Hungarian: 'New Life'] there was an article that said that Zoltan Radnoti became the rabbi here at the prayer house from last fall. [At 5 Karoly Gaspar Square], and the door was always closed, but then it was open on Saturdays. Jews were praying, there were old foxes like myself, but I didn't stay because though my religion is Jewish, we kept the religion with my father, but the war... it turned me away from it. It's not for the religion, I don't say today that I'm a Hungarian Jew. I'm a Hungarian of Jewish religion. They were praying there, we introduces ourselves, he was very kind, don't get upset, Mr. Rabbi, but I - unfortunately, or luckily - here, in the neighborhood (in Vali Street) the Cistercians [Christian Cistercian order of white monks] taught me the National Creed [sic? - The Cistercians did teach on Vali Street in the 1920s in the Szent Imre High School, he attended the Eotvos Jozsef realgymnasium or at least graduated from there.] I was raised with that. So I don't go to synagogue.

Yesterday I asked my wife the question. I said, Mother when were we last in a Jewish temple? She says she doesn't remember. I think it was during the time of our wedding, we didn't really go for the last fifty years. As a tourist, I was in the Dohany Street temple a couple times. It's miraculous. It's worth seeing for its' beauty, it's important, but I don't go there for holidays.

I have a very kind colleague with whom I go once a week. She's been coming to us for years, but since my wife is in such a condition that we can't have visitors, only I meet with her. She made a remark, she's Catholic, and a very religious Catholic who went to church every Sunday. At the time of the election, she went to the church Downtown and came out during the mass and said, 'I didn't

come for a lecture.' Because the priest was getting political. Well the priest shouldn't get political!. The priest should preach love. That was it. But it wasn't just her, a lot of strong listeners didn't like it. It makes no difference if you're Catholic or Protestant, or Calvinist or anything. Preach love, that's the thing, nothing else. So we see what there is in the world. One man kills the other. Is there anything more cruel than humanity? I can only say one thing. I saw on National Geographic, that if the lion has had his fill, you can calmly walk right past him. The lion won't attack a human. Even though we know that it's one of the wildest of the animals. Whether it's had its fill or not, it will surely attack. Humans even attack when they're not hungry, am I right? This is today's world, unfortunately. No matter that there are good people who preach love and live in love.

GLOSSARY

1 Hungarian Soviet Republic: The first, short-lived, proletarian dictatorship in Hungary. On the March 21, 1919, the Workers' Council of Budapest took over power from the bourgeois democratic government and declared the Hungarian Soviet Republic. The temporary constitution declared that the Republic was the state of the workers and peasants, and it aimed at putting an end to their exploitation and establishing a socialist economic and social system. The communist government nationalized industrial and commercial enterprises, and socialized housing, transport, banking, medicine, cultural institutions, and large landholdings. In an effort to secure its rule the government used arbitrary violence. Almost 600 executions were ordered by revolutionary tribunals, and the government also resorted to violence to expropriate grain from peasants. This violence and the regime's moves against the clergy also shocked many Hungarians. The Republic was defeated by the entry of Romanian troops, who broke through Hungarian lines on July 30th, occupied and looted Budapest, and ousted Kun's Soviet Republic on August 1, 1919.

2 Jewish Laws in Hungary: The first of these anti-Jewish laws was passed in 1938, restricting the number of Jews in liberal professions, administration, and in commercial and industrial enterprises to 20 percent. The second anti-Jewish Law, passed in 1939, defined the term "Jew" on racial grounds, and came to include some 100,000 Christians (apostates or their children). It also reduced the number of Jews in economic activity, fixing it at 6 percent. Jews were not allowed to be editors, chief-editors, theater-directors, artistic leaders or stage directors. The Numerus Clausus was introduced again, prohibiting Jews from public jobs and restricting their political rights. As a result of these laws, 250,000 Hungarian Jews were locked out of their sources of livelihood. The third anti-Jewish Law, passed in 1941, defined the term "Jew" on more radical racial principles. Based on the Nuremberg laws, it prohibited inter-racial marriage. In 1941, the Anti-Jewish Laws were extended to North-Transylvania. A year later, the Israelite religion was deleted from the official religions subsidized by the state. After the German occupation in 1944, a series of decrees was passed: all Jews were required to relinquish any telephone or radio in their possession to the authorities; all Jews were required to wear a yellow star; and non-Jews could not be employed in Jewish households. From April 1944 Jewish property was confiscated, Jews were barred from all intellectual jobs and employment by any financial institutions, and Jewish shops were closed down.

3 Civil school: (Sometimes called middle school) This type of school was created in 1868. Originally it was intended to be a secondary school, but in its finally established format, it did not provide a secondary level education with graduation (maturity examination). Pupils attended it for four years after finishing elementary school. As opposed to classical secondary school, the emphasis in the

civil school was on modern and practical subjects (e.g. modern languages, accounting, economics). While the secondary school prepared children to enter university, the civil school provided its graduates with the type of knowledge which helped them find a job in offices, banks, as clerks, accountants, secretaries, or to manage their own business or shop.

4 Plight of Budapest Jews: The majority of Jews living in Budapest fled. By December 5, 1944, those remaining were required to move into the ghetto created then – some 75,000 people were gathered there, by its liberation on January 18, nearly 5000 people died in the ghetto, others had gone into hiding, or occasionally succeeded in getting into a ‘protected’ house, although that did not always prove to be a guarantee of escape. By the time Budapest was liberated, many thousands of people were dragged off to forced labor, driven in death marches to Austria, herded into concentration camps or were killed by the Arrow Cross. Despite this, there wasn’t time for deportations of the scale and organization that rural Jews suffered from May of 1944 in smaller town ghettos.

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

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

7 Second Vienna Decision: 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 30th August 1940 in Vienna: Hungary got back a territory of 43,000 km² with 2,5 million inhabitants. This territory (Northern Transylvania, Seklerland) was populated mainly by Hungarians (52 percent according to the Hungarian census and 38 percent 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.

8 Don River Bend, The Annihilation of the Second Hungarian Army: In April of 1942, the Second Hungarian Army arrived at the Russian Front with 207,000 soldiers with the task of securing a 200

km long frontline along the Don River deep in the Ukraine. In January 1943 the Soviet army broke through Hungarian lines in two days, then proceeded to decimate the Hungarian groups. 40,000 soldiers of the Hungarian Army died in the battles, 35,000 were wounded, 60,000 were taken prisoner and many were reported missing.

[9](#) Horthy, Miklos (1868-1957): Regent of Hungary from 1920 to 1944. Relying on the conservative plutocrats and the great landowners and Christian middle classes, he maintained a right-wing regime in interwar Hungary. In foreign policy, he tried to attain the revision of the Trianon peace treaty on the basis of which two thirds of Hungary's territory was seceded after WWI – which led to Hungary entering WWII as an ally of Germany and Italy. When the Germans occupied Hungary in March 1944, Horthy was forced to appoint as Prime Minister the former ambassador of Hungary in Berlin, who organized the deportations of Hungarian Jews. On 15th October 1944 Horthy announced on the radio that he would ask the Allied Powers for truce. The leader of the extreme right-wing fascist Arrow Cross Party, Ferenc Szalasi, supported by the German army, took over power. Horthy was detained in Germany and was later liberated by American troops. He moved to Portugal in 1949 and died there in 1957.

[10](#) Share-renting: One of the ideosyncrasies of housing after the war (based on the Soviet model) where numbers of families were placed together in the larger apartments (of those owners killed, deported or interned abroad in the war). Usually, each family was given one bedroom, while the kitchen and other rooms were used commonly. Sometimes, the original owner had families placed in their homes on the grounds that they weren't 'entitled' to such a large apartment. Other times, owners 'took in' share renters of their choosing before the council allocated their homes to strangers. In 1960, 136,000 people (7.8 %) lived in shared flats in Budapest. Within 10 years, this rate fell roughly by half. Share-renting was evaded by either permanently dividing apartments or, when possible, by one of the dwellers gradually acquiring the remaining parts through a lengthy bureaucratic process.

[11](#) Rakosi regime: Matyas Rakosi was a Stalinist Hungarian leader of Jewish origin between 1948-1956. He introduced a complete communist terror, established a Stalinist type cult for himself and was responsible for the show trials of the early 1950s. After the Revolution of 1956, he went to the Soviet Union, where he died in 1971.

[12](#) Nationalization in Hungary: The elimination of private ownership and the establishment of centralized state control was the focus of social and economic restructuring after 1945. The process began with multilateral discussions and pacts among political parties, and ended with unilateral and radical steps taken by the MKP (Hungarian Communist Party), as it took power. The series of steps began in 1945 alongside the agrarian reforms. In 1946 Mines and related plants were taken over by the state. The same year saw the nationalization of the five biggest industrial factories, as well as the electricity works, while in 1947 the big banks and their stock were nationalized. In 1948, factories with more than 100 employees were nationalized and after the show trials, foreign-owned Hungarian plants were taken over. In 1949 all enterprises having more than 10 employees were nationalized by decree.

[13](#) 1989 Political changes: A description, rather than name for the surprising events following the summer of 1989, when Hungarian border guards began allowing East German families vacationing in Hungary to cross into Austria, and escape to the West. After the symbolic reburial of Imre Nagy,

the Hungarian parliament quietly announced its rejection of communism and transformation to a social democracy. The confused internal struggle among Soviet satellite nations which ensued, eventually led to the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the reorganization of Eastern Europe. The Soviets peacefully withdrew their military in 1990.

14 1956: Refers to the Revolution, which started on October 23, 1956 against Soviet rule and the communists in Hungary. It was started by student and worker demonstrations in Budapest and began with the destruction of Stalin's gigantic statue. Moderate communist leader Imre Nagy was appointed as prime minister and he promised reform and democratization. The Soviet Union withdrew its troops which had been stationed in Hungary since the end of World War II, but they returned after Nagy's declaration that Hungary would pull out of the Warsaw Pact to pursue a policy of neutrality. The Soviet army put an end to the uprising on the 4th of November, and mass repression and arrests began. About 200,000 Hungarians fled from the country. Nagy and a number of his supporters were executed. Until 1989 and the fall of the communist regime, the Revolution of 1956 was officially considered a counter-revolution.