

# Miklos Kallos

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Cluj Napoca

Romania

Interviewer: Cosmina Paul

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*Professor Miklos Kallos carries on his professorial activity by coordinating doctoral dissertations.*

*Although he renounced the leadership of the Jewish community in Cluj, he remains an outstanding figure of the community.*

*From our very first meeting, Mr. Kallos realized the purpose and the significance of his testimony.*

*The coherence of the account and the clarity of mind are rarely seen in an autobiographical report; but Mr. Kallos had them.*

*I remember his kind expression, the emotion which he made me feel, and the respect which he inspired in me during our first session, as we sat in the privacy of his study – a room filled with books and old furniture.*

*He didn't change, even when we had to move to the kitchen for two sessions of our interview (due to objective reasons).*

*I recall myself standing in front of an old and tall house on Brancusi Street, waiting for the hour of my appointment; he would show up... with the same friendly eyes.*

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- **My family background**

I don't know anything about my grandparents. They probably died at a rather early age. In any case, I never met them as a child. All I knew was that my maternal grandmother was buried at the Oradea cemetery; her native tongue had been Hungarian and she had been a religious woman.

My mother's name was Helena, nee Schwartz. She was born in 1895, in a village called Sasvar, located in the former Czechoslovakia. It belonged to Austria-Hungary before 1918; I don't know the new name of the locality. My mother's education consisted of a few years of elementary school. She had a sister who had got married in Budapest and whose name had become Guttman. I knew

of her existence, but I never met her – she lived in Budapest and that’s all I can say about her.

My mother also had a brother, Zoltan Schwartz, who lived in Oradea. He was a short man with fair-red hair, wore glasses and was very sociable. Unlike my father, he purchased and read literature – he had this cultural necessity or inclination. He wanted his daughters to learn to play the piano, so he bought them one, which means that he tried to attain a certain level of culture; of course, it was a petit bourgeois kind of culture, but it was still culture.

Zoltan worked a lot. He was an employee of the [Neolog Jewish] Community and ran other small businesses on the side. One of them was to buy fire wood wholesale from large warehouses and to sell it to less prosperous people by installments, thus making a small profit. He did pretty well. Eventually, he bought a house in Oradea and led a life that, without being bourgeois, was petit bourgeois, rather well off.

I don’t know how my parents met. I don’t even know where or how they got married.

I did meet my paternal grandmother, who was actually my father’s stepmother. I know nothing about his real mother. When I was six, my father took me to Teceu Mare, to his stepmother’s. She was a very simple Jewish woman, from the countryside, uncultivated. I remember her house, with the flies that kept invading the kitchen – it was a rather sordid life, a peasant’s life like in the old days.

She and my father’s brother, Szrul, had a plot of land – it might have been a hectare or a hectare and a half – and I think this is what they lived from. Their life was very hard. My father helped them until their deportation. He sent them money, as they were very poor. They ended up like all the others ended up: they were surely deported. So my grandparents were absent from my childhood.

My father, whose name was Zoltan Kallos [Jewish name: Zalman Jikusziel], was born in Teceu Mic, in 1893. There is Teceu Mare, which used to belong to Czechoslovakia, and there is Teceu Mic, which is still under Romanian administration. I know they were separated by the River Tisa. They are located in the Sighetu Marmatiei and Sapanta area, somewhere around there.

Back then, there used to be an iron bridge between the two villages. My father and I crossed it a couple of times in order to go visit the relatives on the other side of the river and some tombs – I can’t remember whose tombs they were. We would pay a pol [unit of 20 lei in Romanian] or two to the Romanian border guard, cross the bridge to Czechoslovakia and do the same with the Czechoslovakian border guard on our way back. So crossing the border was not a problem, like it became afterwards and like it still is. Nowadays, one doesn’t just pay a pol to the border guard, for one needs a passport, papers and money.

My father’s brother in Teceu Mare, Srul [Israel], was younger than him. He also had a stepsister there; her name was Reize Feuer. Reize survived the Holocaust and I saw her after the war. He had another brother living in Sighet, whom I also knew. It was before the Holocaust that I met all these people.

[Editor’s note: Mr. Kallos remembers his relatives because he remembers his trips in the area as a child. However, he does not recall anything specific about them because he was too young in that period and because his parents – who both died at an early age, in the concentration camp – did

not tell him much about those relatives; and he never asked them.]

My father's native tongue was Hungarian. He was a tailor by trade, but his practice was rather small. He had other occupations too. Before my birth – in 1926, in Oradea – I know he worked as a baker's aid or even as a baker – I'm not sure. In any case, when I was born, he had already been working for the Neolog Jewish Community in Oradea. As he was a sort of factotum, he also took care of the funerals. He always made the outfits for the deceased, using a sewing machine, at home.

When they are buried, the Jewish departed wear a linen garment composed of several pieces – it's called a kitel – which looks like a robe worn by doctors or druggists. This kitel is also worn for the great religious holidays, at the synagogue. The religious Jews wear it on Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur.

And they are buried in it. Then there is a cap that looks like the cap of the head-chef, which is pulled over the face, and there are other clothing parts. My father made them all. When I was a child, he made some clothes for me too – a sort of jacket or something – but he didn't earn his living working as a tailor.

### • Jewish Oradea

The pre-war Oradea was a town well known not only across the country, but also abroad. There used to be a poor little river, beside the Crisul Repede, which was the main river, that was called Pete, or Pece in Hungarian. For decades, Oradea was known as the 'Paris on the banks of the Pete.'

The locals had nicknamed it like that as a mockery, but also, and especially, in recognition of its remarkable social and cultural life. Even before World War I, there was a very strong literary circle there, led by the great poet Ady Endre [1](#). It was a group of poets and literati called 'Those of Tomorrow,' 'Holnapostok' in Hungarian.

Just for the record, I have a very large volume about the Jews from Oradea who perished during the Holocaust. It's in Hungarian, it was edited in Israel and it was entitled 'The Town of Those of Yesterday' – the town that used to be, as a reminder of the town of those of tomorrow. ['A tegnap varosa', 'A nagyvaradi zsidóság emlékonyve', Tel Aviv, 1981.

Edited by the Association of the Oradea-born Israelis at the 37th commemoration of the deportation of the Jews from Oradea and the neighboring areas. From among those who edited the volume, Mr. Kallos mentions three reputed figures: Dezso Schon (journalist and writer from Oradea), Jozsef Greda and Otto Rappaport.]

The interwar Oradea had seventy or eighty thousand inhabitants. Almost one third of them were Jews. This numerous Jewish community made Oradea an attraction for the Jews from Maramures, who were forced by the harsh living conditions to go seek their fortune in other places of the country.

Most of them came to Oradea, where they did whatever they could. Like all the towns with large Jewish communities, Oradea had all sorts of Jews: there were people of great fortune, prosperous tradesmen, small and medium enterprises – the town had an effervescent economic life.

Like in Cluj, the rich had a decisive contribution to the architectural heritage of the town. The most imposing buildings in Oradea were erected by the Jewish economic elite. Take the Vulturul Negru [the Black Eagle] Palace for instance, right at the center of the town, before the bridge leading to the state theater, which was the only theater in Oradea in those days.

It's a huge building, with some interior passages. It used to be one of the prides of our town, so to speak. It was built by a man named Adorjan, who was also the president of the Neolog Community. The Black Eagle Palace was for rent – there were scores of stores and apartments there. Adorjan had another place, for his own, a sort of family house; again, one of the most beautiful buildings in town.

I can say that the most architecturally valuable buildings in Oradea were built either by the prosperous Jews or by the churches – the Catholic Church, the Reformed Church. Still, the Jews were the ones who erected most of the buildings used for dwelling.

Oradea was an important Jewish center. All the Jewish trends and communities of the time were present in the town. There was a large and powerful Orthodox community [2](#), there was a Neolog community [3](#) and there was a small Sephardic community [4](#), some of the Spanish Jews who happened to end up in Transylvania [5](#).

There were two large synagogues: the one of the Orthodox Community, which is still functional, and the one of the Neologs. One can see on any postcard featuring the center of the town a large cupola with a Magen David on top – that's the Neolog Synagogue, which is still there today.

Beside these two synagogues there were several prayer houses. The synagogues were mostly used on Saturdays and on holidays; on the rest of the days, people usually went to the prayer houses. The attendance was rather scarce. There were no more than twenty, thirty or forty parishioners at a time. So there was no need to keep the synagogue open during the week.

There were also all sorts of Jewish associations with different names within the Community, and most of them had their own smaller synagogues. The Orthodox, for instance, had two other smaller synagogues: one was located on Clujului Avenue, and the other on a street that was called Teleki Street back then.

I think the synagogue on Clujului Avenue has been rented or sold, while the one on the former Teleki Street lies there, in a very poor condition; I don't know what the exact situation is. Then there were also these small synagogues of the various Jewish associations: Zionist associations, craftsmen's associations and the likes of them. Most of them built a small synagogue of their own.

There were several Hasidic communities [6](#). These were not Orthodox in fact, but a sort of state within a state, so to speak, because they grouped themselves around a rabbi whom they followed as their spiritual leader. In Hebrew, this was called a tzaddik, meaning holy man, righteous man and so on and so forth.

These Hasidic rabbis had different degrees, to say so. 'The status of the tzaddik depended on how large the Hasidic community was. If it was large and the rabbi was a powerful one, they had a sort of 'court,' with 'ministers' and 'secretaries' and the likes of them.

In order to get to such a rabbi, one would have to go through an entire procedure.’ [Sandu Frunza, ‘Nicolae Kallos. Crampei de viata din secolul XX. Un dialog despre evreitate, Holocaust si comunism ca experiente personale’ – ‘Nicolae Kallos. Fragment of Life from the 20th Century. A Dialogue about Jewishness, Holocaust and Communism as Personal Experiences’ – The Publishing House of the Axis Foundation, Iasi, 2003, p.17]

There was this rabbi who was the most powerful not only in Oradea, but almost in the entire country; he was the rabbi from Vijnit, named Vijniter. [In 1915, the Russians invaded Bukovina. One of the localities they occupied was the town of Vijnit, where Rabbi Jisrael Hager shepherded a Hasidic community.

Enjoying the Russian administration’s consent and support, he managed to get, together with 70 companions, to Austria-Hungary, after transiting the Romanian territory. He was allowed to settle in Oradea. (Tereza Mozes, ‘Evreii din Oradea’ – ‘The Jews of Oradea’, Hasefer Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997, p.93)] He had a large synagogue and an entire court, with all sorts of ‘secretaries of state’ who were in charge of the rabbi’s daily concerns.

The building is still there, but I don’t know what it is used for today. All these Hasidic rabbis and their small Hasidic communities had their own prayer houses. There were dozens of such houses. So the Hasidic community was very powerful too.

The Orthodox community had an elementary school and a four-year gymnasium for boys and girls. The Neologs, in their turn, had an elementary school and an eight-year high school. These were secular schools, but they were supported by the Jewish communities.

There were cases of Jewish children who went to the Orthodox school, but came to the Neolog high school for their religion classes, or of Jewish girls who went to non-Jewish schools – because Oradea didn’t have a Jewish high school for girls – and who studied religion at the Neologs too.

In the late years, after 1940, under the Hungarian occupation [during the Hungarian era (1940-1944)] [7](#), our Neolog high school turned into a co-educational high school – there were girls in the boys’ classes too. Because of some anti-Jewish laws [in Hungary] [8](#), a number of Jewish pupils were banned from various schools, so some Jewish girls gained access to Jewish education.

Jewish girls used to attend non-Jewish schools and only came to our school for the religion classes, which were provided for a fee. My father was the one who collected this fee.

Why do I remember this? Well, my father trained me for various small chores, and one of them was collecting this fee. I would go through the entire town, to girls’ hostels and to private houses, in order to cash this money. This is, in fact, how I got to know Oradea and its streets. I also helped my father with the funerals, at the synagogue and so on and so forth. And these were my father’s basic occupations.

Only a few Hasidic rabbis had a yeshivah. The communities didn’t really have such schools. But since the Hasidim belonged to the Orthodoxy, and since some Hasidic rabbis led these yeshivot, it was said that the Orthodox had yeshivot. But note that there never was a yeshivah of the Orthodox Community proper.

These schools were formed around some learned men. Not every Hasidic rabbi had a yeshivah – there were only a few of them who had one. But the two or three yeshivot in Oradea were not very famous. The ones in Marghita or Valea lui Mihai or Dej, for instance, were more famous as institutions of religious education than the ones in our town.

A man attended such a school and studied with renowned rabbis in order to become a rabbi himself. After finishing the yeshivah, he would get a graduation certificate from a group of rabbis. Then he would have to go through what is now called post-graduate studies:

spending time next to a rabbi who finally issued an authorization stating his qualifications. In the end, he had to gather several letters of recommendation and validation from the existing rabbis. This process had nothing to do with the state education.

Beside these schools, there were several notable newspapers in Hungarian which were owned by Jews, like 'Naplo' ['Journal' in Hungarian]; this was an ordinary newspaper, not a Jewish one, only it was owned by a Jew. The Orthodox had a weekly of their own; it was in Hungarian and it was called 'Nepunk' ['Our People'].

I would read it every Friday. It addressed the issues of the internal life of the communities, as well as political issues, like the situation of the Jews in various countries. It also contained Jewish and Hasidic stories, literature, poetry and all. 'Every issue featured accounts, notes and short stories about what had happened in Germany, about the pogroms conducted mostly after the Crystal Night [9](#) in 1938.

We knew what was going on there. But we didn't feel threatened in any way here.' [Sandu Frunza, 'Nicolae Kallos. Crampei de viata din secolul XX. Un dialog despre evreitate, Holocaust si comunism ca experiente personale' – 'Nicolae Kallos. Fragment of Life from the 20th Century. A Dialogue about Jewishness, Holocaust and Communism as Personal Experiences' – The Publishing House of the Axis Foundation, Iasi, 2003, p.32]

There used to be a saying back then; whatever happened in no matter what field, the question was: is this good for the Jews or is this bad for the Jews? This was our only way to talk about politics. Of course, there were some events that affected us to a certain extent – for instance, the coming to power of the Goga-Cuza anti-Semitic government [10](#), in 1936 or 1937, brought about a number of anti-Semitic laws. This caused worries to the Jewish collectivity. And when this cabinet fell, there was great joy. From this point of view, we did talk politics. But, for the rest, we weren't into politics at all.

We lived in a Community house. The Community had three buildings for the use of its employees. One of them was a house of three or four rooms that was inhabited by Chief Rabbi Vajda Istvan. Before him, the office was held by an extremely famous rabbi, Dr. Lipot Kecskemeti [11](#), who died in 1936; the Jewish Neolog High School was named after him. For several years after his death, the Community didn't have a rabbi. Then this Vajda Istvan was elected chief rabbi. That house is still there, on Cuza Voda Street.

There were two other houses with several apartments for those who worked in the religious field – the shochetim, the chief cantor etc. We lived in one of them. 'There was also a Christian family in the courtyard where Community employees lived.



They were Hungarian and had a boy who was two or three years younger than me. They were the housekeepers. Again, this is a detail that is less known: the Jewish households had to employ a Christian; every Saturday, he or she would light the candles, start the fire and do all the necessary things that Jews were forbidden to do on that particular day.

This family, apart from taking care of the house, did these things too: on every Friday evening, they would enter each apartment and put the lights out; on every Saturday, they would start the fire and so on and so forth.' [ibid.11.]

### • Growing up

We lived in a modest place: two rooms, a kitchen, a bathroom and a pantry. We didn't have a garden and didn't keep animals. There were only three of us, so we did rather well, we didn't have too many problems. We didn't lack anything because, thanks to my father's office, he always received, apart from his salary, donations from the Community members for various services:

whenever he organized a wedding, he would get something; at a funeral, he would get something too. For the Neologs didn't know the ritual very well. 'The Neologs were the members of the Jewish population who were more assimilated than all the others. Many didn't attend the synagogue anymore; they only went there for the great holidays and when the Maskir, the commemoration of the dead, was celebrated.' [ibid.27]

Before the high holidays, the Jewish custom is to visit the tombs of the departed. On this occasion, a prayer is recited – it's called Kaddish. People didn't know the prayer very well and my father was always around those days. They could ask for his help and my father would recite the Kaddish and get something in return.

So we didn't lack anything from the material point of view. We lived the life of the middle class, an expression that is widely used today: we weren't rich, but we weren't poor either. We had everything we needed when it came to food, clothing, electricity, running water and heating; everything we needed for a decent life.

We spoke Hungarian at home. Sometimes, my parents used Yiddish with each other. Yiddish is, in fact, a variant of the medieval German, sprinkled with Hebrew words. I got the hang of it myself; I can still speak it – not very well, but I can still speak it. Anyway, we usually used Hungarian in our family. As for the customs, we had the usual customs for a religious Jewish family. Although my father worked for the Neolog Community, we were Orthodox in private.

Now you may ask me why an Orthodox was working for the Neologs. Well, all the employees of the Neologs who were responsible for the ritual – the shochetim who slaughtered the animals, my father and others who worked in the religious field – were Orthodox, for these people were supposed to really know their job. The Neologs weren't too familiar with these things.

'Another difference was that Neologs usually held their prayers in the local language. Until the time of the Hungarian occupation, prayers in Oradea or in Cluj were held in Romanian; then they were held in Hungarian. In contrast, the Orthodox held their prayers in Yiddish. (...) Getting closer to the Neolog masses by using a language that was accessible to them was undoubtedly an advantage.

The bad part was that a series of precepts and rules were set aside and forgotten.' [ibid.27]

The Orthodox kept a strictly kosher diet. My father was what they called a shammash. In Hebrew, shammash literally means servant. Each community had a shammash, a servant, who conducted the cultic life. His responsibilities included watching over the divine service at the synagogue and making sure that everyone had their prayer book and their tallit, that ritual garment.

He was the one who chose and invited the parishioners to read the Torah. So he took care of the synagogue during the religious service. He was also the one who organized all the ritual events: weddings and funerals, with all their adjacent rituals, were his responsibility too.

In the case of a death, there was the washing of the deceased, the dressing of the body, the laying in the coffin, the organizing of the funeral, the coordination of the cantor, of the rabbi, the liaison with the family – my father had to take care of all these things. He was also a sort of cashier – there were all sorts of sums that had to be collected by the Community. However, he did not cash the membership fees; someone else did that.

My mother wore a wig, like all religious Jewish women did. On holidays, my mother and I would go to the Orthodox synagogue, not to the Neolog one. But we did the ritual slaughtering at the Orthodox' place. So we were Orthodox from the religious point of view. I always wore a cap or a hat – I always kept my head covered. We observed all the traditions.

Let's take the Sabbath, for instance, the most frequent holiday. Preparations for the Sabbath would begin on Friday. A goose was usually slaughtered for the Saturday meal. My mother did all the required preparations for the Sabbath dinner.

We would buy a milk loaf and some wine, for there was supposed to be a prayer and a blessing using a glass of wine. Milk loaf was baked at home very rarely; I remember my mother did make a large one a couple of times, but not for the Sabbath; it was for the high holidays, when people baked a sweeter milk loaf, with raisins, that was called barkhes.

Before we had our own bathroom, we would go to the ritual bath every Friday. After our place was added a bathroom, we gave up this habit, but not completely, for the ritual bath was recommended – especially for women, and even if they had a bathroom at home. My father and I would still go to the ritual bath twice a month or so. Women had to go at certain times, as well as after their period. They would immerse themselves three times and get out. It was a sort of sacred water.

My father and I would dress up and go to the synagogue on Friday night. My mother stayed at home and lit the Sabbath candle. The woman puts on a veil or a white shawl, makes some movements over the candle in order to inspire the spirit of the Sabbath, says a blessing and adds some biblical phrases.

When my father and I came back from the synagogue, we would have dinner. The prayer was said by men at the synagogue. At home, we had some stanzas, so to speak, and especially some songs that my father and I used to sing.

Women had their own prayer; there used to be a prayer book for women in Hebrew and Yiddish. On Saturday afternoon, my mother would read a few lines from this book. But the only separate prayer



a woman had was the one she was supposed to say on Friday evening, when lighting the Sabbath candle. My father and I said the prayers in Hebrew.

On Friday at noon, we usually had goose liver with goose cracklings. On Friday evening – so on Sabbath – the dinner was gelatinous fish and broth with meat in it. At table, we would sing some songs in Hebrew – they were less religious songs, specially designed for the Sabbath, called Zemiroth. There are three or four such songs to be sung on Friday night and on Saturday afternoon – they're all from the prayer book.

After the meal on Friday night, my father would take me for a half an hour or one hour to see the Sabbath ritual of some rabbis. Both my parents were the followers of some Hasidic rabbis. Each of them had his own synagogue, his own parishioners, even his own tunes and religious songs. After that, we would return home and go to bed.

The following day, on Saturday, we would attend the religious service and have breakfast. After that, my father had to go back to the synagogue, because the Neologs had a special ritual: first, there was an early morning service, like in any Orthodox synagogue, attended by a few dozens of religious people. Then, at ten or eleven o'clock – I can't remember exactly – there was a second service, shorter, but more imposing – they played the organ and things like that.

My father was an employee there and had some duties: to distribute the prayer books, to organize the Torah calls etc. I usually accompanied him. We would come back home at twelve or twelve and a half. We would have lunch, then my father always went to bed for an hour or two. In the afternoon, there was the synagogue again, and this is how things went.

Every holiday had its own ritual. The ritual for Yom Kippur involves the day before Yom Kippur, for the entire holiday is spent in the synagogue and there is no way one could observe some ritual at home. So before Yom Kippur, the custom was to have a kapores; at first sight, this ritual looks rather heathen.

We would buy some white chickens – roosters and small chickens – and rotate them above our head in the morning, saying a prayer. The prayer was supposed to make all our sins fall upon that bird. This was the kapores. Then the bird was taken to the small abattoir, where it was slaughtered.

We would eat a soup made of its meat. Before nightfall, when we had to go to the synagogue, we would eat a lot, so that it would last us for an entire day of fasting; and this was when the kapores was consumed.

The Purim of my childhood and of my adolescence consisted of two parts. First, there was the exchange of cakes with the acquaintances and the neighbors. I carried them around on a small plate. There was an entire strategy to this. Those who were known to make better cakes were sent more cakes, so that the number of cakes received in return was equally large; those whose cakes were not that good were sent fewer cakes. I used to carry those cakes, and I was entitled to a tip for that too.

Then we would stay at home and wait for the children dressed up in carnival clothes. From morning till evening, there were all kinds of them coming over; they would recite small poems and sing songs, most of which were rather silly. However, there were some groups who were better at it and

who even staged sketches, getting the deserved tip in exchange.

These children and youngsters were Jewish, but I wasn't among them. I only went over to some acquaintances, told a poem of six to eight lines, got my tip and that was it.

The children of the Orthodox families went to the cheder. The rest depended on the family's degree of religiousness and on their aspirations. If the parents were very religious, observed all the traditions and wanted their son to become a learned man or a rabbi, the boy was subsequently sent to the yeshivah.

As a child, I went to the cheder myself. This is a Jewish school where the Old Testament is taught, together with the Hebrew letters and a number of prayers. But I didn't pursue my religious education any further.

However, even as I was getting older and became more and more involved in school activities, there was still a sort of rabbi who came by our house on a weekly basis and with whom I studied – and this went on until the deportation. In 1939 I had my bar mitzvah. Any Jewish boy who was religious and went to the synagogue knew what he had to do for the bar mitzvah.

I started to go to school when I was six. I studied in Romanian during the elementary school and the first three grades of high school. I didn't speak Romanian very well. The elementary school was supported by the Neolog Community.

Then the Hungarian Empire came and we had a Hungarian school – it was during the period when I was beginning to open my eyes towards the world, from the age of 14 to the age of 17. I started to write in Hungarian. I'm not saying that I totally forgot how to speak Romanian, because I didn't; but my Romanian was rather poor – I made mistakes of agreement and spoke with an accent.

I went to the 'Dr. Kecskemeti Lipot' Jewish Neolog High School in Oradea. It was a Jewish school because the students were all Jewish and the teachers were Jewish too, with two or three exceptions. By tradition, the gym teacher was not a Jew, but that changed in the later years. Under the Romanian administration, until 1940, the music teacher had to be Romanian, and this was sometimes true for the teachers of Romanian literature too.

The Jewish touch of the school was that that a prayer was said at the beginning of the first class and at the end of the last class – these were the prayers uttered when one is called to read the Torah, two blessings. So these two prayers replaced the national anthem or anything of the sort. [Editor's note:

Mr. Kallos hints at the communist period (the period of the Socialist Republic of Romania), when pupils in elementary and secondary education began their classes singing the national anthem. This was called 'Trei culori' ('Three Colors') and was composed by the Romanian composer Ciprian Porumbescu.]

Of course, one more thing was that we studied Mosaism at the religion classes. Apart from that, it was a high school like any other, where all the regular subjects were taught: Math, Romanian, Hungarian, French, German, Latin etc. On Saturday there was a small festivity in the auditorium, which lasted for a quarter of an hour. Then classes were resumed. The high school was endorsed

by the authorities of the time. Its graduation certificates were officially recognized. It was no different from any other school.

The only difference was that it was an exceptional school. It may not have always been like that. But by the time I got to the intermediate and final grades – from the 3rd to the 7th grade of high school – it had truly become an extraordinary school because of the following reason:

mostly after 1940, when harsh anti-Jewish laws were passed, many Jewish scientists and literati were banned from universities and found refuge in our high school, where they were hired as teachers, to the extent to which the school was able to absorb them. So the teaching body was extraordinary. I wouldn't want to exaggerate, but I really think that at least three quarters of our teachers had a professor's training.

Two of my former teachers who survived became professors after the war, at the university here [the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj] [12](#). One of them, Jeno Rozsa, was the head of the Philosophy Department, and the other one, Gyula Csehi, was the head of the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature. Others didn't follow them, for they perished in the forced labor detachments and so on and so forth.

So I was really lucky to go to such a high school, which represented a real force of attraction and affiliation. My classmates and I used to say that we owe at least 80 percent of our general culture to this high school, which means that it was a really good school. Even today, some of the graduates meet every other year in different parts of the world – mostly in Israel, because there are very few of them left in Europe. Sometimes they edit a bulletin in order to evoke old memories... All in all, we were an elite high school.

The high school was like an oasis to us. We were all alike there and didn't feel the results of anti-Semitism within its confines. These only became apparent outside. In the final two years, 1943 and 1944, we were sort of afraid to leave the place, for thugs from other schools were known to be out there waiting to beat us; one could expect to get shoved around or verbally abused. This phenomenon was a reality. But nothing of the sort went on inside the school, obviously.

### • During the War

My parents didn't have any political affiliation. They didn't talk politics. In general, the issue of anti-Semitism was addressed by the press. The newspaper I've already mentioned, *Nepunk*, reported many of the things that had happened in Germany. But the truth is that we lived in a sort of unawareness, of indifference, or madness.

The unspoken conviction was that all those things were worthy of consideration, but they went on 'there' and they could not happen to us 'here.' There was this self-delusion. And it was a fact that we did have an anti-Semitic legislation after all.

These laws first struck the professions: physicians, lawyers, literati, artists etc. Then the tradesmen were affected, but they did just fine for a while, thanks to some arrangements they made. They pretended to sell their store to a Christian, whom they paid. The Christian became the official owner, but the real proprietor didn't really change. So there was the possibility of such

arrangements in order to elude the anti-Semitic laws.

However, there were other things that we knew of that should have triggered our concern; for instance, there were the forced labor detachments for the Jewish men who were sent to Ukraine, where they were abused, maltreated, and even tortured – many of them died. But the ones who had remained in town lived in a state of tranquility.

There were no pogroms and no overt maltreatments. Most of the population could live more or less in peace. And this generated the blind belief that none of the things that had happened in Germany or Poland could happen here.

We did some sort of forced labor, and we started wearing a yellow stripe as early as 1941, so before 1944, when the yellow star [13](#) was introduced. Like the elderly who went to complete their chores in forced labor detachments, we went to work with the Levente [14](#). This was a youth group that was half or one fourth militarized.

All the Hungarian youths came to Levente, where they marched, exercised, and sometimes practiced with wood weapons – it was a sort of paramilitary youth organization. But for the Jews, it was forced labor. They called it Levente so that it may be assimilated with the Hungarian youths; but we did forced labor four or five hours a week.

In winter, for instance, they would take us to some barracks, where we had to start the fire, carry the fire wood, clean up the rooms or wipe the floors. They sometimes took us to the army cemetery to look after the graves. In the final period, we only worked at the shooting range that had been established behind the town's cemetery; we had digging to do. We wore the yellow stripe at that time too.

In 1942, 1943 and 1944, some runaway Polish Jews got to Oradea. When a stranger who doesn't know anyone in town arrives, the custom with Jews is to ask him at the synagogues who he is and to invite him for a Sabbath meal on Friday evening or on Saturday. We had such Polish Jews over for the Friday dinner several times.

They used to tell us about all those horrible things that were happening to the Polish Jews. And we nodded our heads in astonishment, pretended to believe them, but didn't fully realize what they were saying – it was beyond our comprehension. We never imagined such things would be possible in Transylvania too.

And this brings me to the case of the Jewish councils [15](#). They were founded under the German occupation in order to coordinate things. They passed the requests of the German and Horthyst [named after Horthy] [16](#) occupation troops to the Jewish population: they had to collect money, blankets, clothes and the likes. So they were in charge with everything that had to do with Jews. It was said – and it was actually acknowledged – that some leaders of these Jewish councils had heard about Auschwitz.

In 1943, two Polish Jews escaped from Auschwitz [17](#) and filed a report – this report was known, our Council knew about it! Or, at least, some of its top members knew. And many claim that the Council is deeply responsible for not having informed the Jewish population. I have a different opinion: they simply refused to believe it, just like we didn't believe those Polish Jews who were

telling us about Auschwitz at our table.

But there were people who knew and who believed. For instance, there was a Zionist leader in Cluj who negotiated with Eichmann [18](#) himself through some intermediaries. The deal was that two thousand Jews or so would be allowed to leave for Switzerland to escape deportation. [Editor's note:

This group was called the Kasztner group [19](#).] There was indeed a large group of Jews from Hungary, including two hundred or so from Cluj, who got to Switzerland. They lived in poor conditions – it was a sort of concentration camp too – but they lived through the war.

So there were some people who knew. But even if they had gone public with what they knew, I don't think this would have changed things dramatically among the Jewish population. But it's no use talking about what might have been!

Orders came one after another; Jews had to hand over their radio sets and other things. Eventually, the day came when a decree requested that Jews wear a yellow star on their clothes, as a distinctive mark – on 5th April [1944]. A few weeks later, notices were posted announcing the establishment of the ghettos.

Where they were founded differed from one town to another. The ghetto in Dej, for instance, was set up in a forest, in the open air; the ghetto in Cluj was located in a huge courtyard that was used to dry bricks.

Things were different in Oradea. They picked a quarter that was densely inhabited by Jews and gathered all the Jews from the town there. They surrounded the place with a wooden wall and had the gendarmes guard it. Our family was lucky – if this can be considered luck – because our house and the Community buildings fell within the perimeter of the ghetto, so we weren't forced to leave our home, like others were.

However, our place, which consisted of two small rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom, had to shelter 30 people or so all of a sudden; they were some of those brought from the other parts of the town.

The living conditions were very difficult. People had brought as many supplies as they could. There was a sort of kitchen of the ghetto, where one could have some bean soup or something like that. As far as my family is concerned, I couldn't tell we starved during that period, especially given the fact that we were still at home. We ate separately.

[The Jews of Oradea were deported between 23rd May and 27th June 1944 – a total of approx. 22,000 people.] When we got off the stock-cars [in Auschwitz], women were separated from the men. It was then that I saw my mother for the last time. My father and I went together through the damned routine of the arrival: disinfection, bath, shaving, leaving our clothes, putting on those striped pajamas. We stayed together until September.

This is what happened: I got to a camp called Buchenwald [20](#), which was subsequently dubbed 'the red camp,' because the German Communists, and others, like the French, had an anti-fascist committee there, which dominated the internal life of the camp, so to speak.

The place had been founded in 1936 and had initially served to imprison the German Communists. Like in most camps, the internal control over Buchenwald had been seized by the regular criminals who were doing time there too. They would bully and maltreat the others, just like in the American movies, where every prison has its own ruling gang of inmates.

The SS weren't comfortable with this situation, because it caused disorder in the camp, and they gradually reached an agreement with the communist groups. The SS would let them control the camp on the inside, provided they accepted to maintain order and to grant them any other request.

For instance, if the SS said they needed 3,000 people for work, they expected to have those people waiting in line the next day. So an internal arrangement was made. I didn't know there was an anti-fascist committee inside the camp. All I knew was that there were German Communists. I only found out about those other things later.

Everyone wore a number in the camp. Mine was 58,319; my father's was 58,320. There were also numbers higher than 60,000. If an inmate had the number 12 or 8 or 9, it meant he had been there since 1936, which automatically placed him among the aristocracy of the convicts, so to speak.

These people were the ones who had positions, for inmates had their own positions: head of block, kapo [concentration camp inmate appointed by the SS to be in charge of a work gang] etc. This anti-fascist committee assured order in the camp indeed.

What exactly did this committee do? First of all, they recruited Communists, Socialists, Social Democrats and put them in more or less important positions. When I got to Buchenwald, the young Frenchmen started to question me: who I was, where I came from, what and how I had been before.

This was a stage of the recruiting process. If they found either people who shared their ideas or outstanding personalities – renowned scientists or writers etc. – they somehow isolated them and put them in safer places.

Here is how things went: Around the camp were placed the SS barracks and a unit of the Gestapo. The Gestapo regularly followed the political inmates from the camp and sometimes they came looking for someone. This didn't mean anything good, because they would always seize that inmate and either torture him or kill him.

Then this committee would remove the number from the chest of the one who was wanted and switch it with the number of a newly deceased, thus changing their identities. They would inform the camp's registration office – 'Schreibstube,' they called it – where all the administrative work was done.

Jorge Semprun was also working there. 'Watch out, that guy is no longer X, but Y,' and so they would hide the endangered man. [Jorge Semprun: born in Madrid in 1923, deported as Spanish communist and French resistant to Buchenwald in 1943 and liberated in 1945. He distinguished himself as a writer, with novels like 'Le grand voyage' (1963) and 'La guerre est finie' (1966) – he wrote about his experience in Buchenwald.]



Towards the end, not long before the liberation, the Germans started to organize evacuation shipments, especially for the Jews, and they simply massacred them along the way. There weren't too many survivors among those who left with these shipments, that's for sure. So when the order was given to gather, say, 1,000 people, the committee scattered them in different shacks. They were sabotaging these measures, in other words.

But what personally got to me about these Communists was their rather idealistic belief that youth had to be spared for the future, that young men were what the future needed. And they took care of them indeed. There was a children's shack at Buchenwald and they provided them with a special diet.

There were people who taught them, told them stories, tutored them and looked after them. Whenever an easier workplace would come up – as also in my case – they would choose young people for it, to save them.

I didn't stay at Buchenwald too long, only a few weeks. Buchenwald was a large concentration camp and had several smaller camps, for labor. They would send you to one of them, then you'd come back, then go to another and back again. So our stay at Buchenwald was rather intermittent.

My father and I returned to Buchenwald from a very tough labor camp, at Magdeburg. After three months, my father totally collapsed, both physically and mentally. He was nothing but a wreck. The Communists recruited me when a new commando was formed, in a place where conditions were supposed to be easier.

We were about two hundred young people there and some elderly. I took my father with me, so that we could be together. On countless occasions they came to check us, and my father got dismissed from there twice. Eventually, he was sent back to Auschwitz, where he was exterminated. This happened around September 1944.

There are some ethical and moral issues here. On what grounds did those who had positions in the camp decide who would live and who wouldn't? Who gave them the right to keep me alive, in a safe place, and to send my father to his death? Well, these people took upon themselves these duties – these ethical burdens, so to speak – in the name of the ideals they had about the future; they believed youth was needed in order to build a new world.

In any case, what I went through there explains what I became and how my life evolved in the following decades. These Communists I met there inspired me with a genuine admiration. Everyone is aware – and I am aware of it too – that, after the liberation, many of them became activists and leaders of the newly-installed communist regime, while others, who were in the same camp, were the victims of their fellow Communists who had turned into leaders.

These things are known. But all I can tell you is that, back in the camp, they all behaved in an admirable way. And it's not just me who claims that. This is what all those who were there and who wrote about the camp Social Democrats, Christian Democrats say.

There is a certain Kogon, who is a Christian Democrat. He wrote the first and the best work about Buchenwald and he admitted that what the Communists did there is worthy of all the respect. I hadn't read Marxist literature, I knew nothing about Marxism, and I knew nothing about

Communism. I just met these people and I felt an attraction towards what they believed in.

Here's a private incident. I became very ill in the camp: bilateral cavernous tuberculosis – impossible to treat in the camp's facilities. I normally weighed 70 kilograms, but I had ended up weighing 36 kilograms because of the conditions there – so I was a wreck myself.

After the liberation, on 11th April 1944, they took me to a sort of sanatorium; the place was called Blankenheim, near Weimar, not far from Buchenwald. Well, the conditions were those of a sanatorium, but there was no treatment or medication. The food was good and the place was properly maintained, quiet and clean though. They had a complex of buildings for the leaders of the Hitlerjugend [21](#), and the conditions were good. I spent several weeks there.

At a certain point, the area where Buchenwald and Weimar were, which had been under American occupation, had to be turned over to the Soviets, as it was to become a part of the future German Democratic Republic. So the people at the sanatorium were asked where they wanted to go. 'Go to France or to Sweden,' we were told, 'the Red Cross will take care of you.'

Then a doctor I had met in the camp, a Transylvanian Communist who's still alive and is a good friend of mine, came from Buchenwald to Blankenheim and told me: 'You have to come home; like the Communists say, we've got a new world to build.' And so I came home. It was only several years later that I began to read Marxist theoretical works and form an idea about what Communism was.

In any case, after everything I had gone through, after everything that had happened to me and especially after the weeks following my return to Oradea – where I couldn't find any trace of the people I had once known, or of my house, or of my belongings – I was through with religion.

Nevertheless, a few months after the liberation, I still went to the synagogue from time to time, on Saturday and for the fall holidays of 1945. I didn't do it out of religiousness, but because I missed an atmosphere that I knew so well and that I had grown up with; yet, that atmosphere was never to be found again. Meanwhile, I finally became a member of the Communist Party. By that, my instinctive appreciation for some Communists became official. I also adopted their materialist philosophy to a large extent, so I parted with religion for a long time.

Here is what I personally think. We all went through our own terrible events, but these events look rather similar from the outside. Ask anybody who went from the ghetto to Auschwitz and they will tell you the same thing: there were ninety of us in one single carriage, there was no food, there were two cans – one for water and one for physiological needs – there was no room to move, lie or sit, many died after three or four days spent in the carriage, men were lined up on the Auschwitz platform etc.

I mean, these things may appear unique to each individual, but they are all the same for someone who was never there. There is no way for the people who didn't experience what we experienced to fully realize what we went through, just like we ourselves didn't fully realize what those Poles who came to Oradea had gone through.

Here's a small incident from my own life experience. After I came back, the synagogue's guard, a very decent Hungarian man who was nice to me all the time, asked me how it had been. I started

to tell him; after an hour or so, this question came from him or maybe from his wife: 'So you didn't even get apples there?' It was then that I realized that he hadn't understood one single word.

Sure, there are plenty of movies and books nowadays and people can get an idea about what went on. But in order to make one's own experience have some relevance for someone else, one needs to have a writer's force, a special talent. There's another thing. Many books were written and many films were made on this topic since then, and people who are my age get confused sometimes and mix their personal experience with what they only found out afterwards.

I have these two examples: Most interviews start like this: 'We got off on the Auschwitz platform and saw the furnace of the crematorium.' They saw what? Who could have known that was the furnace of the crematorium. This is what they found out later. When I came back from deportation, I was still not sure whether my father and mother had died or not. There was no way I could have known that for sure. We only began to find out these things later.

There are others who say: 'They lined us up and, at a certain point, I found myself before Dr. Mengele, who sent us either to the right, either...' How could they have possibly known that was Mengele? Did anyone know that was Mengele? It's very hard to stay true to one's memory, to give a thorough account of what one saw and add nothing to it.

These are some of the reasons why I have avoided giving interviews and accounts about the camp. Camps differed indeed. In some of them, the treatment was really harsh; in others, the treatment was better. But they were all alike in their essence: the labor, the chores were all the same everywhere. So it's hard to make any personalization or individualization.

### • After the War

I hadn't finished school. The deportation of 1944 caught me in the 7th grade in high school... When I returned, I came across a special situation, right after the war. Special laws were passed for those who hadn't been able to continue their studies – either from racial, political or other similar reasons, either because they had been drafted – and had lost several years [Editor's note: Mr. Kallos refers to the Voitec-law.] [22](#).

There were some special sessions of examination, students were allowed to complete two grades in one year and so on and so forth. I had finished the 7th grade before the deportation, so when I came back, I passed an exam for the 8th grade; then there was a special session for the high school graduation exam. I graduated successfully. Since we're at it, I would like to say that it was all thanks to the seven years I had spent at the Jewish High School in Oradea. I didn't study for one minute before that test, and I did pretty well.

Then, in 1948, I registered at the Bolyai University in Cluj Napoca. I studied Psychology for one year, after which I transferred myself to the Faculty of Philosophy. I graduated in 1952. Concurrently, I was a student and a teacher: in the 2nd year, I became a tutor at the Philosophy Department.

In the year of my graduation, I was already an assistant. Then I went up the entire academic ladder. For a while, I was both the head of the Philosophy Department and the dean of the Faculty

of Letters at the Bolyai University. In 1959, the two universities were united [and the result was the Babes-Bolyai University].

'In 1959, he, Nicolae Ceausescu [23](#) was sent – as the party's bully – to assure the unification of the Romanian and the Hungarian universities. It was no easy job. He presided over the commission which came and achieved the unification.

There was a whole week of endless meetings: in the morning or in the afternoon; with the faculties or with the groups of students; with students or without students; plenary or open only to the teaching body etc. Ceausescu was accompanied by the Minister of Education, logician and Academy member Joja. But the minister didn't say one word. It was Ceausescu who did the work, gave the orders and pulled the strings.

Since I had been the head of the Philosophy Department at the Bolyai University, I became, after the unification, the head of the Philosophy Department of the new Babes-Bolyai University. They also appointed me assistant dean at the Faculty of History and Philosophy, an office which I kept till the late 1970s. In those days, the dean was Prof. Lascu. Then I worked with Stefan Pascu and, later, with Camil Muresanu.' [ibid.85]. I was a head of department until 1980.

I married my wife unofficially in 1948. We were officially wedded in 1949. This means we had been living together for one year when we got married. We both had bicycles and rode them to work. My wife worked at the knitwear factory on Motilor Street. She came from the factory to the city-hall by bike. At 11 o'clock, we appeared before the Civil Status officer, we had our ceremony, and then we went back to work. People were busy building Socialism; there was no time for anything else...

My wife's maiden name was Katalin Havas. She was born in Dej, in 1922. Her main occupation was that of a tailor. Then she became a clothing technician. She used to work at a clothing factory here in Cluj; I don't know what it's called now, but it was called Somesul back then. She worked there for a long time. She also worked for various knitwear cooperatives.

For the last 20 years, she worked at the Drumul Nou Cooperative. It still exists today. They make all sorts of clothes, women's clothes and others. My wife's education consisted of four elementary grades and a vocational school.

My elder son's name is Peter. He was born in 1950, in Cluj. He graduated from the Conservatory. He became a flutist and a flute teacher. He worked for a while at music high schools in Cluj and Satu Mare. At a certain point, several schools were dissolved across the country, including some music high schools. He ended up in Bucharest because his wife had to go there.

So he moved to the capital, where he worked as an editor for a national newspaper in Hungarian, 'Elore' ['Forward' in Hungarian]. He did that until 1990 or 1991, and then he moved to the Romanian Television. He still works there today.

My other son, Gyorgy, was born in 1955. He graduated from the Polytechnic in Cluj and he was appointed to work in the Bihor County. So he got to Oradea, where I had been born and I had lived. He worked for several enterprises in the field of agriculture, as he was specialized in techniques of manufacturing agricultural machinery. Then he re-specialized in computer science. He activated in the field of computers. He is currently what they call a businessman.

I never insisted that my sons marry Jewish women. There's no question about it. First of all, even if I had wanted that, it would have been pretty difficult. There weren't too many Jewish young women of their age they could choose from. But they didn't have to anyway.

We had a Christmas tree when the boys were young. But that was all.

I didn't look at the Hungarian revolution of 1956 [24](#) with the eyes of a Hungarian. It is true that I was activated in the field of the Hungarian culture, as I was the editor-in-chief of the Hungarian-speaking magazine of the Writers' Union in Cluj; the magazine was called 'Utunk' ['Our Way']. Apart from my academic career, I always worked in the media too. The staff of this magazine 'enjoyed a special attention' from the party leaders; they all had their eyes on us, lest the Hungarian locals should cause them any troubles. Party hotshots came to visit us on an almost daily basis; I met people like Leonte Rautu or Miron Constantinescu several times, because I had that position at the magazine. Meetings were held with the Hungarian writers – those were agitated times.

Back then, my mind didn't let me see what was happening in Hungary as a revolution. On the one hand, I was glad there was an uprising against the regime of Rakosi [25](#), which was at least as oppressive as Ceausescu's regime would become later; on the other hand, I couldn't and wouldn't realize that the system per se was endangered.

After all, none of the slogans of that revolution urged to rid ourselves of Socialism. People were calling for Socialism with a human face. There was no question about it. People were fighting against terror, but didn't question the system itself. All they wanted was the system to become better, more democratic, more humanized.

During the communist regime, anti-Semitism was not an issue. But it depends on how one looked at it. Officially, it was not an issue; things were fine from the official point of view. Officially, the ethnic problem had ceased to exist; it had been fully 'solved.' Nationalism became State policy especially after Ceausescu came to power.

As far as Jews were concerned, there was a time after the war when they felt drawn to the communist movement. They believed in the solutions promised by the communist ideology: all people would be brothers and all the other things. After the fascist period, this ideal caught the attention of a number of Jews and made them become affiliated with the communist movement.

In its turn, the newly-installed communist power needed – both for its repression mechanism and for its political apparatus – people who had been neither Legionaries [26](#), nor members of the Arrow Cross Party [27](#). By definition, Jews had had no involvement in any of those two, so they were considered sort of trustworthy for a while.

As the regime strengthened its foundations, Jews began to be eliminated. One mustn't forget that the Romanian Communist Party initially had a fairly large number of Hungarians and Jews. But the idea was that the Party needed to be represented mainly by Romanians. So a large-scale policy was initiated in order to attract the Romanian proletariat and peasantry to join the Party.

Gradually, as new members were recruited, the Jews were replaced from certain positions which they held in the early post-war years. Moreover, the communist regime had this policy of

proportionality: the number of titles or offices held by the members of an ethnic group – Hungarians, Jews or others – had to be in observance with the proportion of that group in the total population.

This is why here in Transylvania, for instance, whenever a meeting was held at the beginning of the communist period, in the 1950s and the 1960s – and there were lots of meetings – they always made sure there was at least one Hungarian, one woman, one young person etc. among the presiding body. So things were made to look as if this proportionality was observed. Then a period came when the emphasis was laid on nationalism.

‘After Ceausescu came to power, this nationalist line was imposed and reinforced for several reasons. On the one hand, from a political point of view, this was an attempt to part with Moscow, which still promoted internationalism, at least in its official discourse. This national-communist line of action did serve to separate us from Moscow to a certain extent.’ [ibid.89]

As years went by, more and more ethnic groups, including the Jews, were left aside. Here’s an example from my personal experience. I’m not saying that it bothered me – because I was never a social climber – but it is symptomatic. For many years I was an assistant dean at the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj and I worked with various professors.

I was never more than an assistant dean. I couldn’t become a dean, although I was highly esteemed from a professional and scientific point of view. And this is how things usually went on a national scale. If one was a Jew, the best thing one could hope to become was a deputy; never a boss. There must have been some who didn’t like it. But I had no problem with this. I usually didn’t fancy being a boss.

During the revolution of 1989 [28](#), I looked through the window at the masses who were marching and burning the photos of Ceausescu. I got out in the streets, I went to see them, and I listened to Mrs. Cornea right here on Victoriei Square, on the first day of the revolution. [Editor’s note: Mr. Kallos is talking about the poet Doina Cornea. She was condemned to house arrest in the communist period. After the revolution of December 1989, she distinguished herself through extensive civic activities. She still lives today.]

Of course, I was glad. I mean, I was glad about that specific situation, glad because we had got rid of Ceausescu and his regime; I didn’t realize the entire system had collapsed. I gradually figured out what the big picture was; I became aware that, on the world scene, the Berlin Wall had disappeared, the Soviet Union had fallen apart, and so on and so forth. Getting rid of Ceausescu’s regime was a progress. Then we got used to the democratic life, so to speak.

This alleged anti-Semitism is no fairy-tale – it is real, even now. Of course, there aren’t any anti-Semitic laws. On the contrary, there are laws that condemn xenophobia and anti-Semitism. So one might claim that there is no State anti-Semitism.

But I look at the legionary magazines and books that are published and I look at the legionary organizations that activate – all despite a legislation that actually forbids them. And they are all tolerated by the State. This is also a kind of State anti-Semitism.



Indirect though it may be, it is still an official anti-Semitic statement. Not to mention the rhetorical anti-Semitism. There are many books, newspaper articles, interviews and television shows which express anti-Semitic positions. I don't think I need to give names – you know who I'm talking about.

As for the anti-Semitism of the people at large, I couldn't assess it, but it is real too. There were some sociological studies that attempted to determine the extent of this anti-Semitism: people were asked if they would like to have a Jew as a neighbor, if they would like their son to marry a Jewish girl and so on and so forth...

[Editor's note: The questions mentioned by Mr. Kallos often appear in the opinion barometers ordered annually by the Fundatia pentru o Societate Deschisa – The Foundation for an Open Society – and aim at revealing xenophobic attitudes, especially those towards the cohabitating ethnic groups: Hungarians, Jews, Germans and Gypsies.]

It must be real! I mean, an ideology, a conception that has been nourished for centuries couldn't just disappear. It hasn't disappeared. There are also more recent forms, like that Holocaust denial routine. At first sight, there is nothing anti-Semitic about it, it's more of a scientific debate. Still, some of its roots and filiations are anti-Semitic.

[Editor's note: The arguing for the inexistence of the Holocaust by various groups of researchers or professors or the mere doubt expressed by the common people regarding the existence of the Holocaust has been dubbed 'anti-Semitism without Jews.']

Unfortunately, it is obvious that anti-Semitism survives in the absence of Jews in this country. The whole Jewish matter reduces itself to 5,000 Jews plus, according to the latest census. The statistics of the Jewish communities speak of 7,000 Jews still living. Whether there are 5,000 or 7,000, it's the same thing.

So what's all the fuss about 7,000 people, 80 percent of whom are over 70 years old?! How can these people pose any threat to the Romanian public life, culture and economy? So we're obviously dealing with a plot here.

Here's my situation now. In 1997, they proposed me for the presidency of the Jewish Communities in Cluj and they elected me. Are you familiar with the Beckett syndrome? Do you know Beckett? There was a play, and there was a film too. So Beckett was a close friend of Prince Henry of England.

Both of them were steady drinkers and womanizers and they never missed a party. At a certain point, Henry made Beckett the head of the Anglican Church, as he wanted to have a trustworthy man up there. But Beckett took his position seriously and really began to act like the head of the church.

So when Henry asked him to separate him from his wife, he refused. And he was killed because of it eventually. It's a very interesting thing. This is what the Beckett syndrome means: when you are appointed in a certain position and you try to take that position seriously. And this is pretty much what happened to me too.

In what way? They were in for a surprise when they elected me president of the Community. Since we're at it, I should tell you that I never denied my Jewishness; I couldn't have, even if I had wanted to. I didn't turn religious or something, but I did tell them, at the very first community meeting, about my conviction that religion was the factor which played the most important part in preserving the Jewish identity throughout the entire history of the Jewish people. I am the first to admit this. And I told them that, as president, I would do everything within my power to support the religious life. And this is what I really tried to do.

But the community is getting really old. Unfortunately, people began to disappear one after another. And most of the ones who knew how to perform a religious service are among the departed. I had learned how to do this in my childhood and my adolescence, so volunteered myself to officiate on Saturday and on holidays.

It's like a sort of folklore to me. I don't do it out of faith or out of conviction. But I'm one of the few who know how to do it, so here I am. I'm not even religious – you won't see me praying in the synagogue. I won't act, I won't pretend. So I stayed what I was before, a free thinker, but I perform these services...

My children reproached me, and still do sometimes, that have no idea about Jewishness! But this is a thing that can't be taught. The only way to learn it is to come to the synagogue, to watch and to listen. You come once, you come ten times, you come a hundred times, and you finally get it.

But those who do come are usually people who are my age or even older. The youth are rarely seen here. There is a youth choir. We invite them on holidays. They come and they go. But they seldom come to pray, or to the regular service.

Jewish boys have to be circumcised. My sons were not circumcised. They know nothing about the matters of cult. But they showed a particular interest in the Holocaust and the deportation problem; they avidly read everything they came across from this immense literature on the Holocaust.

I abdicated, so to speak, two years ago, in 2001. So I was president for four years and a half. There were some new elections and they wanted me again, but I told them: no, that's enough; I paid my dues, now it's someone else's turn.

I continue to help the community. I'm a sort of councilor to the leadership and I also help them with the religious life. I owe my skills mostly to my father's occupation; like I said, I used to help him in different activities at the Neolog synagogue and at funerals. I also went to the elementary school and the high school of the Neolog Community, so I learned all there was to know about the Neolog and the Orthodox customs.

I am still a consultant professor at the Babes-Bolyai University; I coordinate doctoral dissertations. I also got involved in the activity of the Jewish Committee. I was its president; now I am a member in its leadership.

- **Glossary:**

**1** Ady, Endre (1877-1919): One of the most important Hungarian poets, who played a key role in renewing 20th century Hungarian poetry. He was a leading poet of the Nyugat [West], the most important Hungarian literary and critical journal in the first half of the 20th century.

In his poems and articles he urged the transformation of feudal Hungary into a modern bourgeois democracy, a revolution of the peasants and an end to unlawfulness and deprivation. Having realized that the bourgeoisie was weak and unprepared for such changes, he later turned toward the proletariat. An intense struggle arose around his poetry between the conservative feudal camp and the followers of social and literary reforms.

**2** Orthodox communities: The traditionalist Jewish communities founded their own Orthodox organizations after the Universal Meeting in 1868-1869. They organized their life according to Judaist principles and opposed to assimilative aspirations.

The community leaders were the rabbis. The statute of their communities was sanctioned by the king in 1871. In the western part of Hungary the communities of the German and Slovakian immigrants' descendants were formed according to the Western Orthodox principles.

At the same time in the East, among the Jews of Galician origins the 'eastern' type of Orthodoxy was formed; there the Hassidism prevailed. In time the Western Orthodoxy also spread over to the eastern part of Hungary. In 1896, there were 294 Orthodox mother-communities and 1,001 subsidiary communities registered all over Hungary, mainly in Transylvania and in the north-eastern part of the country,.

In 1930, the 136 mother-communities and 300 subsidiary communities made up 30.4 percent of all Hungarian Jews. This number increased to 535 Orthodox communities in 1944, including 242,059 believers (46 percent).

**3** Neolog Jewry: Following a Congress in 1868/69 in Budapest, where the Jewish community was supposed to discuss several issues on which the opinion of the traditionalists and the modernizers differed and which aimed at uniting Hungarian Jews, Hungarian Jewry was officially split into two (later three) communities, which all built up their own national community network.

The Neologs were the modernizers, who opposed the Orthodox on various questions. The third group, the so-called Status Quo Ante advocated that the Jewish community was maintained the same as before the 1868/69 Congress.

**4** Sephardi Jewry: (Hebrew for 'Spanish') Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin. Their ancestors settled down in North Africa, the Ottoman Empire, South America, Italy and the Netherlands after they had been driven out from the Iberian peninsula at the end of the 15th century.

About 250,000 Jews left Spain and Portugal on this occasion. A distant group among Sephardi refugees were the Crypto-Jews (Marranos), who converted to Christianity under the pressure of the Inquisition but at the first occasion reassumed their Jewish identity.

Sephardi preserved their community identity; they speak Ladino language in their communities up until today. The Jewish nation is formed by two main groups: the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi group which differ in habits, liturgy their relation toward Kabala, pronunciation as well in their philosophy.

**5** Transylvania: Geographical and historical region belonging to Hungary until 1918-19, then ceded to Romania. Its area covers 103,000 sq.km between the Carpathian Mountains and the present-day Hungarian and Serbian borders. It became a Roman province in the 2nd century (AD) terminating the Dacian Kingdom.

After the Roman withdrawal it was overrun, between the 3rd and 10th centuries, by the Goths, the Huns, the Gepidae, the Avars and the Slavs. Hungarian tribes first entered the region in the 5th century, but they did not fully control it until 1003, when King Stephen I placed it under jurisdiction of the Hungarian Crown.

Later, in the 12th and 13th centuries, Germans, called Saxons (then and now), also arrived while Romanians, called Vlachs or Walachians, were there by that time too, although the exact date of their appearance is disputed. As a result of the Turkish conquest, Hungary was divided into 3 sections:

West Hungary, under Habsburg rule, central Hungary, under Turkish rule, and semi-independent Transylvania (as a Principality), where Austrian and Turkish influences competed for supremacy for nearly two centuries. With the defeat of the Turkish Transylvania gradually came under Habsburg rule, and due to the Compromise of 1867 it became an integral part of Hungary again.

In line with other huge territorial losses fixed in the Treaty of Trianon (1920), Transylvania was formally ceded to Romania by Hungary. For a short period during WWII it was returned to Hungary but was ceded to Romania once again after the war.

Many of the Saxons of Transylvania fled to Germany before the arrival of the Soviet army, and more followed after the fall of the Communist government in 1989. In 1920, the population of Erdély was 5,200,000, of which 3 million were Romanian, 1,400,000 Hungarian (26%), 510,000 German and 180,000 Jewish.

In 2002, however, the percentage of Hungarians was only 19.6% and the German and Jewish population decreased to several thousand. Despite the decrease of the Hungarian, German and Jewish element, Transylvania still preserves some of its multiethnic and multi-confessional tradition.

**6** Hasidic Judaism: Haredi Jewish religious movement. Some refer to Hasidic Judaism as Hasidism. The movement originated in Eastern Europe (Belarus and Ukraine) in the 18th century. Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer (1698-1760), also known as the Ba'al Shem Tov, founded Hasidic Judaism.

It originated in a time of persecution of the Jewish people, when European Jews had turned inward to Talmud study; many felt that most expressions of Jewish life had become too "academic", and that they no longer had any emphasis on spirituality or joy.

The Ba'al Shem Tov set out to improve the situation. In its initial stages, Hasidism met with opposition from several contemporary leaders, most notably the Vilna Gaon, leader of the Lithuanian Jews, united as the misnagdim - literally meaning "those who stand opposite".

**7** 'Hungarian era' (1940-1944): The expression 'Hungarian era' refers to the period between 30th August 1940 and 15th October 1944 in Transylvania. As a result of the Trianon Peace Treaty in

1920, the eastern part of Hungary (Maramures, Partium, Banat, Transylvania) was annexed to Romania.

Two million inhabitants of Hungarian nationality came under Romanian rule. In the summer of 1940, under pressure from Berlin and Rome, the Romanian government agreed to return Northern Transylvania, where the majority of the Hungarians lived, to Hungary.

The anti-Jewish laws introduced in 1938 and 1939 in Hungary were also applied in Northern Transylvania. Following the German occupation of Hungary on 19th March 1944, Jews from Northern Transylvania were deported and killed in concentration camps along with Jews from all over Hungary except for Budapest.

Northern Transylvania belonged to Hungary until the fall of 1944, when the Soviet troops entered and introduced a regime of military administration that sustained local autonomy. The military administration ended on March 1945, when the Romanian administration was reintroduced in all the Western territories lost in 1940 - as a reward for the fact that Romania formed the first communist-led government in the region.

**8** Anti-Jewish laws in Hungary: Following similar legislation in Nazi Germany, Hungary enacted three Jewish laws in 1938, 1939 and 1941. The first law restricted the number of Jews in industrial and commercial enterprises, banks and in certain occupations, such as legal, medical and engineering professions, and journalism to 20% of the total number.

This law defined Jews on the basis of their religion, so those who converted before the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, as well as those who fought in World War I, and their widows and orphans were exempted from the law.

The second Jewish law introduced further restrictions, limiting the number of Jews in the above fields to 6%, prohibiting the employment of Jews completely in certain professions such as high school and university teaching, civil and municipal services, etc. It also forbade Jews to buy or sell land and so forth.

This law already defined Jews on more racial grounds in that it regarded baptized children that had at least one non-converted Jewish parent as Jewish. The third Jewish law prohibited intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, and defined anyone who had at least one Jewish grandparent as Jewish.

**9** Kristallnacht: Nazi anti-Jewish violence on the night of 10th November 1938. The official pretext was the assassination two days earlier in Paris of Ernst vom Rath, third secretary of the German embassy, by a Polish Jew named Herschel Grynszpan.

In an increasing atmosphere of tension engineered by the Germans, widespread attacks took place on Jews, Jewish property and synagogues throughout Germany and Austria. Shops were destroyed; warehouses, homes and synagogues were set on fire or otherwise destroyed.

Many windows were broken and the night of violence thus became known as Kristallnacht (Crystal Night, or the Night of Broken Glass). At least 30,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps in Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald and Dachau. Though the German government attempted to

present it as a spontaneous protest and punishment on the part of the Aryan, i.e., non-Jewish population, it was, in fact, carried out by order of the Nazi leaders.

**10** Goga-Cuza government: Anti-Jewish and chauvinist government established in 1937, led by Octavian Goga, poet and Romanian nationalist, and Alexandru C. Cuza, professor of the University of Iasi, and well known for its radical anti-Semitic view.

Goga and Cuza were the leaders of the National Christian Party, an extremist right-wing organization founded in 1935. After the elections of 1937 the Romanian king, Carol II, appointed the National Christian Party to form a minority government.

The Goga-Cuza government had radically limited the rights of the Jewish population during their short rule; they barred Jews from the civil service and army and forbade them to buy property and practice certain professions. In February 1938 King Carol established a royal dictatorship.

He suspended the Constitution of 1923 and introduced a new constitution that concentrated all legislative and executive powers in his hands, gave him total control over the judicial system and the press, and introduced a one-party system.

**11** Kecskemeti, Lipot (1865-1936): Rabbi. Finishing the university and the Rabbinical Seminary in Budapest, he became the chief rabbi of the Nagyvarad community. He was one of the best Hungarian pulpit orators. He was engaged in the study of Medieval Jewish poets during his studies, and later in religious history, and published regularly in the Annals of the Israelite Hungarian Literary Society.

**12** Babes-Bolyai University of Kolozsvar (Cluj Napoca): The Babes-Bolyai University was set up in 1958 by the fusion of two state universities, the Hungarian Bolyai University and the Romanian Babes University. The predecessor of the Bolyai University, called Ferenc Jozsef University and founded in 1872, moved to Szeged after the Trianon Peace Treaty (1920). In 1919 the University of Cluj was declared a Romanian university by an executive decree of the new Governing Council of Transylvania and it was named after the Romanian King, Ferdinand I.

After Transylvania's annexation to Hungary (1940) the Ferdinand University fled to Sibiu and the university buildings in Cluj got back under the rule of the returning Ferenc Jozsef University. In 1945 Transylvania was enclosed to Romania, the Romanian University returned to Cluj, and the negotiation began for the buildings and laboratories.

Since 1945 the Hungarian university has been called Bolyai, and the Romanian one Babes, after the famous Romanian researcher Victor Babes. In the 1950s the Bolyai University was gradually degraded by reducing the number of its faculties, students and teachers. The last phase of this process was the fusion of the two institutions.

**13** Yellow star in Hungary: In a decree introduced on 31st March 1944 the Sztojay government obliged all persons older than 6 years qualified as Jews, according to the relevant laws, to wear, starting from 5th April, "outside the house" a 10x10 cm, canary yellow colored star made of textile, silk or velvet, sewed onto the left side of their clothes.



The government of Dome Sztójay, appointed due to the German invasion, emitted dozens of decrees aiming at the separation, isolation and despoilment of the Jewish population, all this preparing and facilitating deportation. These decrees prohibited persons qualified as Jews from owning and using telephones, radios, cars, and from changing domicile.

They prohibited the employment of non-Jewish persons in households qualified as Jewish, ordered the dismissal of public employees qualified as Jews, and introduced many other restrictions and prohibitions. The obligation to wear a yellow star aimed at the visible distinction of persons qualified as Jews, and made possible from the beginning abuses by the police and gendarmes.

A few categories were exempted from this obligation: WWI invalids and awarded veterans, respectively following the pressure of the Christian Church priests, the widows and orphans of awarded WWI heroes, WWII orphans and widows, converted Jews married to a Christian and foreigners. (Randolph L. Braham: *A népi politika, A holokauszt Magyarországon / The Politics of Genocide, The Holocaust in Hungary*, Budapest, Új Mandátum, 2003, p. 89-90.)

**14** Levente movement: Para-military youth organization in Hungary from 1928-1944, established with the aim of facilitating religious and national education as well as physical training. Boys between the age of 12 and 21 were eligible if they did not attend a school providing regular physical training, or did not join the army.

Since the Treaty of Versailles forbade Hungary to enforce the general obligations related to national defense, the Levente movement aimed at its substitution as well, as its members not only participated in sports activities and marches during weekends, but also practiced the use of weapons, under the guidance of demobilized officers on actual service or reserve officers.

(The Law no. II of 1939 on National Defense made compulsory the national defense education and the joining of the movement.) (Source: Ignac Romsics: *Magyarország története a XX. században/The History of Hungary in the 20th Century*, Budapest, Osiris Publishing House, 2002, p. 181-182.)

**15** Jewish Council/Judenrat: Jewish councils appointed by German occupying authorities to carry out Nazi orders in the Jewish communities of occupied Europe. After the establishment of the ghettos they were responsible for everything that happened within them.

They controlled all institutions operating in the ghettos, the police, the employment agency, food supplies, housing, health, social work, education, religion, etc. Germans also made them responsible for selecting people for the work camps, and, in the end, choosing those to be sent to camps that were in reality death camps.

It is hard to judge their actions due to the abnormal circumstances. Some believe they betrayed Jews by obeying orders, and others think they were trying to gain time and save as many people as possible.

**16** 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 were 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.

**17** Escape from Auschwitz (Vrba/Wetzler): Rudolf Vrba (former name Walter Rosenberg) escaped from Auschwitz along with his friend, fellow prisoner Alfred Wetzler, and on 25th April 1944 gave a report in Zilina, the so-called Report of Vrba and Wetzler about the German extermination camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau, in which they described in detail the camp system and gave witness about the mass murder behind the camp walls, even furnished a plan with important buildings, facilities and gas chambers. Rudolf Vrba also published a book of memoirs, *Utekl jsem z Osvetimi* [I Escaped from Auschwitz].

**18** Eichmann, Adolf (1906-1962): Nazi war criminal, one of the organizers of mass genocide of Jews. Since 1932 member of the Nazi party and SS, since 1934 an employee of the race and resettlement departments of the RSHA (Main Security Office of the Reich), after the "Anschluss" of Austria headed the Headquarters for the Emigration of Jews in Vienna, later organized the emigration of Jews in Czechoslovakia and, since 1939, in Berlin.

Since December 1939 he was the head of the Departments for the Resettlement of Poles and Jews from lands incorporated into the Reich. Since mid-1941, as the Head of the Branch IV B 4 Gestapo RSHA, he coordinated the plan of the extermination of Jews, organized and carried out the deportations of millions of Jews to death camps.

After the war he was imprisoned in an American camp, he managed to escape and hid in Germany, Italy and Argentina. In 1960 he was captured by the Israeli secret service in Buenos Aires. After a process which took several months, he was sentenced to death and executed. Eichmann's trial initiated a great discussion about the causes and the carrying out of the Shoah.

**19** Kasztner group: Named after Rezso Kasztner, a Zionist journalist from Cluj Napoca, who considered aliyah to Palestine the only possible solution of the so-called 'Jewish problem'. In April 1944, Kasztner - as one of the leading members of the Hungarian (Jewish) Salvation Committee - contacted the occupying German authorities in order to save as many Jewish lives as possible.

As a result of his 'negotiations', he succeeded to save the lives of about 1700 Jews, most of them from Budapest. This number also included 387 people from Transylvania (mostly from Cluj Napoca), such as Akiba Glasner, the orthodox chief-rabbi of Cluj and Jozsef Fischer, the leader of Erdelyi Zsido Nemzeti Szovetseg, then Erdelyi Zsido Part.

The Kasztner group arrived in Bergen-Belsen at the beginning of July and left for Switzerland in August and December. After the war Kasztner was criticized by the Jewish community because of his methods of selection. In 1952 he was declared a traitor in Israel, in 1955 the court of justice

found him not guilty. Two years later he was murdered.

**20** Buchenwald: One of the largest concentration camps in Germany, located five miles north of the city of Weimar. It was founded on 16th July, 1937 and liberated on 11th April, 1945. During its existence 238,980 prisoners from 30 countries passed through Buchenwald. Of those, 43,045 were killed.

**21** Hitlerjugend: The youth organization of the German Nazi Party (NSDAP). In 1936 all other German youth organizations were abolished and the Hitlerjugend became the only legal state youth organization. At the end of 1938, the SS took charge of the organization.

From 1939 all young Germans between 10 and 18 were obliged to join the Hitlerjugend, which organized after-school activities and political education. Boys over 14 were also given pre-military training, and girls over 14 were trained for motherhood and domestic duties. In 1939 it had 7 million members.

During World War II members of the Hitlerjugend served in auxiliary forces. At the end of 1944, 17-year-olds from the Hitlerjugend were drafted to form the 12th Panzer Division 'Hitlerjugend' and sent to the Western Front.

**22** Voitec-law: Named after communist minister of education Stefan Voitec, and adopted in 1946. According to this law all those (regardless of their nationality) who had to interrupt their studies during World War II could take exams and apply for high-school or university following an accelerated procedure.

**23** Ceausescu, Nicolae (1918-1989): Communist head of Romania between 1965 and 1989. He followed a policy of nationalism and non-intervention into the internal affairs of other countries. The internal political, economic and social situation was marked by the cult of his personality, as well as by terror, institutionalized by the Securitate, the Romanian political police.

The Ceausescu regime was marked by disastrous economic schemes and became increasingly repressive and corrupt. There were frequent food shortages, lack of electricity and heating, which made everyday life unbearable. In December 1989 a popular uprising, joined by the army, led to the arrest and execution of both Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, who had been deputy Prime Minister since 1980.

**24** 1956 Revolution: It designates the Revolution, which started on 23rd October 1956 against Soviet rule and the communists in Hungary. It was started by student and worker demonstrations in Budapest started in which Stalin's gigantic statue was destroyed. 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 stationing in Hungary since the end of World War II, but they returned after Nagy's announcement that Hungary would pull out of the Warsaw Pact to pursue a policy of neutrality. The Soviet army put an end to the rising on 4th November and mass repression and arrests started.

About 200,000 Hungarians fled from the country. Nagy, and a number of his supporters were executed. Until 1989, the fall of the communist regime, the Revolution of 1956 was officially

considered a counter-revolution.

**25** Rakosi regime: Matyas Rakosi was a Stalinist Hungarian leader of Jewish origin from 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.

**26** Legionary: Member of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known as the Legionary Movement, founded in 1927 by C. Z. Codreanu. This extremist, nationalist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic movement aimed at excluding those whose views on political and racial matters were different from theirs.

The Legion was organized in so-called nests, and it practiced mystical rituals, which were regarded as the way to a national spiritual regeneration by the members of the movement. These rituals were based on Romanian folklore and historical traditions.

The Legionaries founded the Iron Guard as a terror organization, which carried out terrorist activities and political murders. The political twin of the Legionary Movement was the Totul pentru Tara (Everything for the Fatherland), which represented the movement in parliamentary elections. The followers of the Legionary Movement were recruited from young intellectuals, students, Orthodox clericals and peasants. The movement was banned by King Carol II in 1938.

**27** Arrow Cross Party: The most extreme of the Hungarian fascist movements in the mid-1930s. The party consisted of several groups, though the name is now commonly associated with the faction organized by Ferenc Szalasi and Kalman Hubay in 1938.

Following the Nazi pattern, the party promised not only the establishment of a fascist-type system including social reforms, but also the 'Solution of the Jewish Question'. The party's uniform consisted of a green shirt and a badge with a set of crossed arrows, a Hungarian version of the swastika, on it.

On 15th October 1944, when Governor Horthy announced Hungary's withdrawal from the war, the Arrow Cross seized power with military help from the Germans. The Arrow Cross government ordered general mobilization and enforced a regime of terror which, though directed chiefly against the Jews, also inflicted heavy suffering on the Hungarians.

It was responsible for the deportation and death of tens of thousands of Jews. After the Soviet army liberated the whole of Hungary by early April 1945, Szalasi and his Arrow Cross ministers were brought to trial and executed.

**28** Romanian Revolution of 1989: In December 1989, a revolt in Romania deposed the communist dictator Ceausescu. Anti-government violence started in Timisoara and spread to other cities. When army units joined the uprising, Ceausescu fled, but he was captured and executed on 25th December along with his wife.

A provisional government was established, with Ion Iliescu, a former Communist Party official, as president. In the elections of May 1990 Iliescu won the presidency and his party, the Democratic National Salvation Front, obtained an overwhelming majority in the legislature.