

Remembrances of Tibor Koltai (Kaufer), written in 1998

In Monor as in the whole country there were a lot of businessmen, manufacturers and intellectuals among the Jewish. It came from the special situation of the Jewish. There were also wealthy people of them, first of all wholesalers. But the biggest part of the Jewish consisted of grocers, living from income of their small shops day after day on lower-middle-class level or even lower.

Inhabitants of the village were leftist, proof of this was that in 1935 on the parliamentary elections the liberal József Pakots writer-journalist was elected as a representative, opposite to the nominee of the government Károly Papp with open voting.

Coming of Nazism into power in Germany had got special effects soon.

Different fascist-style or directly fascist parties have been established e.g. the party „mower-cross” established by Zoltán Böszörményi, then the fascist party of Zoltán Meskó. These parties had got few members but they were very aggressive. They agreed in one programme point: each was directly against the Jewish. Their aims were to take away property of the Jewish and to chase them from the country.

These small parties reached success only in a narrow range of people, only those people supported them who identified the Jewish employers as capitalists. Intellectuals didn't join them. Some later „Arrow-cross” parties came, e.g. the party of major Szálasi, when in autumn 1944 they took over the power sowed their wild oats and killed many Jewish.

In 1939 new parliamentary elections were held. In the meantime new laws have been accepted upon which voting right of the Jewish was cancelled, so the 5 % Jewish of the inhabitants of the country had no any chance to affect the result of elections. But arrow-cross people and other fascists got a lot of representative positions.

In Monor the extreme-rightist doctor, Tamás Matolcsy became the representative prior to the nominee of the government-party dr. Pál Rabár notary and the manufacturer János Lipták from Budapest, who was the nominee of the Smallholder party.

Situation of the Jewish got worse and worse. Day by day they suffered from indignities. The parliament voted the law of the „More efficient grant of harmony of social and economic order, in 1939. This law is known as „Laws against Jewish”. Also in Monor anti-Semitism appeared. At a summer night in 1939 every window looking to street of Jewish flats and shop-windows were broken. Also in Monor there was a „Crystal-night”. The criminals were unknown. An other similar case happened in 1940, when the round window of the church was broken with a stone during the Friday night church service. The criminal was unknown again. Later abusive anti-Semitic inscriptions were painted on the wall of the church, criminals were certainly unknown.

Those certain „peaceful years” weren't very peaceful. First, live coals were glowing under ashes, then flame got bigger and bigger and instigation became more and more direct. More and more people joined Nazism because of influence of the German propaganda and the Hungarian arrow-cross people and other extreme-rightist persons.

The so-called „gentlemen” joined these movements, too. E.g. count Domokos Festecsics landowner of 40 thousand acre, but the most important personality was Béla Imrédy, first, minister of finance later prime minister. He had got problem when his Jewish origin turned out by parliamentary proof of the liberal representataive, he had to give up to be a prime minister. But he continued loving the German, fascism and anti-Semitism. At this time he was said that only „mór” is true from his name, because his full name was Dr. Béla Imrédy Ómoravici. At the same time it turned out about Szálasi, sitting in prison that his origin is Armenian.

In 1939 World War II broke out. At the beginning of the war Hitler said „if the Jewish of world break out the war, conclusion of peace won't find any Jewish in Europe.” He finished his speech with „Death for Jewish”.

Also in Hungary fascism has been spread, first of all because of German victories. Rules, restricting Jewish, laws against Jewish came into force one after the other. The house of representatives voted for „unlawful laws” – as we know them now – with great majority.

One form of humiliations was to call up people to a forced labour camp. First forced labour camp was established in summer 1944, that time the Jewish were called up to this camp for 3 months. They wore their own civil clothes but they had got their military ranks and accordingly got their soldier's pay. They could keep their sword but couldn't keep a pistol because gun-licence of the Jewish – as unreliable people - was cancelled earlier in 1942.

The Jewish young, born in 1919 were called up to a forced labour camp in 1940, they spent their actual military service, but there was no demobilization. Two young people from Monor – who had taken final examination at secondary school – were called up, too. They were: József Steinberger and Károly Grozner, they had got special uniforms and wore it during their leaves, but they weren't allowed to have got bayonets and within short time also the uniform was prohibited.

In Monor there was a military reception centre, a headquarter. The commander of the centre was József Tomanóczy, in 1940 he was a major but in 1943 a colonel. After the war the people's court passed him a sentence of 12 year-long prison..

In other camps there were even wilder, more cruel commanders, e.g. colonel Murai (Metzl) in Nagykáta, who caused death of a lot of inmates of forced labour camp. He and his accomplices were sentenced to death by people's court, the sentence was performed. On the front the cadre could live out their sadistic and anti-Semitic inclinations, they were terribly cruel. It might be enough to read the book of the Christian István Kossa, titled „From Danube to Don”, which describes fate of jankers.

Certainly from Monor the Jewish of military-age were called up to forced labour camps. Also they were sent to the front in summer clothes, they starved and felt cold, picked up mines and died one after another. From the carried off 50 000 inmates of labour camps only abt. 8 000 returned. Later, after the German occupation their life became again worse, new sufferings and death came. The best of Jewish young of the most active-age were carried off and died. Many of them died in Russian prison camps.

In the meantime the vall religious life was going on quietly in Monor. The church wasn't full even on big holidays, inmates of labour camps missed. In 1943 on the day of „Jajm-Kippur” our rabbi prayed a wonderful prayer for us, all. In the prayer he listed: „German, Austrian, Czech, Polish, Danish, Norwegian, French, Belgian, Dutch, Hungarian Jewish and our Lord, no way out.”. He was speaking in front of the open Ark of the Covenant and the flock was standing and listening to this wonderful sermon.

Meanwhile the old people died according to the law of life but there was neither marriage and consequently no birth. Number of the Jewish reduced. But this was nothing in comparison of the following years, when also the biological reserve was killed, when Auschwitz performed the terrible order of them.

It's interesting that during this terrible period, programs were even held in the council-room. They were like literature evenings in the local circumstances. There were performances, recitations, smaller plays, e.g. „Two people in the mine” titled one-act play, written by Ferenc Herczeg, or Dezső Grósz recited poems or performed prose. Then people danced and sang Hungarian military songs.

The humiliation concerned also the so-called movement Levente. Every young had to join them during the active service or till the final disability. First it didn't cause any problem but from 1941 no Jewish young were chosen into the „parade platoons” of young on national holidays. Since that time the Jewish had to go to meetings of Levente separately, their military training cancelled. An order came that the Jewish young were no worthy of having the name „Levente” but instead of it they were „ auxiliary pre-trained students” and had to wear yellow arm-band on the meetings..

The authorities weren't inactive during this time. At the beginning of 1939 my father Ármin Kaufer was given a citation to order him to go in the office and to take with himself his nationality certificate. We couldn't believe, what this was? Certainly my father hadn't got nationality certificate but had got a document, certifying that he had been a lance sergeant in the world war I., had got a badge of honour, he

paid taxes for the state and for the religious community. He was said it wasn't enough, he had to have a nationality certificate as well as a certificate of that he was an inhabitant of Monor. „Oh, it's not a problem, he said, I've been living here since my age of 5, also my brother is a civil servant here.” It wasn't enough. Until the certificate of nationality is missing we are considered as foreigners or stateless – they said. We started to get documents. My grandfather was born in Nagymácséd in the county Pozsony in 1885. He crossed the border in the war when he was sent to. In Galánta a cousin of my father lived, he did all his best for us to obtain certificates. Finally we managed to get a paper, which described that during rule of Jozsef II there had been a census of Jewish and an ancestor of my father had been named on it. Upon this document we got the certificates of residence and nationality.

In the meanwhile we had to endure terrible afflictions. Fortunately the police commissioner Béla Reviczky Revisnyei was a very well-meaning man. When notices from the authorities came, he delayed papers and informed us, urged that we obtain documents as soon as possible. The procedure lasted for abt. 3 years. The inspector Reviczky had got other Jewish connections, too. Sometimes he came to talk to the house – where also we lived – to the flat of Sándor Gellért. He wore his uniform during his visits. You must know about this citizenship-matter that those Jewish – abt. 15 thousand people – who couldn't certify their Hungarian nationality – were carried away to Kamenyec-Podolszk (occupied by the German) and the German killed them there.

Let's see also incidents of Újvidék. In January of 1942 nearly 1000 Jewish people were killed by Hungarian soldiers and gendarmes. They were shot into icy Danube. Their only crime was that they were Jewish. Jewish inhabitants of Úvidék have been destroyed in this way during the so-called „icy days”. And the forced labour camps! Ten-thousands of Jewish died because of the cruel, brutal treatment and murders of the guard. There were commanders who said these people had to die, they had to be killed, because the guard couldn't go home till they were alive. Only the name-list of the died people needed to return home.

The laws against Jewish made life harder and harder. Jewish doctor, lawyer or actor couldn't be a member of a chamber, rules came into force one after another, aims of each was to make life of Jewish impossible. How right was the main rabbi when in his sermon he was speaking about the poisoned chalice destined for the Jewish: „poisoned chalice of laws against Jewish, poisoned chalice of humiliations, poisoned chalice of deportations , and our Lord, no way out!” Yes, our rabbi spoke about deportations, gaschambers, but at that time he got only news about these horrors.. „Poisoned chalica after poisoned chalice!” Kállay-government accepted rules, laws against Jewish one after another. And the lower authorities did their best to fulfill these orders as perfectly as they could. There were only few honest clerks who tried to delay performance of the rules, but the majority was happy that they could fulfill them. Thankful memory for those people who kept their honesty and helped to survive sufferings and troubles.

On 19 March 1944. the German troops occupied Hungary, they came in Monor, too. At number 1 street Deák F. two families lived, Sándor Gellért with his wife and his 20 year old son Tibor, and we, i.e. Ármin Kaufer with his wife and his 21 year old son Tibor. Now, I Tibor Koltai (Kaufer) remember what happened at that time.

In the morning we were informed of the news, we were talking about it, we tried to to deduct what would happen. In the afternoon German soldiers came, wanted to find a flat, they saw writing „mezuzá” on the door-post, which meant Jewish live in the flat. They didn't do rumpus, they were talking, laughing and eating cakes of Mrs. Gellért, she had baked during the day.

In the meantime Mrs. Gellért was speaking whole time. After eating the German left. They entered several Jewish flats but they left from everywhere without atrocity. This made us be quiet. But who knew at that time what would follow within a short time...

I had got a very good job at that time, I was a delivery boy at No. 1 street Párizsi in Pest and worked for three textile wholesalers. They were good to me I got 80 pengó a week (Hungarian money before World war II). I did hope I could keep my job till the end of the war. I didn't manage to reach it. After the German had come in the country different, new and drastic so-called rules against Jewish were accepted, e.g. we had to wear compulsory yellow stars. I went usually to work from Monor without problems.

Certainly I wore the yellow star. I got a certificate from the gendarme office that I went to work to Pest, so I travelled legally.

On 3 April the first air attack happened against Budapest, after it crowd went to the West-railway station, everybody wanted to leave the capital because they were afraid of the air attacks. And I was expected by a call-up order, according to it I had to go to Jászberény to the local military post on 17 April, taking with myself cold food, enough for 3 days. My school-mate Laci Hőnig received his call-up, too. We took a train in the morning of 17 April and went with back-packs, yellow-stars. We travelled on the platform of the train, because there wasn't free space inside and we didn't know how the travellers would receive us. On the platform a young man – aged as we – spoke to us „where are you going gentlemen?” his voice was just inquiring. Certainly we didn't feel „gentlemen”. We were travelling near Jászberény, only some people were in the compartment, also a middle-aged well-dressed gentleman. Later a stoutly built young railway man took the train, he was drunk and started troubling us. The mentioned gentleman stopped him: „leave those people alone, they didn't speak to you, they have got their problems.” The railway man stopped speaking. We thanked for protection of the gentleman. When we got off, were standing there until the train passed us and in silence we bowed our heads to the gentleman who was so honest

In Jászberény the commander of the barrack was István Zentai colonel. He was a big, 2 m tall man. His voice was very loud, when he started shouting it could be heard from very far. After the war his activity was valued for 15 years by people's court.

In Jászberény our company was established, number of it was 101/97 and we were sent to Pusztamizse. There we were accommodated on the land of Mr. Andreidesz landowner, on the garrets of barns etc. The commander of the company was István Végh, reserve lieutenant, a soldier from the world war I. He was a honest man, we hadn't got problems.

Within abt. 1 month we were entrained and sent to Vác. We were accommodated in a school, an airport was being built there we were working on it. The work itself wasn't very hard for me, I used to do hard physical work from 1941 to the end of 1943, we produced concrete products on Polacsek- site, we had got 60 working hours a week..

When we arrived at Vác the people living in ghetto were entrained. It was very sad to see how the gendarmes pushed forward old people, women and children.

We stayed at Vác for a short time then were entrained again and sent towards east. We thought they carry us to the front which was not far from the border. But no, we stopped and got off at the other side of the Carpathians in the village Vorochta. We stayed there for a month. During the whole month it was raining we had only two sunny days. Work was very hard, we had to load ammunition in wagons and out. Food was little.

We were glad when the Russian were advanced and we were entrained again and returned to Hungary to a village Visóvölgy, where Viso flew into Tisza. We were ten good friends and were accommodated in a room of the house of uncle Pancsek. Certainly we slept on the floor. Uncle Pancsek spoke a bit Hungarian but his family could speak only Ruthene. We had no problem with each other. Regarding work we were very lucky we loaded food, cigarette into wagons. So we could have obtained some more food (certainly not officially). The food we received in the camp wasn't very good, but since that time we could get cheese, salami, fat, cigatte, so everything what needed.

The front came nearer again. On 14 October we made a marching-company and go to Máramarossziget. On the following day the notorious trial desertion followed and the day of taking over of power by arrow-cross people. There was happiness when hearing proclamation of Horthy. It was me who said the German and the arrow-cross people wouldn't allow it. My fellows didn't want to believe it, unfortunately I was right. Next day we loaded war stores, but only a small part was carried away, remaining part should have been destroyed. The warehouse was a synagogue, we had to pour out wine, flour, vinegar... It was terrible to see, and even to do it. We took the train again went to Losonc. There we worked again in a warehouse. In the middle of December we travelled again during the way we had no food, neither cooked nor dry food. At night of 24 December our train stopped, we got off. The name of the village was Kópháza and as

we knew it was 5 km far from Sopron. It was evening of Christmas, we – thirty people - were pushed into a wooden barn of a house, the order was: nobody could go away but would be shot dead. In the meanwhile our guard was replaced, we could see around only armed arrow-cross people, German soldiers and other uniform-dressed people. In the next morning, first day of Christmas we were woken up early, had to line up with the whole marching equipment. We were pushed forward to a big, open field and the command was, everybody had to give down his money, jewellery, watch, knife and razor.

We were poor at home, both my father and me worked as unskilled workers, lived day after day. We even had got some golden things. There was my mother's wedding ring, my father's golden watch-chain – abt. 15 gramm - from the happy peaceful time, I received a golden ring and a watch-chain of one of my dead uncles. All these were sewn in hem of my trousers by my step-mother before joining up. It depended on me what I do with my treasures. It was a big game! We were said that if anybody keeps his jewellery he would be shot dead. What to do? I dug a small hole in the frosty ground with heel of my boots and put the jewellery in it, covered with sand and put my backpack there. A German soldier came and showed me that I take my backpack away. I got frightened. Only a blind man wouldn't have seen that there had been a fresh mound. The German kicked it and jewellery came out. It was cold but I felt sweat flowing along my back. – I'll be shot dead at once! The German soldier picked up the golden things, looked at them one by one then threw down them near me and stepped further. So, there was such a German soldier, too. I have no idea why he did it. He didn't take away anything. I picked up the golden things and we were allowed to go back to the barn. I was afraid very much and I asked a fellow named Freid to sell my jewellery. I got bread, sausage and bacon for them. It was enough for some days, as addition.

Before we arrived at Kópháza I had got the biggest beating of my life. Our train stopped at the boundary of a village Ratisdorf prior to Pozsony. We were hungry. I with some of my fellows went to the houses of a village, being not too far and took with ourselves bags which we wanted to change into food. It's true we were prohibited to leave the train. But we were very hungry! We were back on the way when a guard, a gendarme called us to go to him. We were five. The gendarme made us stand in line, looked around, picked up a finger's breadth stick and said „put out your hands”. He hit my opened hands five-five times with his full might. I felt only pain of the first hit because my palm grew numb at once. My hands got swelled within moments I wasn't able to hold anything, my fellows pulled me into the wagon. The last man from us five, a boy from Mátészalka broke into tears before hit and the gendarme gave quarter to him. For days I couldn't hold anything, I had no chance to put a compress on my palms, going to toilet was the worst of all. I couldn't do it without help. I won't forget it till the day of my death.

In Kópháza we lived thirty people in one wooden barn and didn't think whether it was possible at all to survive a winter in these circumstances. Certainly not everybody survived it. Several people died there but it was nothing in comparison to what later came... Also Imre Havas „Csöpi” died here, he was a very strong boy. His legs were frostbitten and he was nearly putrefied. 62 year old uncle Frielandaera a plumber-master died, too. He was a short, weak man and he was beaten by our German foreman because wasn't satisfied with his work. On the second day after beating the poor old man died. Our working place was some kilometres far from our accommodation. In the morning we were pushed there and we did fortification work there. German soldiers and arrow-cross people supervised us. We built a wooden-sand small fortress: these were the so-called 1 hour 1 minute fortresses – the origin of the name was: when the Russian soldiers came, they saw it and were laughing for 1 hour then occupied it within 1 minute.

I hadn't got gloves and when our fellow Sándor Breiner died I got his gloves. We got bread and marmalade for breakfast and only after return to our accommodation in the evening we got some soup-named cat-lap as cooked food and some bread nothing more. We became thinner and weaker very soon. We were happy when a horse died because knew that some meat would be in soup. When we went to sleep in the barn in the evening I had got only a blanket to be covered and my winter-coat I had got from the clothes of a died man. Clothes of died people were always divided among those who needed them. In the evening my legs were so cold that I couldn't sleep unless I massaged them to be warmer. Contrary to this my big toes were frostbitten, pus flew from them. I had to go on foot and work with this foot.

At the end of February we were pushed forward to Nagycenk where we found a German hospital-train. We were pushed into this train and disinfection started. We undressed and went to good, hot bath, our clothes were disinfected in steam. Lots of louses were destroyed but some persistent specimen survived hot steam. Unfortunately I left my leather wallet in the pocket of my clothes so it became soaked. Result of it was that my wallet was torn into rags together with all my papers, photos. I became embittered very much because these things couldn't be substituted. Hot bath deranged my purulent toe, I felt status of it got worse. I could walk only slowly with a limp, I was the final man in the line. Behind me an Ukrainian man came, he „behaved as an inspector” with a hazel stick in his hand. On the whole way he was beating my legs with that stick. Considering the way was longer than 10 km you can imagine how my legs looked like by the time we got back to Kópháza.

Some words about these Ukrainians. They were anti-Soviet-hearted young people, standing over to the flank of the German and joined them. They had got mutual feeling of hating the Jewish. They hadn't got weapon, their power symbol was a stick, they hadn't got a uniform, too. They tried to please the German. We called them „pan”, i.e. gentleman. The German didn't consider them as humans, gave them the most subordinate work. At the end of January a terrible snow-storm came, at 10 o'clock night there was an alert and we had to go to remove snow-banks from the highway. It was an awful weather. Snow-banks were 2-3 high and during work storm was riging. Wind was blowing snow from one place to the other and back. Finally we managed to overcome snow and made high walls of snow on both sides of the way. This time neither the german nor the arrow-cross people came with us only the cruel Ukrainians were the guard. In the morning we went back from work and found our fellow Sándor Breiner dead in the barn – I got his gloves. Fate of these Ukrainians wasn't doubtful after the war, they got what traitors deserved.

Several times my physical status got worse. Sometimes I couldn't go out to work I stayed lying in the barrack for some days. Certainly I needed permission of doctor. Fortune made that also Dr. Miklós (Schwarz) Szűcs from Monor came to Kópháza. I knew him very much, because he married Kata Steinberger and was a Polacsek-relative, in this way he became a Monor-inhabitant. He got his medical (dentist) degree in Roma university. He wore a red-cross arm-band and got some favour as doctors, since also arrow-cross people needed doctors. Doctor Schwarz helped me several times, e.g. brought an additional bowl of food from the kitchen. It was especially important, because more food meant life in that time. I always think of Miklós with thanks for his help. When I was lying he told me I mustn't only lay: even I'm ill I go out to work. I understood why he said, a lot of sick people were very weak for lying and they died in short time. I wanted to stay alive so I overcame it. The commander of our group wasn't satisfied with my work or my look. I was warned that he was watching me and wanted to shoot me dead if I wouldn't work better. I had to take it seriously because he didn't have to account for the Jewish workers.

Winter has gone away, in the clear blue sky confederal aeroplanes appeared, while they were flying to bomb. The big bombers were flying in order and quick fighter planes were dodging about them. Later we heard bombings we were said bombers went against Bécscújhely. Front came closer and closer. Offensive of the German in Dunántúl was kaput in March Falling back came again. The cross-arrow people said if the Russian could be in Győr, why they couldn't drink in Kópháza. But clash of the war hasn't reached us yet. We hoped very much that in a morning when we wake up no any German, cross-arrow man and Ukrainian would be with us, but only we would see Russian uniforms around. No such things happened to us and we couldn't imagine then what even more terrible things would follow.

In the afternoon of 24 March everybody was very busy and we got the order to prepare our equipment. We knew that marching would follow but where? We were sure that no Russian soldiers would receive us. Everybody knew that war couldn't last for one more winter. It was obvious that the German army was dying but they made as if victory would be close. In the evening we fell in and started in darkness. We didn't know the directon but our way at night was near the lake Fertő. In the way I discovered that during marching at night people could sleep. The

long marching made also well-fed people be suffering but even more us. Before start we had got bread and „Hitler-bacon” (marmalade) - I ate it very fast.

Then Loreto followed. This was the name of a village, sound of it is beautiful and melodious like Italian names. But here terrible things happened. It was abt. 10 o'clock at night when we reached limits of the village.. The German strengthened ways leading into villages, they made the ways more narrow – leaving only space which was enough for a tank – they wanted to hold up the Soviet in this way. While we were marching towards the village we were hearing shots from time to time. The way became sandy before entry of the village. I noticed that people marching in front of me started running.. I wasn't easy and pleasant to run in such sinking sand, but even everybody did it. In some seconds I recognised why they did it? On the two sides of the way the German were standing and beating the Jewish with gunstocks and bats. The Jewish were running because of vital instinct . If a Jewish was beaten by head he stayed there dead. If somebody was only fallen down but was still alive he was shot dead. We heard these shots when were going closer to the village. I was lucky, when I saw that a big German lifted his bat to hit me I started running much faster so he couldn't reach me I survived. In the meantime some selected Jewish were digging sideways graves for dead people . I don't know how many Jewish were hit and shot dead here by the German. From our company I remember a boy from Sub-Carpathia , Mór Ferenczi – he was the same-age as me – I saw him lying by the way with broken head., dead.

In the village our company stopped. Nobody spoke a word, people were gasping for breath and were silent for the suffered horror. We haven't had to experience such horror yet. A boy was standing next to me from an other group – I didn't know him before - he was whispering to the man standing in front of him : „Oh, uncle Laci I have to go to toilet.”. Also the answer came whispered :” you can't go now, do it in your trousers”. The boy did it. He undertook rather the dirty clothes than death. Then I didn't know poetry of Miklós Radnóti yet, but I think his lines from *Razglednica* belong here:: „The company in a big stinking group is standing, above them heinous death is blowing.” This happened in Loreto.

And we went farther. Our accommodation at night was an open mine. We slept on bare ground but we didn't care of it. In the morning after waking up we hadn't to care of breakfast or washing, because no food no water was there. I was moving a bit so that numbness goes away when I saw „Döme” coming towards to me. His real name was Tibor Gellért and he was my best friend. He was a year younger then me and we were true friends. He worked in Popper printing house as a pressman.. His parents had got a small watch-jewellery shop in Monor. When Döme woke up in the morning he saw that Dr. Miklós (Szűcs) Schwarcz was sleeping near him. He asked the doctor whether he knew anything about me. Miklós told him that I was in the hospital team, so Döme started to find me. He was deported to Fertőrákos and was lucky because the owner of the barn employed him as a general servant and gave him enough food. So, he didn't starved and he didn't look thin. His clothes was in relative order, too. My friend arranged with the Jewish leader of his company – named Vadnai - that I could go into his company so we stayed together. Vadnai wasn't too happy when he saw me because he was relatively neat. Also his son and his brother-in-law were in the same company. They came from Kispest. The „jupo” was a position, created by the German as a kind of help to provide order among Jewish. They got double-portion food as a salary. There was also a main/first „jupo”, named Farkas, he served completely the German. I was sorry to leave my company but I wanted to stay together with Döme. On the nearest railway station we took a train, not into animal carrying wagons but normal passenger coaches. Our train

crossed Wien we saw Prater and inside the Ferris wheel. Then suddenly the train stopped and we had to get off. We fell in and started to march.

The name of the railway station was Mauthausen. At that time we didn't know this name but soon it got well-known for us. So, we started marching and after several kilometre walking upwards we reached a camp. We were accommodated in a big tent where we slept on thatch. We were sitting on thatch and were waiting. Everybody was excited about the food. Soon we received the reply on this question. Bread portion a day was 80 grams. Certainly it wasn't normal bread but from bran and a mixture of mast grist. It was even a big treasure if there had been enough of it. We got some black soup for breakfast, only God knew what it was made of. We got cooked food in the evening, it was a kind of thick soup in a big dish. This dish was like a waste bin in these days. Those, who carried the dish got double portion food and had chance to eat the rest of the food from the bottom of the dish. It was an enormous thing then. Numbers of dead people continuously increased. Starvation and typhus killed a lot of people. Report of died people wasn't told to our commander as long as it was possible because we could get also the portions of the died fellows. In this way I got a coat from a boy from Budapest, Ottó Weisz because my coat was already ragged. In the pocket of this coat I found big value. The dirt of pocket was mixed with salt, so I could sprinkle my bread with salt. It was fantastic! The other treasure I found in the coat was a Balaton cigarette. In the past I usually smoked but certainly I had to give it up. Now I went out of the tent and somehow I lighted my cigarette. After a few second an older deported man came to me and asked for my cigarette. I gave it to him without dispute. He looked at me and said: "Oh my God, this is Balaton cigarette, taste from home". Lack of cigarette was a real torture for a lot of people. There were people who gave their food for a cigarette, then they starved dead. If anybody thought that there is no more terrible place than Mauthausen he was wrong. In the morning of 17 April we had to fall in we got a half kilogram of bread per man and go!. Regarding the poor food a German sergeant said: „Molotov will give you more food”. In Mauthausen I was together with Laci Hönig, we were called up together in Jászberény a year before. We weren't together in march he left back, but we agreed if anyone of us could return home he would tell to the relatives that on 17 April we separated. Laci Hönig told me in Mauthausen what tortures they had to survive. They had their own Loreto in more terrible version. Their march was called a death march of Eisenerz. They crossed Eisenerz-Alps and when they were marching across a mountain pass, the German were shooting them from the top of the pass. Especially a half-armed German was „excellent” in killing, a fellow of him loaded the machine gun continuously so he was shooting and shooting. Several hundred Jewish died in this way.

We were forced to start marching on 17 April.. Tibor Gellértl came with me and later we stayed together. We thought already at the beginning of the way that terrible things would follow. When we stepped out of the gate of the camp guns started shooting. Died people were lying on both sides of the way especially we experienced it when crossed the bridge of Danube. Major twins died here, too. One of them was shot dead his brother fell on him and got the mortal shoot, too.

We were marching the whole day. In the first lines women were walking, we met them in Kópháza and the other villages – they were pushed there from Budapest – they were carried to Mauthausen, too. In the meanwhile guns were booming. A lot of deported people were shot dead. I remember a young German soldier – abt. 20 years old - he must have been educated at Hitler

Jugend and he likely considered as a humanitarian activity to kill the Jewish , because he was really diligent.. He chose a victim, the two people, marching near him had to carry him away to the bank of a ditch where the German shot him dead. Other German soldiers killed the Jewish as well, but this young boy was the most „excellent „of them. During the noon-time resting the commander of the march, a Wehrmacht sub-lieutenant ordered the young killer to him and bawled with him. We didn't understand them because they were far from us. I seemed the commander wanted to stop killing. After this, fewer killings happened but several Jewish were shot dead also later. For the terrible starvation a lot of people stepped out of the line to tear some flowering rape to eat it. But every time result was death. I saw a dead man, holding rape in his hand but his head was divided into two. Among our guards there were also firemen from Wien , some of them could speak Hungarian. They behaved guilelessly, only sometimes shouted . One more remembrance. We were going through a village. A farmer was pushing forward his horse and his cart was full of cattle-turnip. As we were passing his cart everybody who could, took away a piece of turnip.and started to eat the muddy, dirty turnip immediately I saw the face of the farmer in front of me also now, he was shocked and didn't say a word looking at Jewish people who were robbing his cart. On the next march continued and we got finally food, bread and „Hitler-bacon”.

We stuffed ourselves with food because the phrase of „ what you eat is yours” was very true. Finally we arrived at Gunskirchen, out of the village there was a pine-wood, a barrack camp, we were accommodated in it. There was already a group of Jewish first of all Polish. The German hit everybody, crying that we must occupy our places. The place meant that everybody sat on his bag and were waiting for food during the whole day. We got also here 80 gram bread and some soup. We would have been satisfied also with it if we had got enough of it. But we hadn't got. I felt that my strength declines day by day. Sometimes we were sent out to bury . Because a lot of died people had to be buried. On the way leading to this camp 400 Jewish people was killed from 5000 by the young killer and his fellows. We dug a mass grave, four people carried one dead man to the grave. Such a dead man who died from starvation couldn't be heavier than 35-40 kilograms but we, four could hardly carry them. We spent two weeks in this camp, the camp was able to receive 1600 people and we were crowded there abt. 10 000 people. It's true that the number of people lessened day by day. In the afternoon of 4 May 1945. at abt. half past five we heard rattle of guns, and saw the German running excited, despaired. And the Americans appeared. They were only few soldiers, but they didn't experienced any fight. The cruel Nazi executioners became meek, they had no more weapons.

A fight started for food. Everybody wanted to get food. To eat, eat and eat. There was no other aim of life but eating. We were unbelievably dirty we were full of lice. There was no enough water to drink, who could care of water to wash? Somebody was passing me in hurry, with an open tinned artificial honey, I dipped my hand in it and started to lick that poor German artificial honey and the taste of it was marvellous. In the meantime I saw that my hand is bloody, because I hurted my hand when dipped in the tin, but I didn't care of my blood I ate honey with my blood.

On the next day Döme, me and some friends went to the near town of Wels. We were going in the ditch because Americans were driving their tanks on the way. It was very touching as the soldiers were sitting on the tops of tanks and were throwing tinned food to us from carton boxes. I could get a tinned tomato fish up in the air, somehow we could open it and ate without bread. In the town we went to the houses and asked for food everywhere. We didn't get too much food,

they themselves had hardly something. Somehow we even got two pieces of boiled potato, together with Döme because we didn't leave alone each other.

Soon we had even to do it, but it had got a special reason. Our accommodation in Wels was the barrack of the alpine riflemen. But Döme and me lived in a basement office of a tenement, because the Austrian porter allowed us to live there. At night I got a terrible diarrhoea and I needed new clothes. The diarrhoea was caused by the huge food, which overloaded my weak stomach. I stayed alive but many people died because they weren't able to stop eating. Several hundred of people died after liberation because it came too later for them. It concerned also me a bit. When we were moving to an other place and I was carrying my bag suddenly I felt fever and hardly could reach the new accommodation. It was in Hörsching, where there was a military airport, and accommodation of the former deported people was established there. Döme came with me to the barrack hospital, I had to lay in a bed and I didn't remember anything else. I stayed there for two weeks, and I remember that Döme visited me two times. He visited me more times but I couldn't remember. So, it was typhus. I still wonder how I could survive this hard disease in that condition. In that weak status I couldn't eat, I was loath to eat. Finally I could leave the hospital and went back to the accommodation. But typhus left consequences, I had got serious memory falter, I became nearly deaf, I heard only loud words. Later my condition got better, though for weeks I could only climb up stairs (on all fours), but I had to go for food.

At the beginning of July we could take a train and go to Hungary. It was Saturday when we arrived at Sopron, there our religious community received us and we got 100 pengő (Hungarian money) per head – this wasn't a lot of money in that inflationary period. We took a train again, I don't remember where we were travelling but it's sure, first in my life I saw Balaton. At dawn I woke up in the train and saw a soviet soldier sitting near me. He – as turned out – was a Jewish boy. We were talking a bit in Yiddish language, and when I told him that I was hungry, he took out his bread and gave me the half of it.

I arrived at Monor after more than a year and met sad reality there: my father, my step-mother and my step-brother died in Auschwitz. From our four-member family only me survived.

How my life continued is an other history.