

Women's Identities in Vojvodina: 1920-1930

Svenka Savić, ed.

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Foreword

This book presents the life stories of six women of different ethnic backgrounds from Vojvodina who were born between 1920 and 1930, in the first decade following the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the First World War and the inclusion of Vojvodina in the newly formed Yugoslavia of 1918. This period is significant for Vojvodina, which under Austria-Hungary had been (and continues to be) the home of a diverse population for two and a half centuries. The diversity of the region was the backdrop against which the women in this book were born and spent their childhood. Each of the featured stories serves both as an example of an individual life and as a model for many similar destinies in Vojvodina. The common thread which binds them together is the formation of personal identity in such a social context. The featured women were born in different places in Vojvodina, some multilingual (Novi Sad, Sombor, Pančevo), some predominantly monolingual (Senta remains predominantly Hungarian, while Perlez is mostly Serbian). They have an awareness of their identities: multicultural, multilingual, ethnically and religiously tolerant. For example, Mirjam is Jewish (by her father), her first language is Hungarian (from her mother), and she is equally familiar with the Catholic and Jewish faiths. She did not ascribe the highest importance to her own ethnicity, but after being sent to a concentration camp for being Jewish, and because of the anti-Semitism which was still deeply engrained in our society both before and after the decade in which she was born, she is sensitive to the anti-Semitism she has experienced throughout her life, regardless of which social structure prevailed at different periods in Vojvodina (monarchy, socialism after WWII and today's neo-capitalism). Vera and Magda present similar examples (Hungarian as native language, Jewishness as the deciding factor in their personal fates—concentration camps, persecution, personal incidents). All of them demonstrate a strong sense of belonging to the Vojvodina region—a place of many layers and many voices in which they too speak with one voice about difference and diversity.

The Life Stories of Women in Vojvodina project was initiated by the NGO for Women's Studies and Research in Novi Sad (Vojvodina) in 1998 as a long-term undertaking which aimed to gather field data from women of different ethnic backgrounds and create a database for further use in studies and research. To date, we have collected some 150 life stories from women in Vojvodina and published parts of the material in several books: *Vojvođanke* ('Women of Vojvodina,' Serbian); *Romkinje* ('Roma Women,' in Serbian, English and Romany); *Slovačinje* ('Slovakian Women' in Slovakian); *Rusinke* ('Ruthenian Women,' in Ruthenian; *Mađarice* ('Hungarian Women,' in Hungarian); while another volume on Croatian women is being prepared

for publication in 2006. The present book forms part of the same project, and the six featured stories demonstrate the idea we wish to affirm—the multilayered identity of women, a category that underlies the life experiences of the entire community of Vojvodina. These individual life experiences are part of the intellectual tradition of Vojvodina, which—more than other regions of Serbia—is tolerant of differences. We can see this best in the women's own work and production: Magda's literary and political legacy; Vera's many fruitful years as a pianist; Pavica's outstanding potential in linguistics. At times it can be difficult to measure the contribution of an individual with such a multilayered identity to her community's worldview and understanding. It may seem that such a category cannot be measured with the tools of sociology and psychology. But personal stories are an effective tool for making sense of the reality of the other. The narratives themselves are convincing proof that events can be turned to good purpose. This is the key to understanding these individual life stories, brought together in this book under a single title.

Thank you to all who have participated in the project from 1998 till now, to all the students and coworkers at the Women's Studies, a group of 90 people all together—a strong community of women, some who told their stories and others (mostly the younger ones) who listened and took them down. This book can be said to represent a new type of women's experience.

Thank you to Ana, Magda, Pavica, Elza, Vera and Mirjam, who told me their life stories and trusted me to convey them to others.

My thank to the translators for making the stories available to readers in English (Edita Jankov, Jasna Trifunović) and German (Zoran Velikić).

Svenka Savić

Novi Sad, August 2006

Anna (1921), Pančevo



Erzählen Sie mir über Ihre Kindheit, die Sie in der Vojvodina verbracht haben. Wo sind Sie geboren?

– In Pančevo, in einundzwanzig. Wir sind Donauschwaben. Deutsche die Maria Teresia in der Vojvodina angesiedelt hat, der Donau entlang noch vor dreihundert Jahren. Da haben wir auch gelebt, dort sind alle unsere Vorfahren, dort sind auch wir, und auch unsere Kinder geboren. Dort in Pančevo haben wir niemand mehr. Außer dem Grab haben wir nichts. Außer Mutters Grab. Unser Vater ist im Jahr fünfund- sechzig nach Deutschland ausgewandert und dort hat er siebzehn Jahre lang gelebt und dort ist er gestorben. Die Mutter ist in zwei und vierzig an Krebs gestorben während der Deutschen Zeit . Und

dann fing unser schweres Leben an. Alles ging dann bergab. Mein Vater war neun Jahre jünger als meine Mutter und dann hat er wieder geheiratet. Wir haben das damals nicht verstehen können, aber jetzt verstehe ich, daß er nicht allein hat bleiben können. Meine Schwester war verheiratet, wir sind nur meine Schwester und ich. Es fiel uns sehr schwer, es zu verstehen. Ich war damals einundzwanzig Jahre alt, da waren die Wunden noch viel zu offen und so konnte ich mir keine andere Frau anstelle meiner Mutter vorstellen. Diese andere Mutter war Serbin. Wir waren nicht dagegen, weil sie Serbin war, sondern weil sie sich in die Ehe meiner Eltern gemischt hat. Sie war da dazwischen, und wir als erwachsene Kinder wußten es und darum haben wir sie so schwer angenommen. Sie hat sich in die Ehe meiner Eltern eingemischt und das hat uns als Kinder sehr schwer getroffen. Und als sich dann mein Vater entschloß gerade diese Frau zu heiraten, dann war sie uns Kindern gegenüber sehr boshaft, weil sie hatte ihre eigene Kinder. Da haben wir das erste mal eine echte Stiefmutter erlebt, von der man in Büchern lesen kann über die böse Stiefmutter. Sie hat sich nur um ihre eigenen Kinder gekümmert.

Meine Schwester war damals verheiratet und ich ging dann aus dem Haus zu ihr. Und ich weiß, daß das meinen Vater sehr getroffen hat. Meine Mutter und Vater haben uns ihr ganzes Leben gewidmet. Wir mußten im Hause nie etwas arbeiten. Mein Vater hat gesagt: „Ihr müßt alles sehen, aber bei mir müßt ihr nicht arbeiten“. Und jetzt könnt

ihr mich hinstellen wo immer ihr wollt, und ich werde euch alles machen können. Aber meine Mutter war eine großartige Mutter. Sie haben sehr schwere Jahre gehabt, ihre Mutter ist gestorben und sie mußte in Dienst gehen. Sie hat immer gesagt: „Ich will, daß meine Kinder so leben, wie das die Kinder meiner Herrschaft haben. Sie war bei einem Apotheker in Dienst, und von früherster Jugend auf bis zu neun und zwanzig Jahre, als sie sich mit meinem Vater verheiratete. Sie hat das nicht nur gesagt, sondern wir wissen auch, was sie alles für uns getan hat. Wir mußten nicht einmal Geschirr abwaschen, aber unser Vater hat uns angestellt, damit wir wissen, daß das Leben nicht rosarot ist und daß der Mensch um sein Leben kämpfen muß und bereit sein muß, für alle Schwierigkeiten, die uns treffen werden. Und das hat auch auf uns gewartet. Seit ich verheirat bin, und mein Mann vom Militär nach Hause kam, ist uns nichts je in den Schoß gefallen. Wir mußten alles schwer erkämpfen, dank dieser unserer Eltern.

Meine Mutter ist an Krebs gestorben. Meine Schwester war verheiratet, und ich habe meine Mutter acht Monate lang gepflegt, habe Tag und Nacht neben ihr verbracht.

Als Sie in die Schule gegangen sind, haben Sie auf Ungarisch gelernt?

– Nein. Wir waren Deutsche. In Pančevo gab es eine Schule, die deutsche Kinder besuchten, in der Altstadt wohnten nur Deutsche. Es wohnten mit uns auch Ungarn. In der Schule war Deutsch die Pflichtsprache, aber Pflicht war auch die serbische Sprache. Der Unterricht war in Deutsch und Serbisch, zweisprachig. So habe ich die Grundschule abgeschlossen.

Dann bin ich in die Mädchengewerbeschule gegangen. Die besteht jetzt nicht mehr. Das ist, wissen Sie, eine Mädchengewerbeschule, wo Nähen, Zuscheiden, Religionsunterricht und all die anderen Grundfächer gelehrt werden, die es sonst in den Schulen gibt, bis zur dritten Klasse und dann haben wir uns für eine Fachschule entschließen können. Diese dritte Klasse war dann die erste Fachschule, in die man ging, wo man dann lernte Lehrerin in dieser Mädchengewerbeschule zu sein.

Ich habe sie nicht abgeschlossen, ich war nervlich nicht gut, habe irgend einen Nervenzusammenbruch bekommen. Sie mußten mich aus der Schule ausschreiben. Meine Eltern haben nicht gut gelebt. Meine Mutter war sehr fleißig, sie war eine große Mutter, und – wie ich schon gesagt habe – mischte sich eine zweite Frau in die Ehe meiner Eltern.

Diese Uneinigkeit zwischen meinen Eltern, das hat uns immer sehr weh getan. Und, wissen Sie, das war die Ursache. Vielleicht war meine Mutter eifersüchtig. Sie wissen ja warum, sie hat von frühesten Jahren auf viele schwere Tage durchlebt, und dann hatte sie niemand, der ihr helfen würde, all dies zu überwinden, das vielleicht eingeboren war. Und so ist sie jung gestorben. Mit vier und fünfzig Jahren. Damals war ich zwanzig, ein und zwanzig Jahre alt.

Wie alt waren Sie, als Sie heirateten?

– Ich war im Lager. Meine Mutter starb im zwei und vierziger, und vier und vierzig kam schon die Befreiung, als Titos Armee eimarschierte. Damals sagte mein Vater: „Wir sind Deutsche“, aber wir haben wirklich in Brüderlichkeit und Einheit mit allen gelebt. Wir sind so erzogen worden, wir waren keine großen Deutsche. Mein Va-

ter sah, daß das nicht gut ausgehen wird. Er hat immer gesagt: "Kinder, das geht nicht gut aus." Wir hatten Nachbarn verschiedener Nationalität. Bei uns gab es nicht: das ist ein Serbe, jener ein Ungar, diese sind Slowaken. Wissen Sie, wir haben alle in einer Gemeinschaft gelebt, und diese Brüderlichkeit und Einheit war nirgends in solch einem Maße entwickelt, wie in der Vojvodina. Wir haben da überhaupt keinen Haß gegenüber anderen Nationen empfunden, wie es dort ist, wo wir jetzt leben (in Kroatien – Anm. Des Übers.).

Und so, im Jahr vier und vierzig, am dreizehnten November als uns als Deutsche das Leid überkam, aber auch alle anderen. Es machte nichts aus, ob du ein großer Deutscher warst oder nicht und daß du nichts gegen andere Nationalitäten hattest, die Hauptsache, du warst ein Deutscher. Alle wurden wir in eine Schablone gepreßt und dann fingen die Verhaftungen an. Diese haben dann durch meine Stiefmutter irgendwie um unsere loyale Haltung gewußt. Wir waren in der Umgebung in der wir wohnten, eine sehr bekannte Familie und so hatten wir keine Feinde. Aber als dann dieser Umbruch kam, sind wir dann doch irgendwie gerettet worden. Mein Vater ist auf dem seinen geblieben, wir hatten eine Sodawasserfabrik. Er blieb zu arbeiten. Obwohl sie ihm alles konfisziert haben, alles haben sie weggenommen. Zu guter Letzt, am siebten August fünf und vierzig sind sie mitten in der Nacht um uns gekommen. Und so wie wir waren haben sie uns ins Lager getrieben, sogar meine Schwester mit ihrem zweijährigen Kind, ohne alles. Ich war auch im Pančevoer Lager. Wiessen Sie, wir waren jung, ich war damals fünf und zwanzig Jahre alt, wir waren ziemlich arbeitsfähig, und dann haben sie uns in jener Zeit wie Sklaven ausgenützt. Unter sehr schweren Bedingungen haben wir in dem Lager in Pančevo gelebt. Wir haben die schwersten und größten Arbeiten getan.

Ein Partisan mit dem Gewehr über der Schulter hat uns auf die Arbeit geführt und hat uns auch zurückgeführt. Immer hatte ich den Wunsch, nur einmal in Freiheit zu leben. Sie können sich gar nicht vorstellen, wie schwer es ist, nicht einmal einen Schritt zu machen, Sie sind nicht frei. Wir haben beim Ein- und Ausladen von Baumaterial gearbeitet. Die schwersten Arbeiten. Und dann haben wir auf der landwirtschaftlichen Versuchsstation gearbeitet. In diesem Lager hatten wir nichts zu essen, alles ungesalzen, die Suppe mit Erbsen- und Bohnenkäfern. Wissen Sie, meine Schwester hat immer gesagt: "Anna iß, Anna iß!" Alles knirschte unter den Zähnen. Das waren sehr schwere Tage.

Wie lange sind Sie dortgeblieben?

– Wir sind bis zum sechsten April nächsten Jahres, angefangen von jenem siebten August, dann haben sie uns ins Lager Gakovo verlegt. Alle, die noch aus diesem Lager geblieben waren.

Wer war alles in diesem Lager?

– Nur Deutsche. Mein Mann hat bei meiner Schwester gelebt, er hatte in der Telefonzentrale als Mechaniker gearbeitet. Ich war damals in jener Zentrale als Telefonistin angestellt. Die haben die Deutschen übernommen am Bahnhof während des Krieges. Und dort war ich, nach Mutters Tod, angestellt, im zwei und vierziger und ich

bin dortgeblieben bis ins vier und vierziger Jahr. Und mein jetziger Mann hat damals in der Telefonzentrale als Mechaniker gearbeitet und bei meiner Schwester gewohnt. Wir haben ihn gebeten zu kommen, da wir ohne Schutz waren.

Er war Ungar. Und auch er hat in dieser Zeit für uns gesorgt. Er hat uns als Deutschen geholfen. Als die Partisanen in unser Haus einbrachen, Haussuchung und all das andere, wir, als Deutsche, waren in großer Angst. Wir blieben aber doch irgendwie verschont bis ins Jahr fünf und fünfzig.

Das heißtt, ungefähr acht Monate lang, als schon alle anderen Deutschen im Lager waren, da waren wir, so an die acht Familien, in jener Siedlung verschont. Sie haben uns nicht ins Lager getrieben.

Was glauben Sie? .. Ich meine, deshalb, weil ihr mit allen gut wart?

– Nein, nein. Wissen Sie warum? Wir hatten eine Nachbarin, Anna. Sie war aus Homoljica. Da war auch ein Komandant der Partisanenwache, der für diesen Bahnhof zuständig war. Er hatte seinen Kreis. Und er hat unsere Nachbarin Anna aus Homoljica gekannt. Und er hat ihrer Willen auf uns und jene acht Familien aufgepaßt. Solange er dort war, hat niemand uns nichts antun dürfen, dank ihm.

Er hat jener Frau geglaubt, und dann hat er auch euch geglaubt?

– Wahrscheinlich hat er gewußt daß es nicht recht ist, was sie uns antun. Er hatte seine andere Meinung. Er hat für uns gekämpft und dank ihm waren wir gerettet. Dann wurde er versetzt an einen anderen Ort. Beograd fiel. Und wir waren auf Gnade und Ungnade ausgesetzt. Und so an jenem siebten August fünf und vierzig sind sie in unsere Häuser hereingefallen und haben uns, alle jene acht Familien, die noch beschützt waren, ins Lager geführt. In diesem Lager war es so, daß jeder für jemanden einzahlen konnte und so einen Insassen aus dem Lager herausholen konnte. Er arbeitete dann für dich, und du bezahltest eine Summe der Lagerverwaltung für den Tag, an dem du gearbeitet hast. So auch mein zukünftiger Mann. Er hat für uns gesorgt. Meine Schwester hatte ein zweijähriges Mädchen bei meiner Stiefmutter gelassen, sie hat dieses Mädchen aufbewahrt. Und dann hat mein zukünftiger Mann auch mich herausgeholt aus dem Lager. Er hat für mich gezahlt und ich konnte hinausgehen, ich konnte das Kind meiner Schwester sehen und für sie sorgen. Mein ganzes Leben lang habe ich nie für mich gearbeitet, immer habe ich für andere gelebt, nie für mich. Hab mich immer geopfert, hab nie etwas vom Leben erwartet. Wenn mich heute jemand fragt, was ich mir wünschte, dann fällt mir die Antwort am schwersten, weil ich weiß, daß ich mir nichts wünsche ... Das war so von frühester Kindheit an und so bin ich auch geblieben.

Sind Sie Katholisch?

– Ich bin evangelischen Glaubens.

Und ist das Teil des Glaubens ... sich für andere zu opfern?

– Nein. Nicht. Das hat überhaupt nichts mit dem Glauben zu tun. Ich bin eben so. Ich habe für meine Mutter gelebt und dann für meine Schwester, die zwei Jahre älter war als ich. Ich habe sie sehr geliebt. Hab für sie gearbeitet. Ich hab immer jemanden haben müssen, für den ich mich opfere und für den ich arbeite. So war das auch in späteren Jahren, auch mit meinem Mann und mit den Kindern, auch wenn ich nicht mein Leben für mich selbst gelebt hab.

Aber jetzt können Sie's.

– Jetzt wünsche ich nichts mehr. Wenn Sie sich in ihrem ganzen Leben nichts gewünscht haben, und wenn Sie jetzt jemand fragt, dann ist das sehr selten, daß ich mir etwas wünsche. Nein.

Und hatten Sie, hmmm, dort in dem Lager irgend eine Umerziehung? Haben euch die Partisanen etwas über den Sozialismus gesprochen? Haben Sie damals überhaupt etwas über den Sozialismus gewußt?

– Nein! Sie haben uns gesagt, daß wir tote Leute sind. Und das waren wir auch. In jener Zeit, wenn jemand in einer gemischten Ehe lebte, oder wenn jemand unehelich

mit einer Frau aus dem Lager gelebt hat, hatte er das Recht, diese Frau aus dem Lager zu holen. Und dann hat mich mein Mann gefragt ob ich zustimmen würde, wenn er mich aus dem Lager herausnehmen würde und sagen würde, es sei eine gemischte Ehe. Sie ist meine uneheliche Frau. Ich habe gewankt und hab nachgedacht. Dann hab ich gesehen, daß es keine Rettung gibt und ich hab gewußt, daß ich aus dem Lager raus muß, um das Kind meiner Schwester zu retten.

Ihre Schwester war nicht mit ihnen im Lager?

– Ja, auch sie war dort. Ihr Mann war damals deutscher Soldat. Und er war Bauingenieur. Er war in der deutschen Armee nie im Kampf, sondern hat als Fachmann gearbeitet. Während wir im Lager waren zog sich die deutsche Armee zurück, und er mit ihnen.

Ist sie im Lager geblieben oder ist sie später hinausgegangen?

– Nein. Sie ist im Lager geblieben. Wir waren zusammen, und ich hatte die Gelegenheit als uneheliche Frau aus dem Lager zu gehen, sie aber nicht. Das war nur eine zeitlang, und dann kamen andere Gesetze. Ich habe damals mit meinem Mann gelebt. Bis zum 22. Januar konnten gemischte Ehen alle Rechte haben. Wir wollten uns damals in der Kirche trauen lassen, ich konnte das aber nicht, weil ich keinerlei Papiere hatte. Wir existierten damals als Menschen überhaupt nicht. Im März musste ich zurück ins Lager. Sie haben uns alle ergriffen, und da gab es keinen Ausweg mehr. Und zu unserem größten Unglück bin ich schwanger geworden in den Anfangsmonaten, vielleicht wußte ich es gar nicht, und so ging ich ins Lager zurück. Dann hat mein Mann Bittgesuche gemacht, eins nach dem anderen. Das ging sehr schwer. Ich habe nie geglaubt, daß ich die ganze Zeit meiner Schwangerschaft im Lager verbringe und mein Kind im Lager, unter schwersten Bedingungen, tragen werde. Wir hatten nichts zum Essen. Mein Mann hat uns immer ein wenig gebracht. Ich wußte gar nicht, daß es schon Frühling wurde, daß es Obst gibt. Und glauben Sie mir, ich bin so gut, es waren unser drei und zwanzig in einem Zimmer, daß ich ein Stück nach dem anderen verteilt hab, als ich diese hungrigen Mütter sah und jene hungrigen Menschen, nie habe ich für mich mehr als für andere zurück behalten. Mein Mann brachte mir immer etwas, oder hat es über andere geschickt. Ich war schon in fortgeschrittener Schwangerschaft. Sie können sich denken, wie groß die Unsicherheit war, ein Kind im Lager zur Welt zu bringen. Und dann haben sie ihn am 6. Dezember zum Militär eingezogen, und am 10. Dezember ist meine Annili geboren, am Tag der Menschenrechte. Auch jetzt wird er

auf der ganzen Welt gefeiert, an dem Tag, an dem wir ohne irgen welche Rechte lebten. Sie haben mich im Lager entbunden. Es war sehr kalt. Wir haben nichts zum Essen gehabt. Wir haben Ästchen im Lager gesammelt und so hab ich gekocht. Damals gab es Majdina, das war Majzena, etwas wie Pudingpulver, so hab ich mein Kind gestillt von dem nichts, was wir nicht zu essen hatten. Wir haben ungesalzenes Essen bekommen. Das war sehr schwer.

Wie haben Sie entbunden, gab es dort einen Arzt?

– Wir hatten im Lager einen Komandanten ohne eine Hand. Der war sehr gefährlich. Als er dort war, trank er gern. Und wenn er betrunken war, hat er uns im Lagerhof alle in Reih und Glied aufgestellt, aus den Betten auf denen wir schliefen. Nein, es waren keine Betten, auf dem Boden, auf dem wir geschlafen haben, unser drei und zwanzig. In diesen Zimmern gab es Wanzen. Damals hab ich zum ersten Mal Wanzen kennengelernt. Es war schon November und eine feuchte Zeit und dann hatten wir türkischer Pflaster im Lagerhof. Dort draußen haben wir geschlafen. Am Morgen war alles womit wir uns zudeckten, naß, und so in Hoffnung, können Sie sich vorstellen, wie das war. Und dann hat sich dieser Lagerkomandant verändert. Er war so, daß er uns in Reih und Glied aufstellte und hat immer bis zehn gezählt. Bei der Zahl zehn haben wir immer Angst gehabt, wer diese Zehnte sein würde. Immer hat er uns ins Wasser gestellt und so bis zum Morgen stehengelassen, denn er hat sich an uns ausgelassen. Er hat sich an den Deutschen gerächt, obwohl wir unschuldige Deutsche waren. An Frauen und Kindern. Das Pančevoer Lager war ein Arbeitslager. Wir haben allerhand Ängste durchlebt.

Wie lange sind Sie dortgeblieben?

– Ich bin im August, 45 dorthin gegangen bis am siebten April, 47. Ah, damals war meine Annili vier Monate alt. Das Lager wurde aufgelöst. Ich sagte schon, wir mußten die schwersten Arbeiten verrichten, jeden Tag haben sie uns verdingt an einen anderen Ort für landwirtschaftliche Arbeit und an der Versuchsstation.

Wir wurden aus Pancevo nach Gakovo gebracht. Als das Lager in Pancevo aufgelöst wurde, haben sie das meinem Vater gemeldet, so hat er dann das Kind meiner Schwester zu uns gebracht. Mein Vater war in Freiheit (seine Frau war Serbin) und hatte zusehen müssen wie seine Töchter am Bahnhof in Viehwagons eingesperrt werden. Er hat am Bahnhof gestanden, jener schwere Zug hat nur so gedonnert, und er hat uns später gesagt „Nie werde ich das Drönen dieses Zuges vergessen, der mir meine Kinder weggebracht hat.“ In dem Zug waren wir in Viehwagons. Ich mit meinem Kind, mit Annili, die vier Monate alt war. Sie können sich vorstellen, wir wußten nicht, da es sich um geschlossene Viehwagons handelte, und konnten es uns nicht vorstellen, wie lange wir fuhren. Ich dachte, daß diese Dunkelheit nie aufhören würde und nie ein Ende nehme wird. Endlich blieb der Zug stehen. Die Waggons wurden geöffnet, da waren Menschen aus allen umliegenden Lagern, die aufgelöst worden waren. Sie haben alles Zurückgebliebene gesammelt, sie in die Viehwagons gepfercht, und all das ging nach Gakovo. Dort fielen Menschen um, Tote fielen aus den Wagons. Mich hat Gott verschont mit diesem meinem kleinen vier Monate altem Kind.

Gakovo ist eine Ortschaft, in der Nähe von Sombor, an der ungarischen Grenze. Wer es fertig brachte, Geld zu beschaffen und die Partisanen zu bestechen, der ist über die Grenze geflüchtet. Dorthin geflüchteten Leute. Das konnte man machen. Wir aber, d.h. ich bin nirgendshin geflüchtet, ich wollte mein Kind nicht irgendwohin in die Fremde tragen, es hatte seinen Vater. So hab ich dann meine besten Sachen verkauft, von mir abgenommen, und so hatten wir jene tausend und fünf hundert Dinar. Die hab ich dann für meine Schwester eingezahlt, daß sie über die Grenze flüchtet. Wir sind lebend ins Lager Gakovo angekommen. Dort haben wir ein so kleines Stück Brot bekommen. Es war gelb und hart wie Stein. Jeder hat ein Stück bekommen. Das war alles, was wir bekommen haben. Das war gemalener Mais (Kukuruz) mit dem Kolben zusammen. Sie können sich vorstellen, wie das gewesen ist. Wir hatten nichts anderes zu essen.

Und als Anna geboren wurde, war ihr Mann beim Militär?

– Mein Mann hat für die jugoslawische Armee eine Telephonmobilstation gemacht, den das Militär nicht hatte. Da gab es einen Major, dem Jani klagte, daß seine Frau im Lager sei, daß ich nicht heraus kann, und so hat er es fertiggebracht, daß ich einen Entlassungsschein bekam, für all die Gefälligkeiten, die er ihm getan hat.

Ich bin dann zu meinem Vater nach Pančevo zurückgekehrt. Meiner Stiefmutter war das nicht recht. Ich kam schwer krank nach Hause. Ich hatte hundert prozentige Malaria im Blut. Und wissen Sie, warum? Im Gakovo ging immer der Trommler, daß sich alle, die Malaria haben, melden müssen wegen der Vakzine. Aber sie haben uns nie die Vakzine gegeben, sondern nur das Serum. Alle Leute starben so wie Fliegen. Da gab es einen großen Pferdewagen und jeden Tag wurden die Toten weggeschafft.

Nicht nur Deutsche, sondern auch andere.

– Nein. Dort gab es nur Deutsche. Das war ein Dorf mit allen denen, die noch als Deutsche aus allen anderen Lagern übriggeblieben waren. Ich hatte immer die feste Hoffnung, daß ich mit meinem Kind herauskommen werde. Wir hatten schwere Malaria, mein Kind und ich. Wir konnten kaum gehen, jeden Tag oder jeden zweiten hatte wir diese hohe Temperatur von Malaria. Und da hab ich mich nur mit größter Mühe bis zu einem hohen Baumstamm geschleppt, und dann bin ich stehengeblieben. Und dann hat der Trommler meinen Namen gemeldet: Anna Koch, deutsch, unverheiratet. Sich in der Komandantur melden. Ich weiß nicht, wie ich in die Komandantur gekommen bin. Sie war ziemlich weit. Und dann sagte man mir: „Sie sind aus dem Lager befreit“. Sie können sich vorstellen, wie glücklich ich war. Er sagt: „Wollen Sie nach Hause gehen?“ Ich: „Mit dem ersten Zug, mit dem es möglich ist.“

Wissen Sie, ich hatte ein Paar alte, zerissene Schuhe, all das Beste hab ich verkauft, damit ich das Geld für meine Schwester habe, ihr über die Grenze zu helfen damit sie mit ihrem Kind zu ihrem Mann kann. Und so hab ich mein Kind in welche alte Sachen gewickelt und hab diesen meinen Schatz nach Hause getragen. Und dann erinnere ich mich an jene Holzbänke im Zug. Darauf hab ich mein Kind gelegt und dann trug ich mein Kind nach Hause. Ich war Gott so dankbar, daß er mich gerettet hat und daß ich sie nach Hause tragen kann.

Und als ich dann nach Hause kam, war ich schwer krank. Und meine Stiefmutter hat gesagt: „Warum bist du zu uns gekommen. Auch wir haben nichts für uns selbst.“ Sie können sich denken, wie mich das getroffen hat, wie das furchtbar war. Und noch sagte sie: „Du muß arbeiten gehen.“ Und ich war schon halbtot. Und so hab ich überall nachgeschaut und machte alles was ich konnte. Mein Vater war glücklich, daß wir zurückgekommen waren. Mein Mann kam erst am siebten Oktober nach Hause. Das erste Mal kam er am sechs und zwanzigsten September, als er Urlaub bekam, nachdem wir aus dem Lager gekommen sind. Damals hat er das erste Mal sein Kind gesehen. Dann haben wir uns auch kirchlich trauen lassen in der katholischen Kirche. Und dann hab ich den Entlassungsschein aus dem Lager Gakovo bekommen. Ich hab ihn auch heute noch. Automatisch hab ich mich angemeldet, hab meine Dokumente bekommen, auf dessen Grund ich mich dann auch trauen lassen konnte.

Und haben Sie danach irgendwo Arbeit bekommen können?

– Nein, ich konnte keine Arbeit finden. Ich bin zu Hause geblieben. Damals konnte man keine Arbeit kriegen. Und dann hab ich für die Bekannten von meiner Stiefmutter genäht um täglich ein halbes Litter Milch für mein Kind zu bekommen.

In Pančevo haben wir bis zum Jahr einundfünfzig gewohnt. Als mein Mann vom Militär zurückkam in 48 dann hat er in der Flugzeugfabrik UTVA in Pančevo Arbeit bekommen. Er hat dort ein schönes Gehalt verdient. Mit seinem Wissen ist er dann ein höherer Spezialist geworden. Er hat sehr gut verdient, aber die Verhältnisse mit meiner Stiefmutter haben sich immer mehr verschlechtert

Hat ihr Mann ein Parteimitglied sein müssen um in der UTVA zu arbeiten?

– Nein, er hat nicht müssen.

Haben Sie es schon damals erfasst, worin die Veränderung im Staat bestand?

Haben Sie das erfaßt?

– Sie wissen, wie das damals war. Wir haben gewußt, wie wir uns dem allen anpassen sollen und wir waren glücklich, in Freiheit zu leben. Das wir freie Menschen und freie Bürger sind.

Und haben Sie damals gewußt, daß es nicht empfehlenswert ist, sich in der Kirche trauen zu lassen?

– Nein. Wir haben es gekonnt. Wir konnten es. Aber in späterer Zeit wußte ich, daß du nicht in die Kirche gehen durftest, wenn du Parteimitglied warst. Dann durftest du auch nicht in die Kirche gehen und du durftest in der Schule keinen Religionsunterricht besuchen.

Und seid ihr in die Kirche gegangen. Euch hat das niemand verboten? Ihr konntet?

– Nein keiner hat es verboten, denn ich war ja nicht angestellt. Mir war die Kirche immer nahe. Ich habe immer an Gott geglaubt. Immer hab ich gebetet und darum hat uns Gott erhalten. Ich sah es ja, ihn hat niemand je gesehen, aber er ist hier unter uns, er ist immer bei uns. Du kannst Gott nicht sehen, aber du weißt, daß du viel von ihm bekommst und daß er immer mit dir ist und immer, wenn es am schwersten ist, wird er dir helfen. Dem, der an ihn glaubt, wird er sich zeigen, so wie er sich mir gezeigt hat in

jenen schwersten Zeiten im Lager. Und alles hat sich so auch erfüllt. Im Lager war es schwer. Ich hab ausgehalten. Ich hab immer den Glauben an Gott gehabt , der Glaube hat mich nie verlassen, daß wir einmal freie Menschen sein werden.

Gehen Sie jetzt in die Kirche?

– Wissen Sie, wir sind nicht von denen, die jeden Sonntag in die Kirche gehen. Wir sind nicht von denen, aber ich glaube an die zehn Gebote Gottes und danach leben wir. Wir trachten immer danach, uns nicht zu versündigen. Aber es gibt Leute, die ständig in die Kirche gehen und immer beten, aber doch nicht wie wir sind. Wir trachten immer danach nichts Böses zu tun und wir wissen, daß wir immer gutes tun. Und dann kommt das Gute immer zehnfach zurück. Immer hatten wir gern zu geben und unser ganzes Leben lang haben wir getrachtet anderen mit beizutragen. Wir waren immer glücklich, wenn wir gute Werke getan haben. Das war unser Motto, womit wir lebten. Es kommt Ihnen nicht immer so zurück, aber auch das ist nicht alles.

Und da Sie jetzt in Kroatien leben, betrachten sie euch als welche Hergelau-fene?

– Wissen Sie was, ich werde es ihnen aufrichtig sagen, alle diejenigen, die von hier kommen, werden in einen Korb geworfen. Sie haben uns nie angenommen, besonders die Inselbewohner. Das ist ein Volk, daß immer sehr isoliert gelebt hat. Sie lieben nicht einmal jene aus dem anderen Dorf. Das ist ein Volk, daß für sich lebt. Besonders lieben sie nicht solche, die aus Ex-Jugoslawien stammen. Und obwohl wir all diese Kriegsjahre hindurch immer gut gelebt haben, hat sich das nicht so stark, wie jetzt, gezeigt. Jetzt sind wir unerwünscht. Jetzt wollen sie sogar das, was wir haben. Sie haben uns sogar nach diesen drei und zwanzig Jahren, nicht angenommen. Wir sind nicht gestern dorthin gekommen. Auch sind wir keine Flüchtlinge, wissen Sie. Wir waren, wir waren in Kroatien, wir konnten uns anpassen. Auch das wußten wir, wenn sie uns schon erlaubt haben, dort zu leben, daß wir sie achten, wenn wir das schon erwählt haben. Aber jetzt, während dieses Krieges haben wir gemerkt, daß wir nicht erwünscht sind, wir haben keinerlei eigene Rechte.

Das heißt also, daß es hier, nach dem Krieg, im Sozialismus besser war. Damals hatten Sie doch als Deutsche welche Rechte?

– Nach dem Krieg, als wir in Pančevo waren, gab es sowas nicht. So was gab es nicht, wissen Sie. Es kam nur eine klein Zahl von Deutschen aus den Lager zurück. Der größte Teil ist über die Grenze geflüchtet. Als im Jahre acht und vierzig Volkszählung war, habe ich immer gesagt, daß ich Deutsche bin. Ich habe nicht davon Abstand genommen. Und dann hat mein Sohn gesagt, daß er Jugoslawe ist – das habe ich nicht verstanden. Mir hat das keiner nehmen können, und mich überzeugen, das zu ändern. Und als Deutsche haben sie mich auch nicht boykottiert. Wir haben unsere Rechte gehabt. Mein Mann hat eine feine Arbeit bekommen.

Wann ist ihr Sohn geboren?

– Ein und fünfzig. Wir haben in Pančevo gelebt bis Ende ein und fünfzig, als mein Sohn neun Monat alt war. Dann sind wir nach Zrenjanin umgezogen zu seinen Eltern. Sie haben immer gewünscht, daß wir zu ihnen kommen sollen. Aber sie waren

arm. Und doch wußte ich, mich in seine Familie einzufügen. Und meinem Vater war es sicher nicht einerlei, wohin er seine Tochter gibt. Er hat meinen Mann aber als einen fleißigen und aufrichtigen Mann geehrt.

In Zrenjanin haben wir bis zu unserem Weggang nach Kroatien gelebt. Mein Mann hat in der Gesellschaft Donau-Teiß-Donau Arbeit bekommen. Dort hat er dreißig Jahre lang gearbeitet. Und wir waren fleißig und arbeitsam. Ich habe in meinem Leben allem entsagt, denn im Lager wußte ich wie man auch nur mit einem Stück Brot lebt. Und ich hab immer gewußt die Freiheit zu schätzen. Wir waren bei seinen Eltern. Und dann sparten wir, sparten und sparten. Und dann haben wir uns eine Wohnung im Stadtzentrum gekauft, eine schöne Zweizimmerwohnung. Dort sind Annili und mein Sohn in die Schule gegangen, nur ein Sprung im Zentrum zur Schule. Neben uns hat seine Schwester gewohnt und seine Eltern. Die ganze Straßenfront, jeder hat für sich gekauft. Und dann hatten wir etwas Geld erspart, noch während der jugoslawischen Zeit. Damals sind wir nach Deutschland gefahren, unseren Vater zu besuchen. Dort hat mein Mann immer bei einem Meister gearbeitet. Ich ging auch zur Arbeit. Meine Stiefmutter, hat gesagt: „Warum bist du her gekommen. Geh arbeiten.“ Mir ist das sehr schwer gefallen, meinem Vater auch. Aber ich hab Arbeit gefunden und haben schön verdient. Das Geld haben wir immer beiseite gelegt und davon haben wir angefangen. Unser Enkel Robi hat mit acht Monaten schweres Asthma bekommen. Und dann haben wir uns entschlossen, ein Haus am Meer zu bauen.

In allem, was Sie gesagt haben, haben Sie nie das Wort Liebe erwähnt. Können Sie mir etwas über Liebe in der Ehe sagen?

– Über Liebe in der Ehe. Wissen Sie was, ich hab so gesagt, mein Mann war so gut, das war nicht eine Ehe aus irgend einer großen Liebe. Aber ich wußte seine große Güte zu schätzen und mit meiner großen Liebe habe ich ihm vergolten, alles was er für uns getan hat. Ich war ihm eine treue Ehefrau, ein treuer Ehepartner, wissen Sie.

Mein Mann hat mich so geliebt, er hat mich vergöttert. Er sagt sogar noch heute, nach so langer Zeit, daß er für mich den Mond holen könnte. Das ist immer sein Ausspruch. Und er sagt immer, daß es nur eine Anna auf der ganzen Welt gibt. Es bedeutet viel für mich, wenn er mich nach so vielen Jahren, noch immer so stark liebt. Nur sag ich, daß ich ihn nicht aus einer großen Liebe geheiratet habe. Aber ich habe ihn geschätzt und geliebt und war immer darauf bedacht, ihm im Leben immer alles das zu vergelten, was er für uns gemacht hat.

Und warum ist ihr Vater, so um die Sechziger, nach Deutschland gegangen?

– Wissen Sie, warum er weggenangen ist? Nach so vielen Jahren ist sein Eigentum konfisziert worden, seine Sodafabrik. Wir hatten die neuesten Maschinen, meine Mutter hatte ein Haus, und das hat sie verkauft und die Fabrik mit ihrem Geld gekauft, nachdem sie geheiratet hatten. Und so hatten wir die modernsten Maschinen und alles. Und das ist dann nach dem Krieg alles dem Staat zugefallen. Mein Vater hat ohne Gehalt in der eigener Fabrik als gewöhnlicher Arbeiter gearbeitet. Er hat nur noch sein Haus gehabt, bis im Jahr sechs und fünfzig, dann kam ein früherer hoher Ofizier, und sagte, er will unser Haus haben, und da gab es kein Zurück. Eh, das hat meinen Vater sehr getroffen. Er hat sein ganzes Leben in unser schönen Haus eingebaut. Er hat ge-

baut, auch sein Leben gebaut. Das war ein deutsches Haus. Sie können sich vorstellen, wie wunderschön das war. Als meine Mutter starb, hat der Priester gesagt: „Sie hat alles verlassen, auch ihren Weingarten, wo die Weinreben wie Soldaten standen.“ Ich erinnere mich noch am heutigen Tag, wie er das am Grab gesagt hat. Jene Zeit hat meinen Vater sehr betroffen. Er war immer Besitzer, er war kein Arbeiter, er hatte sogar einen Arbeiter als Kutscher. Er war ein Herr. Und das hat ihn dann sehr getroffen, und meine Stiefmutter hat gesehen, wie alle aus Deutschland dies und jenes bekommen, und so hat sie meinen Vater echt bemüht sich zu entschließen, nach Deutschland zu gehen, wohin er nicht wollte. Er hat auch sie mitgenommen. Sie hat immer geglaubt, daß wird ihren Kindern helfen, Pakete aus Deutschland zu schicken, sie hat geglaubt, daß es dort alles in Hülle und Fülle gibt und sie sich alles werden anschaffen können

Wissen Sie was, dort wurden unsere Deutsche als Zigeuner betrachtet. In jenem Deutschland waren sie Zigeuner, so haben sie sie genannt. Sie waren dort nicht gern gesehen. Da mein Vater auch keine Sozialversicherung hatte, hat er in einer Gummifabrik gearbeitet, und dann hat er auf einem Dachboden gewohnt. Als sich dann später alles etwär geregelt hat, hat er Kredit bekommen. Das war eine Art von Ausgleich. Das war jener Schadenersatz für all das Leid und eine Vergeltung in Geld für sein Eigentum. Danach konnte er bauen. Er hat sehr günstig einen Bauplatz bekommen. Er hat auch uns gerufen, mich und meinen Mann, nach Deutschland zu übersiedeln. Aber mein Mann hat hier seine Familie gehabt, es waren ihrer neun. Er wollte nicht. Er wollte nicht zu meiner Stiefmutter, mit ihr zusammen leben, denn mein Vater wollte, daß wir zusammen bauen. Vater wollte kein Haus ohne uns bauen. Er sagte, dies brauche er nicht, aber mein Mann wollte nicht. Mir tat es immer leid. Er aber sagte: „Ich habe meine Anstellung.“ Und wissen Sie, es ist auch nicht so wichtig, denn ich habe immer die Wünsche anderer, und nie meine eigenen erfüllt. Ich habe es immer fertig gebracht, meine eigenen Wünsche zurückzustellen... und ich trachtete, ich wußte, daß er seine Familie hat und ich wollte ihn nicht von ihnen wegziehen. Er hat immer in diesen Sachen gesiegt, denn ich habe immer die Wünsche anderer erfüllt und nicht meine eigenen.

Und wie geht es Ihnen nun in Kroatien?

– Jetzt, jetzt fehlt es uns. Jetzt ist es uns sehr schwer, denn wir haben niemanden von den unseren. Die Leute aus unserer Gegend, die hier gelebt haben mit denen hatten wir Gemeinschaft. Jene anderen meiden uns.

Nach der Befreiung aus dem Lager haben Sie nicht mehr gearbeitet, Sie waren immer zu Hause?

– Ich war immer Hausfrau.

Was haben Sie sich von den Änderungen im Staat gemerkt? Zum Beispiel, da war das Informbiro, und danach waren die verschiedenen Pasreikongresse und all die anderen Ereignisse in Jugoslawien. Wie haben Sie das gefühlt?

– Sie wissen, wie wir uns gefühlt haben. Zum Beispiel, wir hatten das Stimmrecht als Staatsbürger in Jugoslawien, wir hatten unsere Rechte. Aber wir waren nicht Parteimitglieder und wir wußten uns anzupassen. Aber, als unsere Kinder klein waren, haben wir uns nicht getraut, mit unseren Kindern Deutsch zu sprechen.

Bei euch zu Hause habt ihr ungarisch gesprochen, oder ...?

– Ungarisch. Ich habe ungarisch gelernt, denn ich wußte, daß meine Kinder dem Vater nach Ungarn sind. Meine Sprache durfte niemand nicht einmal hören, das Deutsche. Meinem Sohn wollte ich immer Deutschunterricht erteilen lassen. Dies war erlaubt. Aber er war nie ein ausgezeichneter Schüler und wir wollten ihn nicht damit belasten. Aber Annili, als kleines Mädchen, war sehr belesen. Sie hat in der kleinen Siedlungsbibliothek alle Bücher gelesen mit ihren neun Jahren. Sie hat privat Englischstunden genommen. In der Schule hat sie die deutsche Sprache genommen. So bin ich zufrieden, daß meine Kinder doch ihre Muttersprache sprechen, aber in jener Zeit durfte man sie nicht deutsch sprechen, daß dich jemand hört.

Anna hat einen Bruder. Wo ist der jetzt?

– In Zrenjanin. Er ist im Jahre ein und fünfzig geboren. Er ist Verbesserungsingenieur (Melioration) bei dem Unternehmen Donau-Teiß-Donau (ein Verbindungskanal, Anm. des Übers.). Mein Mann hat dort dreißig Jahre lang gearbeitet

Dann haben Sie im Haus alle Arbeit verrichtet, und somit gibt es im Haus keine Arbeitsteilung im Haus?

– Mein Mann war sehr selten zu Hause. Er hat in Donau-Teiß-Donau gearbeitet. Ich habe immer gesagt, daß er sich seine Arbeitstelle erarbeiten muß, wo er ist. Er hat sich für Donau-Teiß-Donau geopfert – Und als an diesen Schleusen, wo man das Schiff durchläßt und den Wasserspiegel senkt, ein Schaden entstand, hat sich mein Mann an die Reparatur dieser Schleuse gemacht, um der Fabrik sehr viel Geld zu ersparen. Sie haben ihn nach Hause gebracht. Er war voll Schlamm. Er ist hineingefallen, aber das Wasser hat ihn herausgeworfen. Er hätte umkommen können. Er hat sich geopfert. Nichts gab es in Donau-Teiß-Donau, was er nicht gearbeitet hat. Er kann alles.

Ich war mein ganzes Leben lang in meinen vier Wänden und das ist nicht immer leicht. Aber ich war eine großartige Hausfrau. Ich hatte alles im Haus. Ich arbeitete viel, aber da ich kein Geld verdiente, habe ich mich meinen Kindern und meinem Haushalt gewidmet.

Haben sie irgen welche Reisen unternommen, sagen wir mal, über ein Wochenende?

– Nein, nein. Dafür hatten wir kein Geld. Wissen Sie, ich wußte, daß wir nicht reich sind. Durch mein Entzagen haben wir uns alles angeschafft: wenn wir Fleisch gekauft haben, das waren solche Zeiten, habe ich drei Schnitzel gekauft, für jeden eins. Ich wußte, daß ich keins haben konnte. Ich konnte auch mit nichts leben und ich wußte, daß man so leben kann. Aber meine Kinder und mein Mann mußten es haben. Von einem Gehalt haben wir unsere beiden Kinder geschult in einer fremden Stadt, in Novi Sad und das mußte von irgendwo herkommen. Das Geld haben wir beiseite gelegt.

Aber, hm, dann waren Sie doch gesund, nachdem Sie aus dem Lager gekommen waren. Sie haben mir nichts über Krankheiten erzählt.

– Ich kann Ihnen sagen, die Nerven haben mich lange geplagt. Es war nicht gut mit ihnen. Das Leben, das wir überlebt haben, hat seine Folgen hinterlassen. Es hat seine Spuren hinterlassen. Es war nicht leicht, dies zu überstehen: Wissen Sie wie,

manchmal hatte ich einen Tag vor mir, und ich kann nicht arbeiten, ich kann mich nicht konzentrieren. Und dann hat mich die Panik vor jeder großen Aufgabe erfaßt. Der Gedanke, daß ich etwas verlieren könnte und das ich etwas schaffen muß. Ich wollte immer etwas nach mir lassen, daß ich nicht das erlebe, daß ich umsonst gelebt hab, und daß ich mein Leben vertan habe. Das war mir wie eine Obsession, ich wollte immer etwas erreichen, etwas, was meine Kinder nach mir haben könnten.

Und was glauben Sie, werden sie ihren Kindern hinterlassen?

– Was wir hinterlassen haben? Wir haben ihnen das Haus in Zrenjanin hinterlassen. Sie haben es sich geteilt. Wir hinterlassen ihnen auch jenes dort unten (am Meer, S.S.).

Aber sie können es nicht erben.

– Deshalb müssen wir zur rechten Zeit verkaufen, denn ihnen wird es schwer sein, wenn wir nicht mehr da sein werden, wird das Haus in Gras verwachsen. Man wird es nicht um den Preis verkaufen können, den wir jetzt verlangen, sondern noch weniger.

Und für Erben ist es sehr schwer. Jetzt sind wir sieben Jahre älter, und jetzt ist es die rechte Stunde uns dafür zu entscheiden, obwohl es uns schwer fällt das zu verkaufen, was wir mit schwerer Mühe erworben haben.

Jetzt sind wir, weder er noch ich gesund. Ich bin im acht und siebzigsten Jahr. Das sind schon Jahre!. Man kann nie wissen. Wir müssen uns zu diesen Schritt entscheiden, solange wir noch beisammen sind. Das kann einer allein nicht durchführen. Das ist eine schwere Entscheidung.

Ich weiß, was das schönste ist, was ich hinterlasse – gute Kinder.

Annili ist großherzig. Sie ist eine großartige Mutter. Ich betrachte sie. Sie erziehen ihre Kinder gut. Sie haben keine Minderwertigkeitsgefühle. Sehen Sie sich nur Annilis humanitären Weg an, ich schaue immer zu, sie hat gar nicht anders sein können, sie ist darin geboren. Verstehen Sie, ich habe sie in jenere Zeit getragen. Sie kann nicht anders sein, sondern nur human und großmütig. Das ist sie. Ich hinterlasse gesunde Kinder, gute Kinder, gut erzogene und ich habe mein Leben meinen Kindern gewidmet, aber es hat sich gelohnt.

Haben Sie jemals eine Freundin gehabt, eine gute, intime?

– Ich habe keine gehabt, nicht einmal in Zrenjanin. Wie ich schon gesagt habe, habe ich mich den Eltern meines Mannes gewidmet. Sie waren krank, sie waren alt, ich habe immer alles gemacht. Ich mußte immer jemanden haben, für den ich etwas tun kann.

Zum Beispiel, wenn ich mich hingesetzt habe, und wenn wir sonntags alle beisammen waren und zu Mittag gegessen haben, habe ich nie gegessen, bevor ich nicht aufgestanden wäre, um zu sehen was Omama gekocht hat. Und wenn ich sah, daß sie manchmal nichts hatten, habe ich sogar mein Essen hinübergetragen, obwohl es manchmal auch bei uns nicht viel gab. Aber ich habe immer anderen gegeben, und ich war immer glücklich, wenn ich jemanden etwas geben konnte. Das hat mein Leben aus gefüllt.

Können Sie mir einen Tag nennen, an dem Sie sagen konnten: das war ein glücklicher Tag für mich!

Wenn Sie eine Lehre hätten aus ihrem eigenen Leben, was könnten Sie uns sagen?

– Ich weiß nicht, ob mein Weg recht war, all mein Leben nur Arbeit, allem entsagen, alles den Kindern geben, es ihnen recht machen. Man soll die Kinder lehren, sich der Zeit gegenüberzustellen – es ist nicht alle Zeit rosarot. Du sollst deine Kinder befähigen, lebensfähig zu werden. Das ist mir gelungen. Meinen Kindern zu sagen, daß sie sich zurechfinden müssen, auch wenn sie nichts haben und auch aus nichts zu etwas zu bringen. Und sie nicht erziehen, daß ihnen alles in den Schoß fällt. Das darf man nicht tun.

Und denken Sie, daß Anna glücklich ist, weil Sie sie so erzogen haben. Denken Sie, daß Anna glücklich ist?

– Weil wir sie so erzogen haben?

Ja, ja, glauben Sie das?

– Ich weiß jetzt nicht, ob sie glücklich ist, aber ich bin glücklich, daß es mir gelungen ist meine Kinder so zu erziehen, daß sie sich zurechfinden können, auch wenn sie nichts haben. Es gab Zeiten, als ich nichts im Hause hatte, als wir jenes Haus gekauft haben, das wir unter unsere Kinder geteilt haben. Ich konnte auch aus nichts ein Mittagessen kochen.

Kinder müssen erzogen werden auch für schwere Zeiten, die niemand umgehen kann. Niemand. Deshalb sind wir solche Leute. Ich bin diesen Weg gegangen. Ich sage Annili immer: "Sei nicht so wie ich. Ent sage nicht allem. Lebe dein Leben und gönne dir etwas." Denn die Zeit ist mir so vergangen und wenn mich jemand fragt, bin ich nicht im Stande zu sagen, ob ich mir etwas wünsche. Ich habe nie etwas gewünscht. So habe ich allem entsagt. Ob das das Richtige ist, ob das für eine Frau nötig ist, ihrer Familie willen, allem zu entsagen, weiß ich nicht. Sehen Sie, meine Kinder haben sich Mühe gegeben, ihr Universitätsstudium abzuschließen, auf eigenen Füßen zu stehen.

Ich wollte immer etwas erreichen, ich wollte immer etwas sein. Mein Vater, aber, sagte: "Nein, die Schule ist nicht für Frauen. Für die Frau ist der Kochlöffel." So hat er das ausgedrückt. Deshalb habe ich den Kochlöffel nie gemocht, aber doch bin ich eine außerdentlich gute Köchin. Ich wußte, daß mir nur dies geblieben ist, und ich mußte das anfangen zu lieben, was ich täglich tun mußte. Er sagte: "Die Frau muß eine Hausfrau sein, sie muß nähen können, sie muß alles können, denn wenn sie das nicht kann, wird sie auch nicht befehlen können." Deshalb hat er uns so erzogen, damit wir können. Er hat uns auch ein Mädchen gegeben, die bei uns gedient hat, als meine Mutter schwerkrank war, für die groben Hausarbeiten. Und wenn ich das nicht kann, kann ich niemanden halten, und auch nicht befehlen, es auch nicht wissen. Wissen Sie, zuerst muß man es selbst wissen.

Sagen wir mal, Sie waren so um die dreißig, als Sie anfingen im Sozialismus zu leben, und, sagen wir, wollten Sie nicht in irgend eine Abendschule gehen und so?

– Nein, wir konnten nicht, wir konnten das als Deutsche nicht. Es war damals

wie jetzt, Arbeitslosigkeit. Sie stellten Kinder von gefallenen Kämpfern an, all die anderen, wir konnten nur sehr schwer eine Stelle finden. Mein Mann, aber, sagte, ich sollte zu Hause bleiben und meine Kinder erziehen, sie zu beaufsichtigen, sie zu schulen und so. Und so hab ich mich darein gefügt. Ich konnte keine Stelle finden, auch nicht als nationale Minderheit zu etwas bringen.

Hat Sie zum Beispiel etwas interessiert, sagen wir mal, lesen?

– Ich wollte immer englisch lernen. Ich sagte zu meinem Vater: "Ich möchte englisch lernen. Könnte ich Stunden nehmen?" Er sagt: "Anna, du fantasierst immer."

Dann wollte ich Klavier spielen lernen. Ich hatte eine Freundin in der Schule. Ich wollte immer etwas erreichen, etwas werden, nicht nur Hausfrau. Aber mein Vater hatte dafür überhaupt kein Verständnis. Als meine Mutter starb, als ich ein und zwanzig Jahre alt war, dann sind alle diese Schwierigkeiten über mich gekommen, wissen Sie. Ich war immer zu stolz, meinem Vater zu bitten. Wenn ich ausging, hat mein Vater immer gesagt: "Mein Gott, Anna, brauchst du Geld?" Ich hab nie Geld angenommen. Und dann hatte ich die Gelegenheit Stenographie zu lernen. Ich kann ihnen auch heute noch diese Kurzschrift schreiben. Und dann wollte ich als Stenographin eine Arbeit finden, ich wollte etwas werden. Damals ist es mir nicht gelungen Arbeit zu finden, denn ich konnte das nur als Deutsche, sagen wir mal, beim Militär als Stenographin arbeiten. Ich wollte aber nicht beim Militär arbeiten, wissen Sie. Wir waren so erzogen

Das erzählen Sie aus der Zeit vor dem Krieg?

– Das war zur Zeit der Deutschen, bis vier und vierzig.

Nach dem Krieg aber?

– Nervlich war ich nicht so gut. Es war mir nicht gut.

Sie sagten, daß Sie evangelisch sind. Sie haben sich aber in der katholischen Kirche trauen lassen. Als Sie nach Zrenjanin kamen, sind Sie dann in ihre Kirche oder in die katholische gegangen?

– Die evangelische Kirche war geschlossen. Ich bin dann in die katholische gegangen, dort habe ich immer zu Gott gebetet, mich ihm übergeben, denn ich bin sehr gläubig. Ich ging in die katholische Kirche als die Frau eines katholischen Mannes, Mutter von katholischen Kinder, aber meinen Glauben habe ich nie verlassen. Ich bin nie zu einem anderen Glauben übergetreten, denn ich sagte, er ist nicht wie ein ausgetragenes Kleid, das du jetzt an den Nagel hängst und dann einen anderen Glauben anziehen. Nein, nur das nicht.

Und doch ist es kein großer Unterschied.

– Es ist doch ein ziemlich großer Unterschied. Es ist kein großer Unterschied zwischen den Reformierten und den Evangelischen. Da gibt es keinen großer Unterschied. Auch sie beten nur zu Jesus Christus, die Katholischen aber haben den heiligen Anton und viele anderen Heiligen. Martin Luther, aber, war ein Protestant, er hat die fünf und neunzig Thesen, er war ... er war dagegen, denn: "... du sollst keine anderen Götter haben neben mir." Das ist der Glaube, und er, er war dagegen, wissen Sie, gegen die Beichte.

Was denken Sie ist das Wichtigste in Ihrem Leben?

– Immer gutmütig sein, gutes tun. Ich lebe gern mit allen im Guten, wissen Sie. Du lebst ehrlich und aufrichtig.

Sie haben mir nichts über den Sozialismus gesagt und doch haben Sie fast ein Jahrhundert darin gelebt.

– Wissen Sie, wir waren so verbittert, wir haben so viel gelitten, während Titos Jugoslawien, er hat sich diesen Sozialismus ausgedacht. Wir haben den Sozialismus nicht sympatisiert. Denn wir waren die Betroffenen, er hat das fleißige deutsche Volk vernichtet. Aber doch wußten wir diese Regierung, unter der wir lebten, zu schätzen. Wir sind keine Aufrührer, und wir wußten uns anzupassen und unseren Nächsten zu lieben.

Die Politik aber, die war weit weg von uns. Wir waren glücklich, wir hatten das Recht zu leben. Sie haben uns nicht verfolgt, wir hatten unsere Rechte.

Und wann sind Sie, ihre Familie überhaupt, Ihre Vorfahren hier her in dieses Donaugebiet gekommen?

– Wissen Sie, wann sie gekommen sind, noch im Jahre siebzehnhundert. Damals hat Maria Theresia Deutsche der Donau entlang angesiedelt. Mit ihnen sind auch wir gekommen. Das waren alles Landarbeiter.

Aber von wo sind sie gekommen? Aus welchem Teil Deutschlands?

– Aus Ulm. Mein Vater sagte uns immer: "Kinder, ihr sollt wissen, daß euere Vorfäder aus der Gegend von Ulm gekommen sind. Wir waren Handwerker, meine Vorfahren. So hat mir mein Vater gesagt. Alle waren fleißig. Sie haben im großen ganzen untereinander geheiratet. Das war ein einfaches Volk. Sie liebten die Erde. Alle haben einen Pflug bekommen, ein Pferd und eine Kuh. So hatten sie Milch und Käse und alles. So haben sie sich meist mit Landwirtschaft befaßt. Sie haben Land angekauft und so gelebt.

Brauchen Sie jetzt noch etwas ... suchen Sie ihre Vorfahren?

– Wissen Sie was ... Meine Kunta Kinte ... wie man das so sagt... habe ich immer gern gehabt. Ich weiß über die Familie meines Vaters. Ich liebte es, alles zu wissen, wer meine Tante war, und wer diese Söhne waren. Ich liebe das alles, wissen Sie. In Deutschland haben wir noch Verwandten, die Schwester meines Vaters, mein Vater war in seiner Familie Sohn und dann noch seine Schwester. Und jetzt leben noch ihre Tochter, seine Kinder, ihre Kinder, die Kinder meiner Tante und ihre Enkelkinder und mit ihnen halten wir die Verbindung auf, an der Andria.

Mein Vater starb vier Jahre vor meiner Stiefmutter, sie hat ihre Kinder. Sie hat einen Sohn und die Tochter ist gestorben. Der Sohn lebt dort in Deutschland. Aber er ist, wie soll ich sagen... Ich sehe, wenn jemand einmal etwas falsch macht oder sündigt, dann soll man wissen daß das an ihren Kindern auf einem zurückkommt. Wir sollen nicht denken, daß das nicht so ist. Oh, wie unglücklich, wie unglücklich ist er. Und ich sage ..., an ihm sieht man es, daß dies Gottes Strafe ist, wissen Sie. Niemand kann mich anders überzeugen, daß dies nicht so ist.

Deshalb muß der Mensch aufpassen, wie er ist und wie er sich benimmt, und was er tut, denn du hast Kinder. Man sagt: alles rächt sich.

Interviewerin: Svenka Savić, 1998; Übersetzung: Zoran Velikić

Magda (born 1922) Senta



What was your childhood like?

– My childhood was wonderful. I was born in Senta, by the Tisza River, in 1922. I had a wonderful family: my mother and father were true humanists. My close family also included my grandparents on my mother's side; my grandfather was a veterinarian; and my grandmother lived in a village called Stara Moravica near Backa Topola. I spent a good deal of my childhood with them. I had a wonderful childhood because I was cared for by my relatives, and the area near the Tisza and the village offered plenty of space to play with other children. My father was a lawyer, a truly upright man. He was one of those lawyers who always protected the

poor in Vojvodina, offering them his services free of charge. Just like doctors who often treated poor families for free, my grandfather did the same as a veterinarian.

Father finished law in Budapest and got a post as a judge in Subotica. The Soviet Revolution and Hungarian Commune caused great riots among workers in the city and peasants in the villages. My father took part in those events. My uncle, Jakov Bošan, a mathematician and astronomer, with whom I stayed later in Kikinda, took part in Béla Kún's Red Army (I wrote a great deal about my father and uncle in my autobiographical books). When the riot in Subotica was put down, my father defended the rebels – the trade union leaders – which is why the court authorities suspended him. Meanwhile, he himself was arrested and tortured. Since he was no longer allowed to work as a judge, he moved to Senta with his young wife, where he opened a law office. It was there I was born in 1922, the eldest of three, with my two brothers following in 1926 and 1932. The first one, Đorđe, survived the war and returned from forced labor, while the younger one, who suffered from poor health, died in Auschwitz together with our mother. Father died at the very beginning of WWII, in the Čurug raid, in the Christmas of 1942. I lost my closest relatives in the war, you see, including my grandfather's family in Stara Moravica, everyone, except my brother Đorđe and elder uncle, Mirko Schreyer. My brother became a physicist, earning his doctorate. He published quite a number of scientific papers in several periodicals and wrote a textbook on vacuum technique. He taught at Niš University. He still lives there and is now retired. My father's numerous relatives were killed during the war.

How did I join the progressive movement? In high school, when I was fourteen or even younger, I felt sympathy for the workers' movement and started reading the literature that went with it. My father's attitude had a decisive influence on me. Day by day I saw him defending the poor and those unjustly accused. He spoke openly about his work to mother and me. Consequently, we lived in poverty because he could not earn enough for the family. During the economic crisis of 1929-30 our situation became even worse. People stopped paying. Clients did not pay, so we could not afford to buy in shops or elsewhere. It was at this point that my family started moving from place to place, from town to village and vice versa. This was the reason I finished only two years of high school in my hometown of Senta. My parents moved from place to place while leaving me with friends so I could finish the year. From the age of twelve, I could no longer live with my parents except for the holidays and one year when they moved to Novi Sad. I attended almost every grade in a different city while staying with relatives or close friends of my parents. Due to these circumstances I grew up very early. While living with different people I witnessed their suffering but also faced the insensitivity of some rich people. While I was in the third year of high school, I was staying with my grandmother—my father's mother. It was a large and very poor family. It was there that I remembered my father speaking about Lenin and the October Revolution. An older girl, Etelka, who worked at a factory in Subotica, introduced me to some friends of hers. It was the beginning of my friendship with the workers. They gave me whatever books and magazines they could get their hands on. At this time I was only thirteen. I enrolled in the fourth year of high school in Kikinda while staying with my uncle Jakov Bošan, who was struggling to support his family since he could not get work as a teacher. As one of Béla Kún's soldiers, he was blacklisted. He also told me many things about the Hungarian Commune, about the interventionist war... That year in Kikinda I made my first illegal connection with the SKOJ (The Association of the Communist Youth of Yugoslavia). I was convinced that I just had to join the communist youth. As a member of the communist youth organization, I participated in various legal societies of the progressive youth, in which young people were invited to become members of the progressive and antifascist movement. After one year, however, I had to leave Kikinda and my friends. I enrolled in the fifth year of high school in Novi Sad, in a completely new environment, where I knew no one. I also lost the illegal connection with the SKOJ, due to the arrests that had taken place in Kikinda, and a new one was difficult to get. I was afraid to talk about it, because I did not want to endanger anyone. I had plenty of free time apart from school, so I made friends with young Jews, whom I met in front of the Synagogue during the High Holidays. The Jewish youth movement in Novi Sad was very active. Various activities went on at the club; games were played, as well as chess and table tennis... From early spring to late autumn we went on picnics to the Fruška Gora, but we also ran discussion clubs. We studied Marxist theory at the leftist association called Hashomer Hatzair. It was there where I fell in love for the first time in my life. It lasted only a short time, because we had to move on...

I completed only one year at the Jewish school in Senta, where the language of in-

struction was Hungarian. My parents wanted me to learn to read and write Hungarian properly. As early as the beginning of the second year, my father enrolled me in the Serbian class, and from then on I attended Serb schools. At home we spoke in Hungarian, as in almost every Jewish family in Bačka. We could not speak Hebrew. We only knew how to read old Hebrew from prayer books, but we children could not understand the meaning of those prayers. I did learn some Modern Hebrew, though, at the Novi Sad Ken Club, the Jewish youth club, and I also learned some in high school, in my religion class. Instead of Biblical Hebrew, we learned Modern Hebrew – Ivrit. We did not have a strict religious upbringing at home. My parents observed religious rules only at the High Holidays. Besides, every family had its own way of keeping religious customs. For example, my grandfather, the veterinarian from Stara Moravica, though not an orthodox Jew, strictly observed the rules and customs. Once a year, at Yom Kippur, which is the holiday of reconciliation and forgiveness, every member of my family fasted strictly for twenty-four hours. None of us would eat or even drink secretly. No one expected it from the children, but even so we fasted until we were a bit older.

My father would never declare whether he believed in God. When I came to learn of the new ideas of scientific socialism, I tried to ask him about it, because we were very close. He did not want to answer, though. Once he got annoyed and said: „Don't press me!” So I didn't. I had an extraordinarily well-educated father, who knew a lot about history, geography, and many other things. He talked to me a lot during our walks by the Tisza, and later by the Danube. The most I have learned in my life was from him. Influenced by his hesitation about the question of faith and also by the social environment, I became and have remained an atheist. To me, Jewish customs mean tradition, remembering my late parents and family.

I have mentioned my father first, because he was an extraordinary person indeed. Also, I know how much he suffered from not making a decent living to support his wife, my mother, who he was so fond of, and from not being able to provide properly for our education. He was caught between the dictates of his conscience and his love for us. He would never make any compromise; in court he would always defend the truth. After WW II there were still people who remembered how he fought the good fight and they would tell anecdotes about him. He knew the law very well and also knew people very well. When someone came to hire him, he could tell at the first meeting if the man was right or wrong. If the person was in the wrong, he did not want to represent him in court. He would advise the man not to press charges and not to spend money in vain. The person would then go to another lawyer. He would often mediate between peasants in disagreements, who would press charges against each other because of some minor infraction. They would sometimes accept his advice, sometimes not. Beside his professional work, he was also a writer. He published at his own expense four books of short stories and poetry. I have kept them all. I have also kept his manuscripts. After the war, there was some hope that a book of selected works would be published, but, unfortunately, it did not happen. I still feel it as a duty unfulfilled. I may be able to repay him some day. My time, however, is running out...

And my mother? Of course, she was a good, smart person, too. She was a very quiet, gentle woman. I loved her very much as well, but in a different way from father. It cannot be explained rationally. I always had to worry about him for some reason. Not only did I worry about the dangers that threatened him: whether he would be arrested, whether his law practice would be closed down, etc. but I also worried about his poor health. He was burning himself out, growing old too fast and taking things too much to heart. Both his heart and nerves gave out... If you have ever felt anything similar in your family, you will understand my painful, indescribable love for my father, a man in jeopardy.

We moved to Čurug three years before the war started. My father was killed in January of 1942, at Orthodox Christmas, in the Čurug Raid, along with about 2,000 people, who were also killed then. I loved and respected my mother very much. She finished only the Higher Elementary School for girls, but was very talented. First of all she knew how to run a 'Singer' sewing machine, so she would sew clothes and linens for the children by herself. Of course, she also did the rest of the housework, such as the day's cooking and cleaning and so on... She was talented at drawing and sculpting, and in many other crafts. She would sculpt figures from clay (and kiln-fire them, too), she painted on silk, made lampshades, wove carpets on a loom. At the end she was making dolls to sell, because the family had financial problems. I heard after the war that when I was in prison, and it was clear that Jewish families would be deported, she set to work sewing all kinds of rucksacks for her friends and the people she knew. I myself learned a lot from her. Until recently, I would knit and crochet for my children and grandchildren. I would do needlework, but my eyes were failing, so I stopped doing needlework to save my sight for reading in my old age. My poor mother did not live to see old age. When she was killed in Auschwitz, she was only forty-one.

I joined the High School Students movement, as I have already mentioned, in Kikinda, during the fourth year, and was accepted in the SKOJ, but when I moved to Novi Sad, I lost this connection. I could not reestablish the connection in either Novi Sad or Sombor during the sixth year. When I got to the seventh and eighth grade, I returned to Kikinda, where my serious political activity continued. In my class there already existed a group of young communists with about 15-16 members; there was a large group active in another eighth grade class, where some of my dearest friends worked – Klara Fejes. Lidija Aldan, with whom I was first connected, was expelled from high school, due to the earlier arrests in Kikinda, which I already mentioned. She was working with us anyway, because she had been involved in the town's illegal communist commune, where she was assigned to coordinate the student movement in Kikinda. At that time, apart from reading and studying, we developed all kinds of semi-illegal and legal activities among high school students in the town. We led student associations, held lectures, wrote leaflets, even copied books which arrived in town illegally, in small numbers. Once I copied almost half of one of Lenin's books, while a friend of mine from my class copied the other half. We managed to connect with workers in factories, we wrote lectures for them and also held lectures on basic subjects and on Marxism;

we sold workers' newspapers for them, etc. We acted on a large scale, which came to be known throughout Vojvodina.

When Hitler attacked the Czech Republic, the Czechs, already well-known anti-fascists, fled east with their families ahead of German troops. There were both officers and civilians among them. Transportation went by train, starting south, then turning west, so it passed Rumania and arrived in Yugoslavia intending to reach Paris. They would cross the Romanian border at Kikinda. The Party in Kikinda along with the Youth Communist Organization prepared for their arrival at the railway station in Kikinda. The same reception was arranged a day or two later in Subotica. It was forbidden for high school students to take part in the welcome reception, but it could not be stopped. A large group of high school students from Kikinda was there, along with local citizens. Besides that, we organized the distribution of food and hot tea and milk at the station. It was a huge political manifestation, in which peasants from the surrounding villages also participated. The headmaster of the high school said that he would not let the participants of the event pass their final examination in order to graduate. That was the reason why I was arrested and expelled from Kikinda high school the next year, while I was in the eighth grade. Before that there had been another big general event in which we participated, collecting donations for Spanish Civil War volunteers. I mention all this to make clear that I did not get involved in war activity by mere chance. The fight for socialist ideas and against fascism was my own decision and has remained so up until now. As we know, social and socialistic ideas have existed for thousands of years and will continue to exist, as explained in many research papers. The reasons why those ideas failed in the Soviet Union and in former socialist countries in the East and in our country have been written about extensively. The historical, economic and cultural reasons for that failure have been explained, so I will not go into such explanations during this interview. The fight for those ideas and ideals continues to this day. Trade unions in western European countries, especially in the north, have managed to achieve a lot for their workers. Unemployment benefits are higher there, wages for workers are also generally higher. In recent years, their governments have begun to cut budgets, due to recession, and unemployment and retirement benefits have been reduced. So, if even rich countries in the West have to cut benefits for workers as soon as a recession occurs, you can understand why the Soviet Union, impoverished and suffering the aftermath of WWI, caught up in interventionist wars and the civil war that followed, was unable to implement the idea of socialism. So, just before WWII, in Kikinda, I found myself in the middle of a great antifascist movement of students, citizens, workers and peasants. The high school headmaster would not forget the big welcoming reception for the Czech refugees at the railway station in Kikinda, and that is why he made good on his threat the next year, when I was in my final year of studies. He made a deal with the police on arrests, so they arrested many high school students from my grade just one month before the end of the school year. Why did he wait till the end of the school year? Maybe because he did not want to let us prepare for our graduation exam or pass it. He said he would not allow us to become university students in this country. The

police did not find anything after searching the homes of the arrested students, so they were released the same day and allowed to return to school. They found some minor things at my home and at the homes of two other students, so the three of us were held in Kikinda. Several books were taken as "suspicious" material, written by Russian and some modern contemporary writers, which were also on display in bookshop windows. They sent them to the Ministry of Education, where they said the books were not forbidden in any way, so they had to let us go. The headmaster, however, would not give up and persuaded the Staff Council to expel the three of us from high school, adding that we were eligible to take the final and the graduation exam that very year. The Ministry of Education ordered me to take my exams before a teachers' commission at Subotica High School. My schoolmates were ordered to Vršac and Petrovgrad. Although it was very last-minute, we all passed both exams. It was the most difficult exam of my life. I knew no one in Subotica; nor did I get any teacher recommendations. In just one day, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. I had to pass eleven subjects from the eighth grade. There was not a single break between the subjects; I even had to ask for a glass of water. When I think back on it, it was quite a mental strain. After I was released from prison, I had less than a month to prepare for the exam in front of the new teachers' commission. I returned home to Čurug, to my parents, and would study according to a certain plan the whole day long, out in the corn shed. I planned how many pages a day to read each day on a certain subject, and only returned to the house in the evening. I traveled to Subotica and passed both the final and the graduation exam. The graduation exam was a bit easier, because there were fewer subjects to be passed. Passing those exams so easily was a great satisfaction to me in those early years. I sometimes dream about those exams even to this day, and recall how the teachers behaved. I remember two high school teachers being kind, they must have been sympathizers with the movement; most of them treated me with indifference, while one lady was quite hostile and went out of her way to make things hard for me.

In the fall of that year, 1940, when I went to Belgrade to enroll in the Faculty for Technical Engineering, Department of Mechanical Engineering, the first anti-Semitic laws were issued in Yugoslavia. I thought I had managed to enroll, since I had filled in each and every application form and got my student index. But as it turned out, it was not valid. The Minister of Education was the known reactionary Korošec, who under the influence of Hitler's Germany had submitted the Proportional Quota law. In the Yugoslavia of that time, 0.5 % of the population was Jewish (out of 14 million, just 70,000 Jews), therefore, out of those newly enrolled in secondary schools and Universities, only 0.5% Jewish students were allowed to register (which for Vojvodina meant only 31 slots). There were a few exceptions, but I was not among them. At the time, I was working at the dining hall for students from Vojvodina. I helped to distribute meals, because my parents could not afford my stay in Belgrade. I left home ready to earn a living. My grandfather, the veterinarian from Stara Moravica, had promised some help, but since I was not accepted at the University, my entire family suggested that I return home to Čurug. I did not return. I stayed on, working at the student din-

ing hall and doing certain activities with the students' movement in Belgrade. This only lasted a few months, though. One of the illegal leaders at the dining hall told me in confidence that it did not make any sense for me to stay in Belgrade. In Belgrade there were many enthusiastic young people, said he, who were ready to work on important tasks for the student movement and the progressive movement in general, but such people were lacking in the countryside. He told me I could go to Pančevo to undertake illegal activities. I accepted this idea eagerly, knowing that my dear friend from Kikinda, Lidija Aldan, had moved with her family to Pančevo, so I could stay with them. Lidija and I went on working as professional Party activists in Pančevo. At the beginning, we worked with female workers employed at local factories, as well as with organized young apprentices. It was immediately before WWII, arrests were taking place in Belgrade, they were coming after people at home, on the street, and several locations with Party material were really in danger. The two of us were assigned to bring a lot of the endangered Party material from Belgrade to Pančevo, to safe houses. We brought it by bus in school bags. This took us several days. We managed to fulfill the task, but we were noticed, nonetheless, and were afraid we might be arrested. It was in the spring of 1941, just before the bombing of Belgrade. It was decided that I would go back to Pančevo, but after the bombing of Belgrade and the attack on our country, I got another task. I was to go to work in Subotica. Hungarian was my native language. The consensus was that there were not enough Party activists who knew Hungarian, so I could be useful.

In April 1941, I arrived in Subotica. Again I had some trouble with the Party connection, this being the time of the occupation and dismemberment of Yugoslavia, and the scattering of Party activists. I had more experience, now, though, so I was successful in my work.

We started preparing young people and citizens for resistance and for armed rebellion. I was accepted at the local SKOJ (Association of the Communist Youth) Committee. I was leading the SKOJ and reading groups, conveying the latest directions from the Party and SKOJ. That meant spreading illegal leaflets, collecting arms, carrying out first smaller, then somewhat bigger actions – sabotage and diversions. Arrests were taking place in Subotica. Occupation agents did not arrest communists at the beginning; they must have been waiting to track down each and every piece of information. The pre-war police, who were collaborating with the occupiers, also began to arrest well-known trade union, working class and peasant leaders. The flatlands of Vojvodina just didn't offer enough places for so many people to hide. The underground hideouts had yet to be built. The detention center in Subotica, the infamous "Yellow House," was full of those arrested in the early fall of 1941. It was a place of torture for hundreds of seasoned fighters and young activists—ones who had carried out the latest sabotage actions such as scattering nails across roads, pouring sugar into the petrol tanks of enemy vehicles and burning wheat in the fields so the occupiers could not reap the rich harvest. There were, of course, those who could not withstand the beatings, so they did not remain silent. This is how my name was mentioned.

September came and I had only the summer clothes I had worn to Subotica. Not knowing that I had been found out, I left for Čurug to get some warm clothes for the autumn and winter. At the time I was living underground with some people; I did not dare go to relatives for help. I meant to spend only one day in Čurug and then return. But the police burst into the house, because they had been looking for me, and arrested me. They transported me to the railway station. I took advantage of a moment when they weren't paying attention and escaped into a nearby cornfield, trying to reach the Tisza River and a familiar farm that belonged to a partisan from Čurug. But I failed. They pursued me into the marshes and caught me the same night with dogs, near my destination.

I know who gave me away. They were all men; in prison we were kept in separate cells, even separate buildings; after the war I never mentioned it or blamed them. They were not traitors, just men who could not bear torture for long. Men were tortured especially severely, many of them got seriously ill. We all suffered greatly. Besides which, revenge was just not part of my character. In Subotica, the counterintelligence, where investigations took place, was situated in the city center, in a large, yellow building called "The Yellow House". There were such centers in Novi Sad and every other town, even the smaller ones in Bačka. Experienced agents trained by the Gestapo worked there. They worked skillfully and methodically to uncover the entire network of the movement. They beat people cruelly. They were especially harsh on the men. They usually did their work at night, in the cellar, so the screams would not be heard on the street, but people avoided that place anyway. I should say that I was also tortured severely for ten days, systematically, twice a day. Of all the women I may have received the most beatings. I should also say that they did not beat me the way they would beat the men; they had some respect, who knows why. Males were beaten, as I have already mentioned, at night. They tortured their genitals; they did all sorts of things to them. In the underground movement, we were warned that we might get caught and tortured. Whoever can't stand the torture, they would tell us, better gave up illegal work. Nobody forced you to be an underground activist; you chose it of your own free will. Still, no one knows how much one can bear. It was there I saw that no one can say for sure how one will behave while being beaten. Physicians say it does not depend just on one's willpower, but on the strength of the nervous system as well. Sooner or later, something had to give.

We were tortured in different ways. Just being restrained and transported from Čurug to Subotica, bound tightly by the hands to prevent another escape, was horrible. It lasted a long time and they fastened the cuffs to my wrists, directly over the artery. It caused terrible pain. I could feel the pain both in my brain and in my heart. In Subotica, on the other hand, the agents used a different method. They stretch you out on a bench. First you must lie on your back, and then they tie your legs with a belt and slip the belt over the end by your feet. Next they bind your hands above your head with a belt and pull that back. You are stretched out completely, you can't move at all. They beat you with a hard rubber club, starting with the soles of your feet. If you don't tell them what

they want to know, they beat you all over your body as you lie stretched out. After that, they pummel their fists into your stomach, ovaries, and breasts. My whole body was black-and-blue from bruises, from head to toe. Every inch of me swelled up.

You asked me how I could bear it and what gave me strength. I don't know. You can only take strength from an idea and from a sense of responsibility toward your comrades—both the ones under arrest and the ones who are still free. Most of the prisoners would keep quiet while they tried to outguess the interrogators. If you did not die from the beating, which also happened, you would say something in the end. You would tell them something that was already known, something past saving, that couldn't be avoided any longer.

Let me tell you how the agents tortured us. If the beating and fists don't get the information out of you, and when the agent gets tired of beating you, he unties you from the bench and lets you go back to your room until the next session. You sit down on your rags, with your legs crossed, facing the wall, because you are not allowed to lie down on the straw spread next to the wall. But, when you are untied from that bench, you are unable to get up or walk. The agent grabs you and leads you, walking you like a horse. I had long hair, very beautiful, reaching halfway down my back. The agent twists my hair around his hand and starts yanking me up and down the room, running from one wall to another... When we reach one wall, he bangs my head against the wall, and when we reach the opposite wall, he bangs my head against that wall. He keeps at it, until I start walking on my injured feet to my room. It was a big room, where we would sit in a row, facing the wall. When you finally reach your place, of course, you cannot sit down... Just as you were not able to get up, so your friends prop you up with their shoulders, helping you stand. They do this very discreetly, because the officer stands and watches you, and the second he notices anything, he beats you with the butt of his rifle.

Once, they were torturing me using horseradish. They tie your hands and arms as you stand there. Then they pull a sack full of freshly grated horseradish over your head. Not only does it sting, that's the least of it, but the strong odor takes your breath away, not letting you breathe at all. You have the feeling that you are going to suffocate right away. You try hard to take a breath, but the only thing happens is that your stomach swells up. It is an incredible feeling. I tried to undo my skirt with hands tied, but I couldn't. How did it end? The strong horseradish irritates the mucous membranes. Tears started pouring from my eyes and my nose was running. The liquid made the sack with the horseradish wet, and it ripped, so I was able to get a breath. The agents, who were standing around me watching my misery, cursed and pulled the sack off my head. They even brought a photographer to take a picture of me in that sorry state, with my hair full of horseradish, legs spread, in agony. They ordered the photographer to write under the picture: this is what a Bolshevik woman looks like. After that I could not comb my hair, because it stuck together from blood and sweat. One morning, when we were going to wash ourselves, a brave girl whom I had not met before, approached me in front of the officers and took me to the corridor, where barbers were cutting some

prisoners' hair. She led me to a chair and asked the barber to cut my hair short, as short as possible. The barber did so, and I was reprimanded for having my hair cut without permission.

One day came someone, who was arrested for the second time and felt devastated. At the hearing, he said that I was not from Subotica, but from Čurug, that I attended school at Kikinda and that I knew the Movement in all those places. It had a terrible effect on me. They led me to another room, where I had never been before. The chief detective with two or three colleagues started interrogating me; you can imagine how they treated me. Eventually, they brought me face to face with the newcomer, but I denied knowing him. I said he must have mistaken me for someone else. The chief detective said: "I won't torture you because of Kikinda and Banat, where Germans are, you will get through their hands anyway. But, I'm going to beat the hell out of you because of Čurug and villages in Bačka!" Then, I said I had to go to the toilet. He let me go and I went escorted by an officer. Luckily, the officer didn't hear when the head detective said to me I had to go back, so I went right to my place. The head officer didn't send for me any more. I heard later that by that time, arrests had been going on in Čurug. Many people were arrested and taken to the Army in Novi Sad, into the investigation center, and the head must have thought that he needed no more evidence from me.

Someone, however, a young woman from Čurug, denounced me. An agent was sent from Novi Sad to take me and bring face to face with that woman. I got treated severely there. Afterwards, I was taken back to Subotica.

The main motivation to remain silent was the thought of my comrades, whose lives depended on what others or I might say. Eventually, you just had to say something, didn't you? From me, however, they didn't hear any new name; neither did I tell them any new facts. I signed a record of evidence, otherwise they would have killed me; I didn't care, though, if they killed me or not. I was young and strong, just didn't die from their beating. I was just 19... There were somewhat older comrades, who were tortured before, when arrested during the former regime and now got heart failure, and died as a consequence. Whoever signed a record of evidence, was escorted from the "Yellow House" to the court jail in Subotica, because new places were needed for those arrested. Thousands of people from Subotica were kept in the "Yellow House", as well as from the surrounding colonist Serb villages, such as Mali Beograd, Žednik and so on.

I spent the whole winter 1941/42 in the court jail in Subotica, and the next spring, proceedings were taken to the whole group of ours. The military occupation court sentenced me to 13 years of severe imprisonment. Some time after the sentence has been brought, we were kept in Subotica prison, and in the autumn of 1942, with a group of ten women, I was brought to Marianostra, a place north from Budapest. Since we were sentenced to severe imprisonment, we could not stay in an ordinary prison, where the conditions of living were a bit better. Those who were sentenced to less than one year of imprisonment were left home (they were controlled by the police, and many of them got arrested again). Minors were brought to the prison for minors. Nuns controlled the prison in Marianostra, while the outside guard was made up of

men. The regime, however, was much more severe than that in Subotica. I stayed there up until the summer of 1944. When Hitler's Army occupied Hungary officially, in April 1944, they separated us, Jewish women from the Christians, and made a ghetto for us. That means a prison within the prison. Up until then, we were all together, the political female inmates – regardless of our religion. They separated us with the intention to deport us right away for German concentration camps and give over to SS troops. Horthy's government in Budapest, however, postponed the political prisoners' extradition to Germany, that's why we stayed at Marianostra until the end of summer. After that, we were moved to another prison in Budapest. Horthy's government was still postponing the extradition of its citizens to Germany because secret negotiations on separate peace treaty were under way. It was too late though. In October of 1944 the right extremist organization, the so-called arrow-cross organization (Hungarian Nazi), took over power. The new government decided to extradite political prisoners from Hungary to Germany. Not just Jews but Christians as well. Hungarians, Serbs, imprisoned Ukrainians and the others. Shipments from every prison started moving toward the border. We were moved into the military prison at the fortress of Komarom at the border between Hungary and Austria, where we were handed over to SS officers. After a short while, we were transported to the concentration camps Bergen Belsen, Falersleben and Saltzwedel. This last one was at the Elba River and it was here where the American Army liberated us in April of 1945. We stayed in this town for a while, but outside the camp, which the Americans burned down because of filth. We were gaining strength because when we were liberated we were very weak. In mid May 1945 we started moving home and got to Subotica on June 2nd the same year.

I wrote a book on my war experience called "As soon as Sour Cherries Start Blooming". I wrote everything in detail there, so I would not like to go much into details now. It is a novel. It is common knowledge that nuns were keeping us in prison. It does not seem very logical that nuns keep their sisters in prison, but it was true. I wrote about it in detail. In that prison they had been guarding women who committed some criminal act before the war. During the war women who committed some criminal act and political detainees were held. They did not regard us as their sisters, neither were they as god-fearing as they wanted to appear.

Now the liberation began. We moved from Germany back both on foot and by train, because railways were not in function everywhere. Where the tracks were cut off, we just disembarked the train and walked as long as the next track was in function. The next train brought us further. No one asked for a ticket. We traveled through Europe freely, finding the shortest way home. We were on the roofs of trains and on roads. We used a map that we got back in Germany from a German prisoner, a man of good intentions. We made our way through Northern Germany, Czech-Slovakia, and moved south toward Budapest and Subotica.

Lifes went on... I married a former camp detainee who was born in Srbobran, Simin Živko. I could not give birth right away. I bore the consequences of war where we suffered from very low temperatures. Many women could not give birth never again. I

underwent treatment, was seeing doctors and went to a spa. I could never regain health completely, although I gave birth to healthy children. My son Nebojša was born in 1948 and my daughter Nevena in 1950. They are well and healthy.

As long as I was in the Movement, I felt no discrimination whatsoever. On the contrary! In the pre-war movement and the illegal Communist Party, there were extraordinary people indeed. They were educated and civilized and really wanted to create new, better social conditions. In the Party and Youth Movement there were few girls and women in their estimation, that is why they tried to recruit and educate young girls from every social strata. Sometimes I could feel as they cherished us, give advice about everything. There were certainly some obsolete, old-fashioned places, where people were still brought up in patriarchal spirit. As a young SKOJ member and CP member I never came in touch with such people. I was too young, held no function, got in touch only with party officials in lower positions in Vojvodina and Belgrade. They were very diligent, like Negroes of the Movement. The circle of people I knew was not very narrow, but was not very broad either, what I could see was that they were simple, sincere and honest people. During the war in prisons and camps I was together only with women, because we were separated from males. We women created almost ideal groups, sharing the good and worse, sharing little food, clothes and underwear we could get from our families. As member of those illegal leaderships of the prison and camp groups, together with other leaders, I always cared that everything be distributed equally that each and every woman, regardless if ill or healthy, be protected properly. During that time, I did not experience any kind of discrimination by Party males.

After the war, however, the Movement became more numerous. Social organizations of trade unions, National Fronts were created allowing many new young and older people enroll the Party. I am not saying that everyone entered the Party or large organizations out of interest, there were also many people with good intentions, but they were burdened with old fashioned, patriarchal opinion about the women's role, and about other things as well. I was totally aware of that, I knew where lived. Nevertheless, I was hoping that things would change through better education, cultural development and financial well being and would be resolved just like many other problems.

I paid no attention to minor remarks or offences by others, regardless of the fact that that my pre-war comrades, in whom I had absolute confidence, were killed. I could seek advice from them. The new ones, although very good to me (some acting like a father to me, like Đurica Jojkić my first secretary after the war and leader at the Novi Sad Committee Organization), were too busy with important party problems so I did not want burden them with my personal worries. Since the women activists kept silent about those problems, with good intentions, thinking that women's position would be improving all the time. The Party and whole Society paid no attention to that problem.

Women's position in work places in that period was not easy at all, and has remained the same up until now. Every woman had to work harder at her work in order to prove herself, especially if she was even at a minor position of leadership. Males at

companies did not like watching a woman at a bit higher position, in spite the woman's effort and abilities. They especially did not like it if a woman had a bit higher salary than they did. I could feel that myself. When Novi Sad Radio was founded, I was appointed Head of Programs. Later, I worked as editor in chief and everybody thinks I did a lot for the development of the program. Nevertheless, in that difficult but beautiful time, when the whole staff in Novi Sad Radio did their best to create something out of nothing, I could feel over the years that males in the departments did not like their manager being a woman. Some of them did not like that I was a Jew either. A double problem there: a women and a Jew! It is not in my character to offend people, but I had to be very careful nevertheless not to say anything incorrect or to raise my voice, not to reprimand anyone, and serve an example within my work. I reacted harshly only when one from my chiefs would offend me: the Chief Executive Officer of the Radio Station, for example. Not often though, but it did happen. Once I submitted a written complaint because of such an offense to the Regional Party Committee where the Secretary General was Pal Soti. One of those men, who like Đurica Jojkić, was like a father to me. He resolved that conflict very easily, not wanting to deepen it. It was correct. On another occasion, because of a quarrel with a Radio manager, I left the Radio Station and moved to the 'Dnevnik' newspaper. But, this was not due to any feminist problem. The cause of the dispute was a misunderstanding concerning education of young people and distribution of flats. I had been working for a year in "Dnevnik", when the same manager called me back and apologized...

You asked me to say something about the compulsory buying up of wheat after WWII. I did not take part in the obligatory purchase of wheat, even though I had hard feelings about those affairs. Beside my regular work, I worked a great deal with social organizations, like at the AFŽ (Women's Anti-fascist Organization), when great actions were under way. For example, when colonists arrived in Vojvodina. It was a time when we traveled around villages to meet colonist women to ask what they needed, what they wanted, and we taught them everything: how to live in Vojvodina, how to use water rationally, about nutrition, especially how to feed children. The women came mostly from underdeveloped areas, very poor and illiterate. We organized literacy courses for them. In the beginning, basic hygiene was our main concern. Poor things. They complained about the water, saying that water in their mountainous region was clean, as well as the air, which was also much clearer there than here in the plain. They also complained that they did not have to be so careful about their children's food as here, but nevertheless, the children were healthier. I remember one women saying angrily: 'You can put a child on a stone, nothing will happen. Water, air, food are healthy there, while here children get ill easily.' For example, they could not prepare meat and keep it for later usage. They would slaughter a piglet and leave it in the sun, so it spoiled. Century long habits were in function in the mountains, unlike here in Vojvodina. That was one of the education roles of the Women's Organization. We advised the women to befriend the locals, to make contacts, because they would benefit from that. They would learn a lot from them, such as how to cook, or how to cultivate the garden.

Local women's organizations worked a lot on that issue. We were also visiting homes, where the children of those who had been killed in action in Yugoslavia lived. And other homes as well.

Before the colonists arrived in Vojvodina, the local authorities were instructed to collect furniture from the abandoned German houses. Everything collected was to be put into warehouses, and distributed to colonist families: the basic things were beds,, tables, chairs, linen and kitchenware. I should say that the very first injustice was made to colonists right then. Comrades and even more women were carefully keeping those things in warehouses, but, nevertheless, a great deal of the things was stolen. Many a colonist family moved into empty or half empty houses, with no furniture. What happened? Soldiers and partisan officers, who arrived from the war and settled down in towns, were without anything. Many of them, especially those from Belgrade, got warrants from higher military and political bodies authorising that they could come to Vojvodina and take whatever they needed from the warehouses containing German houseware. I witnessed such an event in Vrbas or Kula; I can't remember exactly where. An officer's wife arrived from Belgrade with a warrant allowing her to take whatever they wanted. She behaved rude and intolerant, just as a true nouve rich. She was choosing not only sofas, but the colour of linen as well as lamps, she was picking glassware, I feared she might break something. I am explaining this, because it was symptomatic of the social malformations at the very beginning of the post-war social development.

After the war, repression was under way toward German families. At that time I was not back home in Yugoslavia. As I have told you, I came back from the camp on June 4th 1945. The anarchy that was happening immediately after the liberation, in the fall of 1944, caused a lot of trouble. Autocratic actions were taken toward the minorities: for example, towards the Hungarians from Čurug who had emigrated; then toward the German population in Bačka, and even more noticeably in Banat. Individuals and groups were deprived of the right to take revenge any more.

Somewhat later, it came to my attention that comrade Moša Pijade, as early as the end of 1944, issued a strict order, by which the right to pronounce a verdict passes over to the newly formed authorities of National Courts only. German families, or individuals who felt guilty, withdrew along with the German army, moving back pushed by the liberation army. The civilians who remained were unprotected. So these civilians were forced to newly formed camps, apart from those individuals who were collaborating with members of the National Liberation Movement: it was common knowledge who these people were. They were few who did collaborate though, but still there were some. In all my books, in which I described pre-war and war events and conditions, I wrote very carefully about those fighters and their sympathizers – SKOJ members and Party members – who were by origin Germans or Hungarians. Their contributions were important, their attitude demanded great courage. Even more so as were the minority within their own national groups. I can say that I have a clean conscience regarding them. A German family lived in the house where I lived, because they behaved correctly toward illegal individuals during the war. At Novi Sad Radio Station there were also

individuals of German origin, with whom we were getting along very well. Of course, there were exceptions to this rule. Every member of a German family did not relate to the National Liberation Movement equally. For example, a friend of mine from Petrograd, near Zrenjanin; his family is half-Jewish, and the whole Jewish part of his family perished in the war. Many members of the German branch of their family helped, while the others behaved as enemies. That friend of mine was going from village to village, from camp to camp, looking for the family members who had helped them. She tried to get them out from the camp and succeeded. I know more than one such example. Germans in camps worked in agriculture but their lodgings and food were very bad. Now, Germany as well as the International Community blames us for that. Later, detainees immigrated to Germany and just a few of them came back.

I did not work for the AFŽ organization for long; nor did I work for any other purely feminist organization. Soon I realized that it is hard to help just women. The whole family should be helped. The standard of living of the whole family should be raised, and the level of education of the whole population should be improved in order to help women. One can't help just the women, as one can't help just the child. It is just an illusion. Those actions are short-term, and not efficient enough. For example, I am watching on TV how humanitarian relief is being distributed to children who have become orphans in the recent Yugo-wars. In my opinion, it is a non-educational gesture. Those children are very vulnerable. It is incorrect to remind them all the time that they are orphans; it is stigmatizing. It is far better to give larger, more significant relief to families or homes, in which those children live and to give them presents for holidays just as other children receive. The welfare of women will only improve if the welfare of the whole society improves, and that is the case with the children and the elderly.

The general opinion is that a woman who holds some public office neglects her family. I was living with my mother-in-law, and she helped us a lot. She welcomed her son (my husband) home after the war; it was in Srbobran where he had come back from the Mauthauzen camp. He hardly survived because they had to work very hard at the camp. They were carrying stone up the hill. The liberation found him at the camp quarry, where he could not stand on his feet any more. A good friend of his brought him out in his arms and raised him up to the roof to see the liberation. That friend was feeding him and healing him and escorted him home to Srbobran. He stayed in poor health after the war and died too early. During the hardest years of the post-war reconstruction time I had no children, so I had more time left for work in the field; I traveled a lot all over Vojvodina. Later, after my children had been born, I would stay at home in the afternoon, especially in the evening, so I could prepare the children for bedtime. I told them stories or read to them, which they liked very much. I don't think that I stayed with my children enough, but when I was with them it was always with a full heart. My relationship with them meant a lot to me and hopefully to them, and later to my grandchildren, also.

When children are small, fathers usually do not spend too much time with them. Later, when they are five or six, they like to take their son's hand and go with them to

see some friends and boast about them. I have several photos of my husband with our son in a boat on the Danube, or while carrying bricks at a building site at Kamenjar. My husband was also successor of a patriarchal family, he liked being free and going with his friends fishing and hunting. He knew I was at home with his mother. He was also a political activist, engaged both at the factory and in social work.

You asked how we were building our relationship as a husband and wife. I do not like talking about that. Generally we lived nicely for a long while, in love and with mutual understanding, as they say. I can't remember other words than this. We hardly noticed how poor we were and how scarcely our home was furnished. As soon as one notices this, love usually ends. Once we moved to Belgrade; this was because my husband was moved from Elektrana electric company in Novi Sad, to Serbian Elektroprivreda. He was respected as an expert; he did a lot for the city, for Vojvodina, even for Serbia. Despite the Elektroprivreda Chief Executive Officer, we did not get a flat in Belgrade, so we came back to Novi Sad. We moved several times, changing flats in Novi Sad; we were never rich, or even wealthy. We always lacked the money for good, healthy food for our five-member or six-member family. My brother Djordje, who also returned from war, and did not find anything back home, except for me, lived with us for a while. After that, some children from my husband's family lived with us. The two of us had good salaries, he as a company general manager, I as an editor in chief; nevertheless, it was not enough for a comfortable life. As a general manager, he was extraordinarily diligent and honest. He never took any bribe or present from colleagues of business partners and I supported him in this, believing in the same thing. At that time villages in Vojvodina were electrified. Electric substations were built, so village representatives would give anything to get electricity before others. They offered him all sorts of things, but he never wanted to receive anything. There were people like him who cherished honesty that yielded during the war, revolution and in their homes. In the post-war period, it was these people who rebuilt the economy from the ashes, from nothing. Some of the managers in companies abandoned that honesty. They might have seen managers in Belgrade who led a completely different life. Their moral principles weakened, and as a consequence fast malformations in the society occurred.

In 1948 both my husband and I knew the conditions in the country very well, in towns as well as in villages, in the industry, culture, etc. Our job took us around the country regularly. We did not just sit in offices. I took part in the implementation of the Agrarian reform, foundation of national boards, as well as social organizations within Vojvodina. When the Inform biro resolution was announced, my husband and I could tell for sure what was false or half true in the accusation of that document. We also knew that the half-truth is often more dangerous than lies. We did not hesitate a second; the accusation was false. We could not know, however, how this conflict between our party and other communist parties from the Eastern countries occurred. We didn't know that back during the war a conflict occurred between the Party Central Committee and Stalin, because he did not want to recognize our liberation war. Neither did he want to help in the beginning. Many things were not published; our Central Commit-

tee did not want to announce the ugly truth about the politics of the Soviet Union as the politics of a large power, stuck to its selfish interest. Our Central Committee hoped reconciliation with Stalin would happen and did not want to disappoint the nation. I entered the Movement while very young, I hardly knew anything about Stalin, and neither did I know much about Tito. I was never interested in a person, but about an idea. What I knew were only the founders of Marxism and the COM intern and Lenin. I heard Tito's name for the first time when I was in prison. It was in 1942, and I heard it from my friends who were arrested after me and who brought in news about the fight of the Yugoslav nations.

Our comrades, who accepted the Resolution were stigmatized, and I felt sorry for them because of that: very sorry... Some of them were friends of mine from the war period, and I had no doubt about their honesty. Some of them were friends of mine, women, whose husbands were arrested and they were left without a job, some of them without a flat, with small children. A severe conflict arose because I helped some of them to buy food for their children and people heard about it, so I was called in to explain. I was determined and, I dare say wise in defending myself, and they did not arrest me. Still, they reprimanded me and probably put me on the black list. I was not fired but it certainly had some effect on my career, maybe on my salary as well. Later on, when my comrades were coming back from Goli Otok, I did not ignore them. Many people were afraid not to become suspicious, because arrests were going on for the next few years. I spoke to them in the street as well as in offices, because they seemed to be so unhappy for being isolated. It was my moral choice. I inherited such an attitude from my father and mother. I was blamed for all sorts of things and I defended myself. I did not keep silent. Today I may say that I defended myself pretty wisely. I did not become affectionate, neither did I cry, neither was I desperate, but gave reasonable explanations why I did this or that. I could do so, because my conscience was clean. From a human point of view, if a mother with a child is hungry I am not interested if she is a German or Serb, or if she agrees or disagrees with Tito. She is hungry. I knew what hunger was like. When you tell this calmly and openly to a man who invited you to an interview at the Regional or City Committee, it is important that he is not able to say that this is not true. Many of those people, who were entitled to lead investigation on people, were convinced that they defended Yugoslavia and they were not bad people. Yugoslavia was in poor condition, not only economically because of the blockade of the Eastern countries, but in a physical sense too. Armies were waiting at the borders. Those who were interrogating me were positive people because they did not insist I be arrested. I may have been lucky. A lot depends on who interrogates you. People are different, aren't they?

It was not common knowledge for a long while that people arrested because of the Infombiro Resolution were brought to Goli Otok. I can't remember for how long... Nobody from my family was arrested so I did not have to search. My whole family perished during the war though. From my closest family I had only my husband, my brother— who was a student— and just one uncle who lived in Stara Moravica. He was greatly

respected in his village because of his expertise. However, those women who joined the Movement influenced by their husbands or boyfriends, and had no knowledge whatsoever, could not have an attitude of their own so were deported to Goli Otok.

During the war, my husband was in a camp because he had joined the Young Communists' Movement in Belgrade. He was among those who committed important sabotages in order to weaken the enemy. A film has been shot about such people, titled 'Otpisani'. In films, understandably, many scenes are unreal but the fact is that there were sabotages and diversions in Belgrade. He was arrested in 1943, tortured severely and sent to work as a forced labourer in Kostolac. After that he was deported to Austria with a big group, to Mauthauzed camp. The inmates worked very hard in a quarry. They had to carry stones uphill, to dig tunnels in the mountains. He hardly survived, as I have already said. After he had recovered, he came to Novi Sad and became general manager of the Electric Plant in Novi Sad. Shortly after arriving in Belgrade, while furnishing our flat, we heard about the Resolution at the radio. Had we stayed in Novi Sad, we would have probably heard about it before it's publishing and prepared for the news. Can you imagine what a shock it was for us? We understood it, didn't we? This was absolutely clear and we both agreed on it. If our Central Committee had ever been right with regard to Tito, this time it certainly was.

It was unjust that the families of those who had been arrested were mistreated though. They should not have treated those arrested the way they did. This issue, along with the compulsory buying up of wheat, was a huge mistake of the regime. Such mistakes it could never overcome if you ask me, I was hoping for a long time that all the mistakes could be overcome. That belief, however, had to vanish. Once you realize that your ideas will not come true, that the society has gone wrong, with no possibility to turn back, a terrible trauma starts followed by disappointment and pain. I could feel physical pain while watching what is going on.

The only thing I gain strength from now are my children and people dear to me. I am not very optimistic, but in the company of the people dear to old friends and myself from the war, I forget about my concerns. You probably know that, here in Novi Sad, we have an association of women, former political prisoners. I have been president for many years, and Seka Vojnovic is secretary. We have been keeping in touch. There are also associations of former political prisoners who were kept in some other prisoners and camps. Our association gathers people from Marianostra prison and some smaller prisons, but there are associations of Csillag prison from Seged, Vac, Dachau, Mauthausen and others. People get older and older. They get ill, die, it is natural isn't it, but painful for us. There are fewer and fewer people in our gatherings and parties.

I visit the Novi Sad Jewish Community club. I meet nice people there, and there are also programs on. Friendships from the war are the strongest, though. The same case is with soldiers, who fought at fronts, went through war horrors together. If I happen to visit a friend of mine who lives in Sombor who I have not seen for years, she will receive me as if we parted just yesterday, as though we conversed yesterday and now we can continue the conversation. Just like sisters, isn't it? It gives you inner warmth,

doesn't it? My books also give me warmth. I have many readers who say that they enjoyed reading my books. I never became famous though. How should I have when the latest book of mine, the one written about Laslo Gal, the poet, had only 400 copies produced? It is said to be a good book. I would like to see the Serb edition published. It is now in the possession of Matica Srpska cultural society.

Before WWII one could feel discrimination against Jews. I have already mentioned this. Immediately before the war there was repressive legislation and anti-Semitism among people also. It could be felt stronger among those people, who were under the influence of the Catholic clergy, something less strong among the reformed Christians and Orthodox. After the war there was no repressive legislation, but certain repulsiveness coming from some families and individuals toward Jews remained. Such incidents cannot be rooted out easily. I have mentioned that I could also feel something related to that. Males simply did not like to see a Jewish woman as their boss. They could not hide that. I could tell other examples as well, but it has no importance now. I paid no attention to that. I believed for quite a while that we would overcome hatred among the nations that every ethnic and national group would reconcile. The perspectives for that existed, as the whole staff of the Yugoslav Communist Party and National Front along with the youth organizations worked hard to achieve it. Nowadays, the slogan celebrating brotherhood and equality has faded away and it is often ridiculed. The slogan itself, just like every other slogan, might be simplified and rudely formulated. What is ridiculous or wrong about the intention of progressive people in this country to come closer to each other and to reconcile nations in dispute, which through the history turned each and every empire against each other, taking advantage of it in their fight for gaining power? On the contrary! The intention is noble indeed, isn't it?

As far as nationalist antagonisms are concerned, the situation was not the same in every settlement of Vojvodina. Especially in those places where occupiers carried out the raid back in 1942, such as was in Čurug, Žabalj, Bečej, and Novi Sad to some extent, the situation was difficult and it was hard indeed to establish peace. Srbobran was also among those places. It is common knowledge that back in 1848 a battle took place at Srbobran, one of the battles Serbs led against the Austro-Hungarian army. Hungarians were living separated from the Serbs in that place. A great deal of effort had to be put in to regain confidence among the nations. We have succeeded quite a lot in this matter, people have calmed down. Had peace prevailed in this country such problems would have disappeared in due course... Whenever I visit Stara Moravica, where I spent so many years with my grandfather, the veterinarian, and meet friends of mine from childhood with whom I had played together in the dust, they tell me sincerely that they cry after Tito's death, when life was good and one could live in dignity. I am talking about Hungarian women who came from families with no possession of land, whose fathers were day wage labourers. After WWII they got some land, or got a job, so they could buy a nicely furnished house and were satisfied with their social position. They had never lived so well. They would tell me, that they could feel safe "In Tito's time".

Let me go back to the issue of anti-Semitism. I knew how deeply rooted it had

been and that it would be hard to overcome. Where anti-Semitism is concerned, I was hoping those incidents were isolated. When people offended me I would pay no attention, as I am already mentioned. I have always declared myself as a Jew and a Yugoslav. In questionnaires and application forms, when it was straight forwardly asked from me, I filled in that I was Jewish. I intentionally did not want to fill in either as a Serb or Hungarian. I had quite an experience in this matter from the war and the post-war period. I did not want anyone to think about me as an intruder in any nation. I wanted to appear clear deep down. To tell the truth, I felt as the citizen of Europe and citizen of the world. Deep down bared culture and tradition of both the Serb and the Hungarian nation, along with the tradition of my Jewish ancestors. Today, they would say I have a triple identity. Apart from that, of course, I am also fond of literature and culture of other nations, especially Russian and French, and some others.

As editor in chief of Cultural and Entertainment programs in Hungarian language at our Radio Station, I did much to select and educate the best possible professionals: journalists, literates, poets, teachers, actors and directors, along with technicians of course, who will make the recordings. The technical staff did not belong to my department, but to the technical department. Hungarian staff occupied not all work places right away because they had to be educated first. At the department of entertainment, for example, worked Braca Ruškuc, an excellent man as well as an excellent humorist. Somewhat later, Đurka Fišer got employed, also an excellent humorist, very well known all over Vojvodina and Serbia. He was a Jew who wrote in Serbian language just as Ruškuc. Their texts had to be translated. Ivan Horovic, a Jew, also worked at the drama group and wrote in Serbian. Something happened at that time that offended me. Someone accused me writing anonymously to the general manager that I was gathering Serbs and Jews. It was absurd, regarding that out of 80 employees, including me, four or five were Serbs and Jews. All the more so, because the "worried man" as well as the general manager knew how hard I was working to establish a Hungarian group of actors along with directors here in Novi Sad, where there had never before been a professional theater, neither an actors' ensemble. I invited university teachers from Novi Sad Hungarian Department as well as from Budapest to work with the actors, radio presenters and journalists in order to improve their technique of speech, pronunciation, and persuade Radio Novi Sad management to be generous in giving money for that purposes. The general manager called me for a tete-a tete conversation to calm me down, maybe wanting to warn me. I was astonished to hear his comment, which was even more offensive. He said: "There are many Jews working at Novi Sad Radio and I get along with them very well". There were few Jews working at Novi Sad Radio Station and why on earth did the general manager get along just with them? As I mentioned before, I wrote a letter to Šoti Pal to the Regional Committee. He was an excellent man and a great internationalist. He set my heart at rest. I don't know what he told my general manager. National and extreme national problems, as we all are aware of, have not been solved as yet. Each new crisis or war situation increases aversion and hatred among nations. I could tell some more examples about such an aversion, but I do not think it is neces-

sary. Šulhof and I worked together, he was an excellent journalist and a versatile man. He wrote articles covering various fields of culture, he also wrote theatre criticism, not just about ballet. I employed him as a music advisor, because he had an extraordinary knowledge in music. He learned to play the piano, his mother was a piano teacher and before WWII he worked for some Hungarian newspapers in Vojvodina. He was a journalist with a big routine and held lectures for journalists on journalism and language at the Radio. Everybody called him uncle Šulhof. Even though I was his superior as editor in chief, this was never felt between us. He behaved as a father, as a teacher and as an older friend. He helped me a lot with his critical suggestions while I was writing my first novel 'As soon as Sour Cherries Start Blossoming'. The book might have never published if he had not helped me.

I had not been on high-ranking Party functions, neither on positions with the national leadership, so I had no power over people (and material assets). Party institutions were reserved toward people not coming from the armed fights led by Yugoslav nations, but coming from European prisons and camps. They suspected that they might have had connections with foreign, secret spy organizations. The Dachau Process in Ljubljana is well known. Such processes did not occur here, but there was suspicion though. We, who came back from prisons and camps, had to write our biographies two or three times, again and again, with the explanation that the previous one had been lost. They wanted probably to catch us in lie. At the very beginning, when I returned in Yugoslavia, I could not become Regional Committee member of the Vojvodina Communist Party, even though some people knew me from before the war and were glad to see me in the beginning. I was appointed to work with the Agitprop within the Committee. I had no hard feelings about that as I remember. I accepted that as something normal. Later, I was Local Committee member in Novi Sad, leader of Agitprop. At higher forums in Belgrade they blamed our secretary and the whole committee for something, so every one of us were replaced. I had no Party function whatsoever in Belgrade, where we moved with my husband. I was not tempted to abandon my ethic and moral principles. Even some small offenses (maybe big ones) strengthened me in my belief that I should stick to my original principles and avoid power, and people in power. I have been working in culture my entire life, even after my retirement. Hopefully, I have achieved a lot in general development. It is difficult to mention everything I worked on. My memories were published, for example, about the years spent at Novi Sad Radio in the edition "Memoirs", on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Radio Station. Before that, in the book about JRT (Yugoslav Radio and Television), I wrote a section on RNS history. However, nothing has been written about how hard and efficiently I worked as board member of various cultural institutions in Vojvodina and I feel sorry about that.

I have mentioned that I did not take any part in high forums so I was not involved when the so-called liberals held positions, when they were criticised and fired from their high rank positions. I was as interested as anyone who wanted the best for his country would be. It was hard to witness how people I respected and who did much for

the development of this country were replaced, neglected or degraded. Among them also was the then secretary of Central Committee in Serbia, whom I thought to be one of the smartest people in this country, who saved us from civil war or at least from major incidents by his moderate, clever approach when misunderstandings occurred with Croatia, with Savka Dapčević. I will mention just some people from Vojvodina who were very close to me and who had great contribution in the development of Vojvodina: Đurica Jojkić, Šoti Pal, Geza Tikvicki. When they were accused of being liberals. I did not want to turn back on them and continued to be kind, even kept being in their company to ease the isolation they found themselves in, to make them feel that they were not alone. It was noticed by some people in the region, probably my name came onto a black list, but this had no consequences on my work with the Radio Station. I was not called to account. After many years, as an old man, Geza Tikvicki wrote his memoirs about the war and fight in Vojvodina. He asked me to give a talk about his book at the Novi Sad Socialist Revolution Museum. In that book, Geza changed some of his earlier, rather sharp and strict opinion about peasants and fighters coming from the working class in Bačka. Čeda Popov, the historian also gave a speech. Geza Tikvicki was happy and apparently touched by our talks. It was a nice evening indeed.

I spent a good deal of my working life at the Radio Station, which is where I retired. I think that every manager (there were many, because the shameful system was in power) felt happy when I left, because I was fighting on the board meetings and staff meetings for program development; both the general program and the artistic one, but especially those related to education and culture. I was fighting for our share in the budget, for appropriate premises, for equipment, for a share in the program, for wages and remunerations, for new studios, good quality recordings, etc. Many difficult problems occurred in the course of the years. Political forums always supported the leadership in developing informative programs while other segments such as cultural, artistic, literary, entertainment, drama, children's programs and education programs, everything I was responsible for, they regarded as a second rate task, an inevitable evil. Therefore, one had to fight for the quality and development of those programs. A radio station is a very complex corporation. Technical equipment should be in function; musical program should be run as to develop the musical culture in the whole region. Departments operate in five languages and informative, cultural and artistic programs are also run. The best thing is when everything functions parallel, equally, with no campaign work. Due to financial restrictions, our staff meetings always lasted very long and were tedious. Overall, we were getting along well though. Open conflicts occurred rarely.

Some time after my retirement, due to radical changes in politics in the last fifteen years, many things have changed in the politics of the Radio Station. Entertainment, cultural programs and those related to education, for which I fought so hard over the years along with excellent associates, have been reduced. The theatre company, created with such an effort over the years, has been discarded, many public programs have been taken off from the stage at Studio M as well as all over Vojvodina; the music department also shrank, and the whole program has become poorer. I can't tell how long it

will take to recover or even develop further. I remember Anton Eberst's words; he was former editor in chief at Music Department of the Radio Station, with whom I worked together successfully. Once, when the management wanted to dismiss an orchestra due to a "hungry year", he said: "It is so easy to dismiss an orchestra, but ten or even more years are needed to create one!"

Now I can say it was so easy to dismiss the RNS theatre company, together with the directors. We were creating it for ten, twenty or even more years. Here is another example: It was easy to stop publishing the Bulletin with radio programs in education, which helped teachers in Vojvodina to apply our programs at school. It was easy to save money on that important publication but it was difficult to create and edit it so to be useful. I feel hard when I visit the Radio Station, because people complain in every department on the current situation.

When one is young and strong one can do everything. I wonder whether successfully, though. I never had enough time for writing. Nevertheless, something forced me to write. No matter if I wrote for the Radio or my books, I was always writing at night when the house was quiet, when everybody went to bed. The bedroom was not heated, so I sat up in my bed, covered myself, put a big drawing board in front of me and wrote by hand. I had a typing machine at the Radio Station, after I bought one, even two machines, as I was writing both in the Serb and Hungarian languages. In bed you just can't type, can you. So, I always wrote the first concept by hand. That was how I was writing in prison, with a pencil, lectures and leaflets that were distributed in cells. I was writing on WC paper, in capital letters so that everybody could read. I always write by hand first even today, after that I type.

How did I raise my children? I had them educated. They had a good basic education from their early childhood. I was reading and talking to them often. They liked it very much. We had a pretty rich library at home. Children from the neighborhood were coming to play with them, but they were also taking books to read. Other mothers asked me how I achieved that my children liked folk tales, folk poems and reading in general. Very simply, I replied. I told stories to them and read. They also began reading to their children in the evening. When children still do not know how to read, parents should read to them in order to have fun. In our home, it was a lot of fun. Others also spent a lot of time with my children, especially my only uncle, who was living in Stara Moravica with his wife. They spent many summers there. They also stayed quite a while in Srbobran, with my husband's relatives. They also liked them very much and devoted to them a lot of time. It means a lot, doesn't it?

I never thought I was doing well if I lived alone. I don't like being alone. I did not have any other choice but to divorce him though. It was how I thought then. I do not like talking about this. It comes down to the same marriage problem every time. He was having an affair and I could not take it. The children were fifteen and sixteen at that time. I recall that my son Nebojša was attending the second grade at high school, Nevena the first. It was hard for them to accept our divorce. He left, leaving his mother, my mother-in-law to live with us. He came after some time and took her in an elderly

home, where she died soon after, as if she died from sorrow. He also died five years after our divorce. From cancer... He returned from the war very weak and had poor health ever since, although it was not so visible. Of course, his second wife did not know how to take care of him properly. He had become ill; he was only fifty-three when he died.

In the beginning I was not thinking about getting married or any relationship, not to speak that my children were not ready to understand. Later, I tried, but failed... At my age, I couldn't start life again from the beginning. One is burdened with the past, with everything one has gone through. Up until the time I retired, I managed to work with enthusiasm and to get along with problems both at home and elsewhere. I felt worse after retirement. I have said that I could not bear loneliness easily. I have my children and their families. They have a world of their own, while I have mine. Those two worlds are simply not identical.

As I am recalling the past now, I remember that I did not want to write. I was forced to, though. Back in the fifties, the Marxist center called up many intellectuals and former fighters from Novi Sad with the aim to engage them on collecting written trails about the war and revolution in village, city and brigade chronicles. The Vojvodina Fighters Association set up a department called 'Vojvodina in wartimes'. Since I had been in prisons and camps, I agreed to write a document on those places I had been kept along with about 400 women, who had also been with me. Others also wrote this and that. I was the first one to hand in recollections about women in prisons or camps during WWII. Zemba, manager of the Centre read what I had written and called me up to say: "Magda, it is interesting indeed, why wouldn't you write a book to be published?" Meaning, a literary piece of work should be created from a document. – "How should I do that, Zemba? I have never written such a thing before", said I. "I have written only articles as a journalist!" – "Yes, you can do it" – answered he shortly. – "Take the text with you and just do it!"

I did put a lot of work into this. I gathered my lady friends from Novi Sad whom I could find, along with those in Subotica. I asked them how they felt about this and that; just the same way as when we discussed the first documentary. The biggest challenge for me was how I should begin writing and in what tone I shall write the book. I decided to write in the first person. I thought that way it would be the most faithful and the most truthful, with the least of pathos, because I would not praise myself for sure... That was how my first book 'As soon as Sour Cherries Start Blossoming' came about. During the writing, my faithful critic was Sulhóf József, the literate, about whom you have already asked me. I gave him the first fifty pages and he told me what he liked and what he disliked about it. His basic remark was that I had mentioned too many persons, that I should choose just few and follow up their destiny throughout the whole novel and let the readers get attached to them emotionally. I am very grateful for that advice. I may say now that my book has become popular throughout Vojvodina, many people told me that they were impressed by it. They invited me to participate in literary programs in schools, cultural centers... When the 'Vojvodina in the war' department, where I was also a member (the only woman) intended to publish my book, it was given

to Živan Milisavac as a reviewer. It is usual practice to give a book to a reviewer before it gets published. Everybody was surprised, and I was the most surprised, by the positive criticism and outstanding valuation of my book. This was an enhancement for me and I could not resist writing any more. My book 'As soon as Sour Cherries Start Blossoming' was printed back in 1958. As soon as the next year, in 1959, 'Forum' publishing house published that book in Hungarian, translated by Pál Schaffer, a journalist and literate with whom I spent a lot of time at radio Station, just like with József Sulhóf. The three of us were a team, discussing programs, finding weaknesses here and there and suggesting how to improve things. Many thought that Schaffer's translation was not the best one; nevertheless, that book reached each and every school. That is how I became invited to Hungarian schools, to cultural centers. Later on, I wrote in Hungarian, being it my mother tongue. I translated my text originally written in Serbian language. I thought it would be the best and most correct thing to do. In the beginning, though, I did not dare write in Hungarian, because I attended my school in Serbian. Now I write in both languages. Whether equally good or equally bad, I do not know. I am sure that writers, who write just in one language, and that is their mother tongue, write better. I recall Veljko Petrović spoke about this issue after the war, talking to friends. He himself wrote in Hungarian in the beginning, during the Austro-Hungarian regime. Later on, however, he chose to write in his first language: Serbian. Somewhat later, when other literates started visiting our Radio Station, emigrants from Europe and the USA, they also spoke about the same problem. Story telling writers, as it seemed necessary as emigrants, started writing in English, French or other languages, while poets wrote in their mother tongue while writing and living abroad.

After she had read my book 'As soon as Sour Cherries Start Blossoming', my war friend Milica Marković visited me. She was our wartime Party secretary, Svetozar Marković's widow. She told me: "I am taking you with me to Zrenjanin (she lived there with her children) to the Center, where orphans of the partisans who were killed in action live. I will introduce you to the manager, Gina Kojić, an extraordinary woman... You are supposed to write a book on her and the Center". I stayed speechless... That's how my second book 'Sprouts in the Wind' came about. Critics say this second book is weaker than the first one, that it is like an adolescent novel. I agree. That is, however, how I entered the routine of writing and I just could not stop doing it anymore.

My poor husband was coming home rather late and besides, he had to travel a lot due to his work. So, I was left plenty of time for writing. I could put on and off the light whenever I wanted to. He had no objection whatsoever against my writing; he would be often listening to the radio or reading. He was a good sleeper and he could sleep if he wanted to. I enjoyed his support as long as everything was OK between us. Something else caused the problem between us. I would rather not speak about my mother-in-law's behavior toward me; it would be too banal. Our relationship was the typical one between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. It happened, however, that some people at his workplace also turned against me. They knew I was editor in chief at Novi Sad Radio Station and had an enormous salary, even compared with him as

a general manager. So, they started supporting his ego as a male and patriarch of the family. I have already spoken about the remains of patriarchal upbringing here. Our relation was good for years. He worked a lot and successfully as general manager of electricity-company 'Elektrovojvodina', later as general manager at 'Petar Drapšin'. During his term, a new wing of the plant was built. New machines were imported and the production rate rose significantly. As general manager at 'Elektrovojvodina', he changed the plants, provided electricity throughout Vojvodina, planted transformers, long-distance cables; he was the person who chose and bought the material in Italy. The city and regional government trusted him. He got enough resources to achieve this and develop our Vojvodina region. He carried out his tasks very successfully. He paid little attention to his friends' and associates' malicious remarks.

I invested in our relationship and supported my husband. Whether enough, though, I do not know. We discussed problems at home and I was going to his company at special occasions, such as celebrations and parties. As I have already mentioned, he was an absolutely honest man and I supported him to resist temptations as not receive any bribe for this or that. I showed respect in front of his friends as well. I did not demand strictly how much money he was supposed to give for the household; I may have been too generous. I took care of him when he was ill... But, women were very fond of him as a handsome and successful man. In the beginning, he would talk to me about this laughing... I would rather not speak about this anymore.

I wrote 'Stories from Israel' listening to an inner voice. Books are generally written according to an inner voice. My books were well received in Vojvodina and well known critics wrote sometimes very good and sometimes somewhat less good reviews. The readers liked it and over the years, I was invited to schools and Cultural Centers to present my books.

My third book, called 'The Darkening', describes the situation in our society during the harshest campaign of Infombiro against our country. I am not describing Goli Otok in this book, because I have not been there. That was the first book written on those times in our country. Critics kept silent in the beginning. Only later did some of them dare write about it more and less cautiously, but wisely. It later came to my attention that a writer from Slovenia had published a novel on those events before me. I should say that Aleksandar Tišma encouraged me to publish that manuscript. He published it as editor of the publishing house within Matica Srpska. My friends, however, were against publishing 'The Darkening'; they were afraid I would be arrested or suffer bad consequences. I was not arrested, but the book was never translated.

'Dreams from Youth' is my fourth book, it is about my childhood up until the war, and written in the first person. It was written in a lyric tone and was translated into Hungarian, just as the previous one 'Sprouts in the Wind'.

My next novel is 'A Stone on the Shoulder', inspired by some motives from my husband's life when he was serving his forced labor term at Mauthausen camp. That novel was not translated either. I rarely presented this book publicly. I avoided reading up some very hard and tragic events describing carrying stones from the Mauthausen

quarry on the Danube. I did not want to shock people, especially children. It is one thing when you read such a book at home, in your quiet room, having enough time to think it over. It sounds different when you read it publicly.

It was back in 1990 when my book you have asked about 'Notes from Israel' was published. It is an itinerary about Israel and my relatives living in Israel. That is the book I got the best reviews for in my whole literary career. The abridged edition of that book, under a new title (it was the sponsor's idea, not mine) was published in 1998; 'Stories from Israel'. I translated it into Hungarian and published under the title 'Izraeli csládfa' in 1999. Meanwhile, I published the poet László Gál's biography in the form of a novel. It was written in Hungarian and the Serb edition is under way.

I wrote some ten radio-dramas for adults and children, some of them were broadcast also on the Kossuth Radio from Budapest. I would not like to talk about them now. I would just like to say that I wrote and produced two documentaries on the radio and two on TV. According to the general feedback, they were interesting, but I never spoke about them. In the first drama documentary, an elderly peasant woman from Stara Moravica talks about her most interesting life during WWI and WWII as well as in between those wars. The questions were put in such a way that they could have been left out, leaving the woman speak in a long, interesting soliloquy. It could have been presented in the theater, but I have never come down to undertake it. The other drama documentary in three parts is a monologue as well, narrated by an elderly, most interesting man, born near Budapest. He was a prisoner of war when he participated in the organization of the Hungarian Soviet Republic of Béla Kún. After the fall of the Hungarian Commune he immigrated to Vienna, where he tried to organize the Hungarian emigrants who could not get on very well. After that he goes to Yugoslavia helps the National Liberation Movement in WWII and he meets Moša Pijade. After the liberation, he goes to South Hungary, somewhere near Pécs to help develop the long sought for new Hungary. In 1948, after the Inform biro Resolution had been declared, he did not want to take part against Tito, so he had to flee back to Yugoslavia, where he eventually died. His family in Hungary was persecuted and almost extinguished. One of the many, tragic stories of revolutionary emigrants in the twentieth century... I was recording this program very carefully and slowly. Eventually, the general manager of Novi Sad Radio forbids broadcasting it, with no explanation whatsoever. Someone warned him that I was making a program about a suspicious person. He was afraid for his position, but was reluctant to investigate if it was correct to broadcast such a good positive story about a Hungarian emigrant. The program was broadcast as recently as last year; luckily, it had not been erased.

I also wrote a synopsis for two TV documentaries. One of them is about Klára Fejős, the other one about Sonja Marinković, both very well known and tragic fated female persons of Vojvodina. We were shooting in Novi Sad, in Kikinda and Zrenjanin.

We were not talking much about the present. My sight has deteriorated, I read less than before. I spend my time doing housework, visiting literary evenings and lectures...

I did not mention many important events in my life. I did not talk about, or just mentioned, people who were very important for me and whom I loved. One of them is Đorđe Bošan, my brother and a physicist, who is now living in Niš. Another Đorđe Bošan my late nephew, a painter and docent at the Academy of Arts in Belgrade. Mirko Schreyer, my only uncle who remained alive and who lived in Stara Moravica and my dear friends. Zaga Krdžalić, a teacher and partisan fighter, who was head of Education Institute in Vojvodina, a successful organizer of a new school network in the region. Raša Radujkov, a former prisoner of war; somewhat later he was initiator of many cultural events in Vojvodina as general manager of 'Dnevnik' publishing house, patron of the Serb National Theater, founder of Sterijino pozorje theatre festival. I could mention many people dear to me, with whom I was working with for many years, but it would take too long time, wouldn't it. Maybe another time...

Magda died in 2005. in Novi Sad.

Recorded, transcribed, edited by Svenka Savić, 1999, translated by Edita Jankov.

Pavica (1923), Perlez/Novi Sad



Erzähl mir von deiner Kindheit.

– Meine Kindheit war einmalig schön.

Geboren bin ich in Perlez, im Banat, wo mein Vater Lehrer und Schulleiter war. Ich habe noch einen jüngeren Bruder, Prof. Dr. Bogomil Karlavaris, Maler und Kunstpädagogen, der unlängst 50 Jahre seiner pädagogischen und künstlerischen Laufbahn sowohl in Rijeka als auch hier, in Novi Sad feierte. Ich hatte auch eine Schwester Maria, die leider vor 20 Jahren gestorben ist. Der Vater Ivan (Nino) Karlavaris ist in Kastav, in Istrien geboren. Unser Familiennname ist wohl griechischer Herkunft, obwohl die zahlreiche Familie Karlavaris Anfang des 18. Jahrhunderts aus Italien nach Istrien gekommen ist. Im 17. Jahrhundert lebte in Venedig ein Maler Luka Carlevaris, dessen Graphiken und Bilder wir besitzen. Die meisten

aus der Familie Karlavaris waren Kaufleute oder stellten verschiedene Gegenstände aus Kupfer her.

Als Kinder verbrachten wir den Sommer oft im Haus unseres Vaters, in Kastav, so kann ich mich noch gut an meine Nona (Oma), Maria Batschitsch, erinnern, an "die arme Schönheit aus Slowenien", wie sie die wohlhabende Familie Karlavaris nannte. Unser Nono (Opa) war schon gestorben, so trug sie (der damaligen Sitte gemäß) ihr Leben lang Trauerkleider. Ich sehe sie noch heute vor mir, wie sie mit einem schönen Spitzenschleier auf ihrem gepflegten grauen Haaren in ihrem Lehnstuhl sitzt und durchs Fenster die Kwarner Bucht betrachtet. Sie soll auch einen schönen Tod gehabt haben. Sie frühstückte ihr übliches Milchbrot mit Rosinen und trank dazu ihre Bewanda (mit Wasser verdünnten dalmatinischen Wein) und schlief ein. – Auch ich wollte meine alten Tage dort verbringen, aber seit 1989 war ich nicht mehr in Kastav. Weiß Gott, ob überhaupt noch ...

Bevor mein Vater in die Woiwodina kam, war er Lehrer im Dorf Vranje auf dem Berg Utschka in Istrien. Noch heute bewahren wir eine Ansichtskarte "Schule in Vranje" – und unser Vater als junger Lehrer davor.

Als dann nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg Istrien an Italien angeschlossen wurde, kehrte er nach Kastav zurück (das blieb in dem damaligen Jugoslawien), bewarb sich um eine Lehrerstelle und bekam sie in Perlez. Da lernte er unsere Mutter kennen, die viel jünger als er war. Sie hieß Eva Fischer, ihr Vater Johann und die Mutter Magdalena Schampier (das wohl französische "r" sprachen die Deutschen aber aus, und das "ie" wurde deutsch als "i" gelesen). Es ist aber mit Sicherheit anzunehmen, dass diese Oma französischer Herkunft war, denn unter den Donauschwaben gab es auch Einwanderer aus Elsass – Lothringen.

So fließt in unseren Adern Blut verschiedener Nationen und ich war immer stolz darauf. Als ich im Jahre 1962 das erste Mal in Hamburg ein Seminar besuchte, forderte uns in der ersten Stunde Prof. Martens auf (ein bekannter Phonetiker, der mir sehr gut in Erinnerung blieb!), uns vorzustellen und etwas über uns zu sagen. Als ich wohl mit etwas übertriebenem Stolz über meine Herkunft erzählte und sagte, dass ich mich als Europäerin fühle (damals gab es noch keine Europäische Union!), waren alle im Saal erstaunt, aber der Professor sagte ganz nüchtern: "Dieses Wienerische werden sie hier so schnell wie möglich ablegen müssen!"

Unser Vater fühlte sich als Jugoslawe, so auch wir, seine Kinder. Im Haus wurde sonst nie über Nationalitäten gesprochen. Der Vater lehrte uns, dass es nur gute und weniger gute Menschen gibt. Er selbst strahlte Güte und Ruhe aus und die Mutter war die Heiterkeit und Lebendigkeit in Person. Der Vater spielte wunderschön Klavier und in der Kirche die Orgel, er leitete auch den Kirchenchor (da hat er unsere Mutter auch kennen gelernt, die eine herrliche Stimme hatte und den ganzen Tag etwas sang). Wenn sie zu Hause eine neue Arie einübten, versammelten wir, Kinder uns ums Klavier und hörten andächtig zu. Ich hatte später nie im Leben so schöne Stunden erlebt!

Aber mit zehn Jahren gingen wir alle, der Reihe nach, von zu Hause weg. Die Trennung von den Eltern und Geschwistern fiel mir nicht schwer. Es war ja beschlossen, dass wir aufs Gymnasium sollten und da ich gerne lernte, war es ganz selbstverständlich, dass ich von zu Hause weg musste. In den Ferien, zu Weihnachten und zu Ostern waren wir wieder alle zusammen und ließen uns von den Eltern liebevoll verwöhnen.

In Novi Sad, im Konvikt, wo mich die Eltern untergebracht hatten, war alles in bester Ordnung. Der Leiter des Konvikts war ein guter Mensch, die Erzieherin etwas streng, aber im Grunde auch gut. Ihre alte Mutter mochte mich besonders gern und lehrte mich mit viel Geduld mit fünf Stricknadeln Strümpfe zu stricken. Ich weiß nicht warum, aber alte Leute hatten immer viel übrig für mich – vielleicht weil ich so zierlich klein war (beim Turnunterricht immer die letzte in der Reihe) – aber ich war auch sonst ein folgsames Kind.

In diesem Konvikt wurde auch viel gesungen und sogar Ballett gelernt und getanzt. Es wurden auch öffentliche Vorstellungen auf der großen Bühne des "Soko" Vereins gegeben. So träumte ich, eines Tages eine große Ballerina zu werden. Der Vater sagte aber, altmodisch wie er war: "Du wirst Lehrerin und dein Brot in Ehren verdienen!" – Und so wurde es auch.

Und wie unglücklich ich war, als sich nach der abgelegten Aufnahmeprüfung in der Lehrerbildungsanstalt die große schwere Eingangstür hinter mir mit einem lauten Schlag schloss! Aber ich bin von Natur aus ein anpassungsfähiges Wesen, so gewöhnte ich mich ziemlich schnell an das Leben im Internat. Die Disziplin war hier viel, viel strenger (ältere Schülerinnen nannten zum Beispiel eine der Erzieherinnen "Kidza" – Schlange), trotzdem kann ich mich an nichts Böses erinnern, das mir meine Jugendzeit trüben könnte.

Was hast du nach dieser Zeit gemacht?

– Es kam der Krieg! Am 6. April 1941 Bombenangriffe an Belgrad. Der Unterricht wurde unterbrochen und wir fuhren alle nach Hause. Im Mai versammelten wir uns wieder in Novi Sad, lernten etwas Ungarisch (die Ungarn haben die Batschka besetzt) und Ende Juni bekamen wir unsere Zeugnisse. Die fünfte Klasse der Lehrerbildungsanstalt beendete ich in Werschetz und arbeitete danach zwei Jahre als Lehrerin in Knićanin (Rudolfsgnad, vier Kilometer entfernt von Perlez). Im Oktober 1944 kam dann die Befreiung, im November heiratete ich Milan Mrazović und kam mit ihm und seiner Mutter nach Novi Sad zurück.

Wo hast du deinen Mann kennengelernt?

– Er war in Perlez Flüchtling aus der Batschka. Damals verordneten die Ungarn, dass alle, die nach dem Jahr 1918 in die Batschka einwanderten, auswandern mussten. Die Familie meines Mannes kam 1920 aus Irig (Syrmien) nach Novi Sad. So lebte er als Gerichtsangestellter mit seiner Mutter während des Krieges in Perlez. Und wie ich schon sagte, kehrten wir nach dem Krieg wieder nach Novi Sad zurück.

Im Jahre 1946 kam meine älteste Tochter, Milana, zur Welt, dann 1947 Ivana und 1951 Milosch.

Seit der Befreiung lebt ihr ständig in Novi Sad?

– Nein. Im Jahre 1948 gingen wir nach Jagodina (Svetozarevo), wo mein Mann eine Direktorstelle in der Kabelfabrik erhielt, die damals gebaut wurde. Dort verbrachten wir fast drei Jahre und dort wurde auch unser Sohn geboren. Aber meinem Mann gefiel das Leben dort nicht. Er vermisste die Donau und sein Angeln, und ich meinen Beruf – dort war ich in der Administration tätig.

Nach unserer Rückkehr nach Novi Sad bekam ich eine Lehrerstelle in einer Grundschule, die gleichzeitig als Übungsschule für die Studenten der Höheren Pädagogischen Schule diente. Der Direktor wusste, dass ich Deutsch kann, so sollte ich in den höheren Klassen (das neu eingeführte) Deutsch unterrichten.

Es war mir unangenehm, dass Studenten als Hospitanten zu meinen Stunden kamen, Ratschläge von mir erwarteten, und ich, trotz guter didaktischer Kenntnisse aus der Lehrerbildungsanstalt, formal dazu doch nicht qualifiziert war. So beschloss ich, im Fernstudium die nötigen Qualifikationen zu bekommen, wobei mir der einsichtsvolle Direktor viel geholfen hat. In zwei Jahren (1952-54) beschloss ich dieses Studium. Fächer wie Pädagogik, Psychologie und Didaktik waren mir vertraut, gelesen habe ich auch früher sehr viel, so war auch die deutsche Literatur kein Problem, aber um so mehr die Linguistik! – Ich las und las verschiedene Bücher, Skripten und dachte: – das

schaffst du nie! – Aber der Stoff packte mich so sehr, dass ich später mit viel Begeisterung meine ganze Tätigkeit, mein ganzes Leben der Sprachwissenschaft widmete.

Zur Diplomprüfung im Juni erschienen nur zwei Fernstudentinnen, eine aus Belgrad und ich und wir bekamen die besten Noten, jede eine Zehn. Darum sagte meine Kollegin zu mir: "Komm, wir wollen dies feiern! – Gehen wir in eine Konditorei!" – "Nein, liebe Gordana, ich kann nicht. Meine Wäsche liegt eingeweicht, ich muss waschen ..." Und zu Hause wusste niemand, dass ich mein Diplom gemacht habe, dass ... Eine Waschmaschine hatte ich damals noch keine.

Später habe ich eine Zeitlang gleichzeitig an vier Schulen unterrichtet (es gab zu wenig Deutschlehrer). Täglich bis zu zwölf Stunden! (Alles ohne Honorar! – Es war Pflicht und Ehrensache dort zu helfen, wo es Not tat.) Jetzt fällt mir das Abendgymnasium ein, wo ich von 20 – 22 Uhr meine Stunden hatte. Da lief ich wie eine Löwin im Käfig durch die Klasse und dachte mir: Nur nicht einschlafen! Hätte ich mich hingestellt, wäre ich im Nu eingeschlafen.

Wie bist du mit so vielen Stunden und deinen Kindern zurechtgekommen?

– Meine Schwiegermutter lebte mit uns. Sie war zwar an keine Hausarbeit gewohnt (ich ja auch nicht!), aber gekocht hat sie. Das war eine große Hilfe. Meine Eltern, die inzwischen nach Novi Sad zogen, wohnten in der Nähe und konnten und wollten helfen. Trotzdem war die größte Arbeit mir überlassen. Während meiner Fernstudien habe ich ganz wenig geschlafen, aber ich war daran längst gewöhnt. Alle meine Kinder sind zu früh geboren, mit sieben Monaten, weil ich die Blutgruppe RH negativ habe – das wusste man aber damals nicht und es gab auch keine Inkubatoren. So folgte ich dem Rat der Hebamme, hielt die Kinder warm und stillte sie alle zwei Stunden, Tag und Nacht. Das waren die schwersten, aber auch die schönsten Jahre meines Lebens, denn mit sechs Monaten wog jedes der Kinder volle sechs Kilo. So lernte ich mit wenig Schlaf auszukommen. Mir fiel das trotzdem nicht schwer, wie auch später das nächtliche Lernen. Da konnte ich in Ruhe, von niemandem gestört arbeiten.

Deine Generation ist wohl im Jahre 1953 an die Fakultät gekommen?

– Nein. Erstens gehöre ich ja zu keiner Generation. Ich kannte ja weder an der Höheren Pädagogischen Schule noch später an der Philosophischen Fakultät niemanden, keine Professoren, keine Studenten. Zweitens diplomierte ich an der Pädagogischen Schule im Jahre 1954. Danach wollte ich gleich mein Fernstudium fortsetzen, in der Hoffnung, dass man mir einige an der Pädagogischen Schule schon abgelegten Fächer an der Philosophischen Fakultät anerkennen wird. Da dies aber nicht geschah und da zur selben Zeit mein Sohn, der spät zu sprechen begann, plötzlich viel zu viel in vollen Sätzen sprach, wobei es mir vorkam, dass er zu viel phantasiert, dachte ich: Nein, du wirst nicht studieren und dein Sohn zu lügen beginnen! – Aber dann begann ich im Jahre 1956 mein Studium an der Fakultät und diplomierte 1960.

Zu dieser Zeit war ich als Deutschlehrerin an der neu gegründeten Experimentalsschule angestellt, in der die Anwendung von neuen Unterrichtsmethoden in verschiedenen Fächern erprobt werden sollten. Ich sollte mit anderen Fremdsprachenlehrern erproben, ob der etwas frühere Beginn des Fremdsprachenunterrichtes mit

Hilfe von damals modernen audio-visuellen Mitteln und dem täglichen Gebrauch der Fremdsprache im oralen Verfahren bessere Resultate ermöglicht, damit sie anschließend in allen anderen Schulen angewendet werden könnten. Eine schöne, aber auch zeitraubende Tätigkeit, denn außer einigen Anweisungen gab es bei uns damals kein passendes Material dazu. (Was mein Bruder damals für mich an Wandbildern und Applikationen gemalt hat!!) Für jede Stunde (fünfmal die Woche) musste ich vieles zusammensuchen und gründlich durchdenken, wobei ich in Voraus wusste, dass die meisten Anweisungen völlig falsch waren: keine Muttersprache, kein Übersetzen, keine Erklärungen, kein Schreiben, kein Lesen, nur das bloße Nachplappern, wie Papageie! Das konnte ich weder mir noch den Kindern im Alter von zehn Jahren zumuten.

Solche Verfahren haben Erfolg bei kleinen Kindern in "Gouvernantenverhältnissen", aber nicht bei Kindern, die schon lesen und schreiben konnten und vor allem zu denken gelernt haben. Mich zum Affen zu machen und die Kinder zu Papageien, das wollte ich nicht, sollte es aber tun. – Wie groß damals der Respekt vor technischen Geräten war, vor allem vor dem Tonbandgerät (man behauptete sogar, dass man auch im Schlaf lernen kann, man braucht bloß das Gerät laufen lassen!) zeugen viele Fragen und Ängste der Lehrer bei verschiedenen Seminaren, weil sie sich um ihre Existenz Sorgen machten. Und wie oft musste ich wiederholen, dass keine, überhaupt keine einzige Maschine den Menschen ersetzen kann, vor allem nicht den Lehrer, der so vieles kann, was eine Maschine nie können wird: lachen, sich über gute Erfolge freuen, unterstützen, lieben auch tadeln usw., usw. Alles in allem ich habe dieses Experiment nach meiner Art durchgeführt, wir haben viel gespielt: im Schulhof, in der Schulküche "gekocht", im Speisesaal bedient, Tische gedeckt, und auch viel gesungen, so dass einmal der Schulleiter gefragt hat: "Was unterrichtest du denn. Deutsch oder Musik?"

Nach drei Jahren dieses "Experimentierens" gab ich ein Lehrerhandbuch mit Inhalten und Anleitungen zur Arbeit heraus. Aber wer liest das schon! Noch heute beharrt man darauf, dass im Anfangsunterricht nur gehört und gesprochen werden soll und Schüler schreiben deswegen brav unter der Bank deutsche Wörter in kyrillischer Schrift auf, weil sie ganz normal Angst haben, diese zu vergessen.

In dieser Schule wurde auch viel Wert darauf gelegt, die Schüler auch außerhalb des Unterrichtes zu betätigen, so sollte ein jeder Lehrer irgendeine Sektion – nach Wunsch der Schüler – leiten. Ich wählte die "Filmsektion". Wir sprachen über die damals laufenden Filme, wählten solche, die dann anderen Schülern im Filmsaal gezeigt und vorher besprochen wurden. Auch einen Film haben wir mit Hilfe der technischen Sektion gedreht, mit dem wir dann bei einem Schülerfestival in Zagreb auftraten.

All diese Erinnerungen an die längst vergangenen voll ausgenutzten Jahre meiner Tätigkeiten in der Schule scheinen gar keine richtige Antwort auf deine Frage zu sein, denn du fragtest mich nach meiner Generation beim Studieren. Diese gab es wohl, sie ging zu Vorlesungen, die Studenten kannten ihre Professoren (die meisten kamen damals aus Belgrad), ihre Wünsche und Besonderheiten, sie studierten also im wahren Sinne des Wortes, ich aber nicht. – Ich hatte aber Glück, dass ich nicht einmal wegen der nötigen Bücher zur Fakultätsbibliothek musste. – Die Mutter eines Schülers

von mir war Bibliothekarin im deutschen Seminar und sie besorgte mir alles, was ich brauchte.

Und im Sommer, wenn alle Lehrer ihre verdiente Ruhe genießen, fuhr ich jedes Jahr mit meinen eigenen drei und 30 anderen Kindern ins Erholungsheim der Schule ans Meer, danach mit den Meinigen meist noch nach Kastav, um den ganzen Tag mit ihnen sein zu können, das Versäumte nachzuholen. Mein Mann war oft dagegen, er behauptete, dass unsere Donau das Meer bestimmt ersetzen könnte. Ich war anderer Meinung, wie oft. – Bei diesen damals sehr umständlichen Fahrten mit relativ kleinen Kindern und anschließend im Erholungsheim hatte ich nie Probleme, wie später auch bei den Exkursionen mit den Studenten. Schwer war es aber oft mit den jeweiligen Heimleitern auszukommen. Alles beruhte auf Befehlen oder Verboten! – Beim schril- len Pfeifenton ins Wasser, und genauso raus! Wie bequem für die Erzieher! – Meine durften ins Wasser, wenn es ihnen Spaß machte, wenn sie mit ihrer Sandburg zu Ende waren, und ebenso raus. Die Kinder machten ja Urlaub und ich war ja da um aufzupas- sen. Oder: Um acht Uhr haben alle im Bett zu sein! – Keine Spaziergänge am Strand! – Ich ging mit den Meinigen spazieren und langsam trennten sich die Kinder von selbst und gingen zu Bett, oft viel früher als verordnet. Oder noch schlimmer, wenn sich ein Kind zur Mahlzeit verspätete, sollte es ohne Essen bleiben. Wie habe ich damals dage- gen gekämpft! Wer hat das Recht dazu, dem Kind die von den Eltern bezahlte Nahrung zu verbieten?! Und dann verordnete einmal ein anderer Leiter einem Kind als Strafe (weiß Gott warum!) alle Betten im Zimmer zu machen und alles aufzuräumen. Als ich ihm danach sagte, dass dieser Junge sein Leben lang die Arbeit als Strafe empfinden wird, verstand er mich einfach nicht. Und er hielt sich für einen guten Pädagogen und Erzieher! – Natürlich gab es dabei auch viele schönen Tage. Aber eine Bemerkung einer von meinen Kolleginnen in der Schule (die meisten waren Frauen von einflussreichen und bevorzugten Politikern!) kann ich bis heute nicht vergessen. Bei der Besprechung der Fahrt ans Meer im Lehrerzimmer der Schule sagte sie zu mir: "Du hast es gut, du fährst ans Meer und mich wird mein dummer Mann durch Paris schleppen!"

Es wäre schön, wenn ich diese fruchtbare Zeitspanne meines Lebens durch eine schönere Erinnerung beenden könnte. Leider fällt mir eben nur noch eine traurige Begebenheit ein. Am Ende des Schuljahres 1959/60, im Monat Juni also, reichte ich schriftlich bei der zuständigen Stelle ein Gesuch ein, mir zehn Tage Urlaub zu gestatten, damit ich mich (vor allem psychisch) für die bevorstehende Diplomprüfung an der Fakultät vorbereiten kann. In dieser Zeit geschieht in den Schulen sowieso nichts Besonderes, man macht Ausflüge, oder beschließt Schülernoten, das ich schon getan habe. Als Antwort darauf bekam ich von der Frau des zuständigen Inspektors münd- lich übermittelt: "Wozu braucht sie Urlaub, um zu lernen, was sie ohnehin schon kann."

– Als ob man in zehn Tagen etwas lernen könnte!

Du hast dann praktisch gleichzeitig drei Leben gelebt!

– Kann man sagen. Ich war Mutter von drei Kindern, war Deutschlehrerin in der Schule und Fernstudentin an der Fakultät. Das war aber nicht alles. Ich habe auch weiterhin Privatstunden gegeben, fast mein ganzes Leben lang, bis vor einem Jahr. Be-

gonnen habe ich noch im Gymnasium, nicht mit Deutschstunden, sondern mit der Mathematik, die ich immer mochte. Vom ersten gesparten Honorar habe ich mir mit 14 Jahren die schönsten Schuhe der Welt gekauft (solche, die Schneewittchen im Zeichentrickfilm von Walt Disney trug) und feine Lederhandschuhe und eine passende Handtasche dazu.

Hat dir dein Mann dabei geholfen?

– Nein. – Ja, weil er mir die Arbeit bei allen nötigen Rechnungen bei vielen Tests, die ich damals und auch später bei verschiedenen Untersuchungen zu machen hatte, abnahm. Später, zum Beispiel, wimmelte der zweite Teil meiner Dissertation von Berechnungen der Prozente, als ich die negative Interferenz der Muttersprache auf das Deutsche untersuchte. All dies tat er. Mich hätte das viel Zeit gekostet und er tat es mit Vergnügen, denn er war von Ziffern fast verzaubert. Alles musste stimmen. Er war im Stande in der Bank die ganze Nacht zu verbringen, um Fehler – sei es nur ein Pfennig – herauszufinden.

Geholfen hat er mir auch beim Übersetzen von Phraseologismen. Wenn mir keine treffende Entsprechung in der serbischen Sprache einfiel, dann beschrieb ich ihm die Situation, in der etwas Bildhaftes gesagt werden kann, und er schüttelte gleich zwei-drei nur so aus dem Ärmel. Sein Wortschatz war voll bildhafter Ausdrücke und er verwendete sie im Alltag, ohne damit zu paradieren. Auch sonst hatte er die Begabung, bei irgendeinem besonderen Anlass in der Familie – Geburtstag, Schulschluss und Ähnliches – aus dem Stegreif passende und geistreiche Reime vorzutragen, oder sogar in Voraus vorzubereiten. Deswegen war ich traurig, dass er mir bei verschiedenen Übersetzungen seine Hilfe einfach untersagte. Ich weiß noch heute nicht warum. Er scheint etwas gegen das Übersetzen gehabt zu haben. So hat er zum Beispiel die „Buddenbrooks“, nachdem sie gedruckt waren, gar nicht lesen wollen, obwohl er sonst viel und gerne las. Und von diesem Honorar habe ich meine erste Schreibmaschine gekauft (die Übersetzung habe ich drei Mal mit der Hand geschrieben) und für ihn einen neuen Kahn zum Angeln.

In der Küche half er auch, aber erst als seine Mutter starb. Bis dann war er der Herr im Haus, es stand ihm auch gut. Er zeigte sich immer sehr streng, im Grunde war er sehr großzügig und herzensgut, nur dass er sich davor schämte. Das habe ich leider viel zu spät eingesehen.

Bei der Erziehung der Kinder half er wenig, oder anders, nicht so, wie ich es mir gewünscht hätte. So sitzen wir zum Beispiel beim Sonntagsfrühstück, ich nutze die Gelegenheit aus, um mit den Kindern über ihre Schulaufgaben, über Bücher, die sie gerade lesen, zu sprechen und er hört ruhig zu und schweigt in Erwartung, etwas dazwischen zu sagen, meist das Gegenteil von dem, was ich gesagt habe, aber witzig und lachend – die Kinder lachen mit, und all meine „Pädagogik“ geht verloren.

Er duldet aber jahrelang mein nächtliches Lernen und Tippen. Ich saß meistens in der Küche, aber manchmal auch im Schlafzimmer, so wiederholte er oft im Scherz, wie er gleich eine Scheidung bekommen könnte, wenn er sagen würde, unter welchen Umständen (bei grellem Licht – wie beim Polizeiverhör!) er schlafen muss.

Du sagst, dass du wenig geschlafen hast, dass du auf ein normales menschliches Bedürfnis verzichtet hast.

– Ja, aber dieses Verzichten empfand ich nicht als eine Art Opfer. Ich habe ja bloß getan, was ich gern hatte. Für mich war das Lernen immer eine große Freude, etwas Neues zu erfahren, um dies dann anderen übermitteln zu können, das war einfach Freude und kein Verzichten. Ich wollte ja durch dieses Lernen nichts Bestimmtes erreichen, keine Karriere machen. Die Arbeit war einfach Bestandteil meines Lebens, das ich dabei in vollen Zügen genoss, mit meinen Kindern, mit den Freunden, in der Schule ...

Beim nächtlichen Lesen hielt mich oft das Stricken (von einfachen Pullovern für die Kinder) wach. Auch tagsüber – bei Privatstunden – strickte ich oft. So blieb im Kreise der Familie und der Freunde eine Episode mit meinem Sohn erhalten. Seine Lehrerin erzählte einmal im Lehrerzimmer, wie sie bemerkte, dass mein Sohn, während sie etwas erklärte, nicht aufpasste (er zeichnete etwas in sein Heft) und sie forderte ihn auf, das von ihr Gesagte zu wiederholen. Er tat es fast wortwörtlich. Erstaunt sagte sie zu ihm: "Wieso weißt du, was ich erzählt habe? Du hast ja etwas in dein Heft gekritzelt!" – Und er: "Ich bin wie meine Mutter, sie macht auch mehrere Sachen gleichzeitig."

Warst du Mitglied der Kommunistischen Partei?

– Nein. Nie. Keiner einzigen Partei. Ich kann nicht mit fremdem Kopf denken. So war ich auch froh, dass ich nach dem Krieg kleine Kinder hatte und deswegen von vielen Aktivitäten befreit war. Damals gab es immer wieder etwas, was man tun musste, vor allem viele Arbeitsaktionen, wie zum Beispiel die Mais- oder Kartoffelernte und anderes mehr. Meine jüngere Schwester machte all dies mit.

Die Kinder erzog ich aber im Einklang mit den damaligen Verhältnissen. Ich wollte keine doppelte Moral bei ihnen wachrufen – in der Schule das eine, zu Hause etwas anderes. Ich benahm mich selbstverständlich auch so, obwohl ich die Kinder nicht ohne Kenntnisse über die biblischen Legenden ließ, die ich ihnen nahe brachte, genau wie die antike Mythologie (die ich selbst sehr mochte und bei der ersten Gelegenheit Griechenland und alle mythologischen Stätten besuchte). Trotz all dem war ich sehr betroffen, als wir einmal im Sommer durch Kastav spazierten und zum Kalvarienberg kamen, und mein Sohn Milos, etwa vier Jahre alt, interessiert fragte: "Wer ist der Onkel da auf dem Kreuz?"

Später bei verschiedenen Exkursionen mit den Studenten in Deutschland musste ich immer wieder feststellen, wie groß die Lücke in ihren Kenntnissen über die christliche Kultur war. Nach einem Rundgang durch eine Kirche oder ein Museum mußte ich, trotz der fachkundigen Leitung der Gastgeber, anschließend manches erklären oder ergänzen.

Außerdem hatten unsere Kinder das Glück, alle kirchlichen Feiertage, vor allem Weihnachten und Ostern, doppelt zu erleben. Bei meinen Eltern lernten sie alle katholischen Bräuche kennen und von meiner Schwiegermutter – die zwar im Haus war – aber "für sich" orthodoxe Sitten pflegte, viel Dazugehöriges zu erfahren. Am Silve-

sterabend und zum Neujahr versammelte sich dann die immer größer werdende Familie bei uns im Haus, wo wir versucht hatten, eine Kombination von beiden Gläubensrichtungen zu vereinen. Es gab immer einen Weihnachtsbaum mit Geschenken, aber auch ein orthodoxes Essen, sowohl zum Silvesterabend als auch am ersten Januar. Jetzt fällt mir ein Silvesterabend ein, als schon zwei Enkelinnen, die Töchter von Ivana, da waren. Da die beiden noch klein waren, versammelten wir uns bei Ivana und Miodrag, die schon ihre Wohnung hatten, und Alja die ältere Enkelin, etwa vier Jahre alt, wollte unbedingt mit uns Erwachsenen auf "das Kommen des neuen Jahres warten". Sie schlummerte im Schoß vom Opa, aber von lauten Gratulationen der Erwachsenen erwacht und vom Opa belehrt: "Das neue Jahr ist gekommen!", fragte sie: "Wo ist es denn?" Und der schlagfertige Opa griff nach einer Tüte voller Konfetti, schüttete sie über ihr goldenes Haar und sagte: "Hier ist es!"

Später, als sich die Zahl der Enkel vermehrte, sechs an der Zahl, spielte sich fast von selbst ein, dass die Eltern am Silvesterabend ihre Kinder zu uns brachten, wo auf alle ein schön geschmückter Tannenbaum, Geschenke und das Abendessen warteten. Danach gingen die Eltern ihre Wege und mein Mann und ich verbrachten schöne Stunden mit den Enkeln, bis langsam einer nach dem anderen zu Bett ging. Am nächsten Morgen bekamen alle ihr Frühstück im Bett und dann kam der schon zur Tradition gewordene Spaziergang mit mir bis zur meist vereisten Donau, während mein Mann das schon in Voraus vorbereitete Mittagessen fertig machte, die Eltern kamen und das Festessen begann. Jahrelang saßen wir zu vierzehn bei Tisch. Wie schön waren diese Jahre!

Aber ich erzähle wieder zu viel von meinen Kindern und Kindeskindern und habe auf deine Frage nur mit einigen Worten der Verneinung geantwortet. Und dazu müsste ich doch etwas mehr sagen. Die Tatsache, dass ich nicht wollte oder nicht mochte, mich in die Reihe der Bevorzugten anzuschließen, habe ich später im Leben oft teuer zu zahlen gehabt. Das ganze Leben sich als Mensch zweiten Ranges zu fühlen, war nicht leicht. Dieses Gefühl entstand nicht aus dem mir völlig fremden Neid, sondern aus der Tatsache, dass ich nie mit irgendeiner Unterstützung rechnen konnte, dass ich alles im Leben nur durch harte Arbeit erreichen musste. Nein, neidisch war ich nicht, weil diese unschönen Gefühle auch bei meinen Eltern niemals zum Vorschein kamen. Meine Mutter sprach zwar manchmal zum Beispiel über die Europareisen der Frau vom Notar, aber ohne Neid, bloß als Mitteilung oder sogar scherhaft, weil "der arme Mann" ohne seine anstrengende Frau nun ein bisschen aufatmen konnte. So beneidete ich auch nicht meine beste Freundin, die Tochter des Dorfarztes, die ihre Sommerferien meist im Ausland verbrachte. Das war einfach so, sie konnte sich das leisten und wir hatten ja unser Kastav! – Ebenso störte mich später überhaupt nicht, dass der Sohn meiner Kollegin aus Belgrad, deren Mann General war, mit einem Sonderflugzeug zusammen mit Titos Sohn Mischa zur Insel Brioni flog, während meine Kinder zusammen mit anderen Schulkindern im Zug auf harten Bänken die Nacht durch nach Rijeka fuhren, und dann noch einen halben Tag in heißer Sonne im Hafen auf das Schiff warten mussten, um zur Insel Loschinj, ins Erholungsheim der Schule, zu gelangen. Um die Kü-

sten beider Inseln, Brioni wie auch Loschinj, braust ja dasselbe Adriatische Meer – und Hierarchien hat es ja immer gegeben und sie bleiben wohl auch weiterhin bestehen.

Schmerhaft und oft demütigend und beschämend waren andere Begebenheiten. Wenn zum Beispiel meine ehemaligen Schülerinnen oder Schüler (denen ich nicht nur die deutsche Sprache sondern auch andere ethischen Normen beibringen wollte), die meist auf Grund ihrer Parteizugehörigkeit zu hohen Posten kamen, wenn mich also diese direkt oder öfters indirekt in meinen Tätigkeiten hinderten oder von oben herab mit mir kommunizierten. Nur ein einziges Beispiel dafür (ich könnte unzählige anführen!). Bei verschiedenen Besuchen von Delegationen deutscher Politiker oder auch Botschafter war der deutsche Lehrstuhl irgendwie verpflichtet, einen Dolmetscher zur Verfügung zu stellen. Da man am Lehrstuhl wusste, dass ich nie "ich kann/will nicht" sagen werde, musste ich meist diese Rolle übernehmen. Wenn ich dann in den Räumen des Komitees, des Rathauses oder des Ausschussrates auftauchte, erkannten mich meine Schüler plötzlich nicht mehr und nachdem "der Moor seine Schuldigkeit getan hat" konnte ich ohne ein einfaches, menschliches "Danke!" oder "Auf Wiedersehen!" gehen. Vielleicht dachten sie, dass dies für mich eine Ehre gewesen sein sollte! – Nur einmal hat die Chefin des Protokolls im Ausschussrat mir ein Honorar angeboten, das ich höflich ablehnte (damals war ich schon ordentliche Professorin!). Danach schickte sie mir nach Hause einen Blumenstrauß mit Dankesworten. Aber sie war zufällig Schulfreundin meiner Tochter Ivana. – Es heißt ja, dass Ausnahmen die Regel bestätigen, hier die Regel, wie sich Parteileute zu anderen zu benehmen pflegten.

Du warst also politisch nicht aktiv?! – Warst wohl auch nicht Mitglied des "AFŽ"?

– Nein, politisch war ich nicht aktiv, aber Mitglied der "Antifaschistischen Front der Frauen" ja, und zwar gleich unmittelbar nach der Befreiung von Novi Sad. Als mein Mann und ich im November 1944 wieder nach Novi Sad zurückkehrten, hat mich eine Verwandte zur Präsidentin dieser Frauenbewegung geführt und vorgestellt. So wurde ich einigermaßen ihre "rechte Hand", ihre Gehilfin bei damals sehr vielen humanitären Tätigkeiten. Ich hatte ja Zeit im Überfluss, denn mein Mann ging gleich nach der Heirat an die Front, der Krieg war noch nicht zu Ende.

Kurz vor dem Kriegsende bekamen wir die Nachricht, dass mein Mann schwer verwundet in Osijek liegt. Wie wir, meine Schwiegermutter und ich, nach Osijek kamen, weiß ich nicht mehr. Ich weiß nur noch, dass wir irgendwo in Osijek durch die Mitte einer riesigen Halle schritten, links und rechts von uns lagen auf Stroh und Boden laut jammernde Verwundete. Ich habe meinen Mann nicht erkannt, aber darum seine Mutter! Wir wollten ihn gleich irgendwie nach Novi Sad bringen, aber die Leitung im "Krankenhaus" wollte eine schriftliche Bestätigung von einem Krankenhaus in Novi Sad, dass man ihn auch aufnehmen wird. So musste ich wieder zurück. Diese Fahrt blieb mir aber in heller Erinnerung, im Lastwagen mit laut singenden und halb-betrunkenen bulgarischen Soldaten. Wenn ich damals nicht gestorben bin, sterbe ich nie. Und ebenso mit der Bestätigung wieder zurück. Wo und wie wir dann einen Bauernwagen und ein Pferd aufgetrieben haben, weiß ich wieder nicht. Ich weiß nur, dass

ich mich an einer Latte am Wagen festhielt und neben dem Wagen schritt, ständig in Angst, ob wir ihn noch lebend nach Novi Sad bringen. Und dann begann erst meine verantwortungsvollste Tätigkeit im Frauenverband. Vom frühen Morgen bis spät in die Nacht versorgte ich viele, viele Verwundete, meinen Mann selbstverständlich auch und während ich dann in dunkler Nacht (kein Licht auf den Straßen!) durch die stillen Straßen mit meinen Holzschuhen klapperte, halbtot vor Angst, dachte ich über die Grausamkeiten der Kriege nach und hoffte dabei, dass es nie wieder einen geben wird – alles nur fromme Wünsche!

Als es meinem Mann nach monatelangem Pflegen wieder einigermaßen besser ging, wollte man ihn beim Militär behalten. Er hatte schon im alten Jugoslawien während des Militärdienstes eine Offizierschule besucht und den Rang eines Oberleutnants gehabt. Jetzt wollte man ihn befördern. Er hatte wirklich alle positiven und nötigen Eigenschaften eines Soldaten: strammer Auftritt, ein entwickeltes Gefühl für Disziplin und Strenge, aber auch für Gerechtigkeit und Ehrlichkeit. Aber diese Qualitäten zieren ja nicht nur Soldaten! – Ich war sehr dagegen. Ich glaube vor allem deswegen, weil ich mir Waffen im Hause nicht vorstellen konnte (ich fürchte mich auch heutzutage vor scharfen Messern in der Küche!), aber noch mehr hätte mich die Uniform gestört. Ich mag keine Uniformiertheit, nicht nur deswegen, weil ich acht Jahre lang in der Schule eine Uniform tragen musste, sondern weil ich einfach ein anderer Mensch bin und anders als jemand neben mir aussehen möchte. Und meine Uniformen in der Schule waren immer etwas anders als die von anderen Schülerinnen, bestickte oder mit Spitzen versehene Kragen auf der schwarzen, meist seidenen Schürze, eine zierliche weiße Masche usw., etwas an mir musste eben anders sein. – Etwas später bereute ich fast diese Entscheidung, denn das Militär hatte nach dem Krieg viele Privilegien, höhere Gehälter, Versorgung in speziellen Läden, Restaurants usw. Aber langsam kamen auch für uns bessere Zeiten, so bin ich doch zufrieden, dass alles nach meinen Vorstellungen verlief.

War dein Mann Parteimitglied?

– Ja, aber erst als er sich für eine Stelle in der Bank bewarb, Ende der fünfziger Jahre. Sein bester Freund, Bece Bela, hat es ihm geraten. Er machte sich aber nicht viel daraus und wir sprachen nie darüber. Mit Bela ging mein Mann angeln und verbrachte mit ihm jeden Urlaub an der Donau. Obwohl Bela jünger war, starb er einige Monate vor meinem Mann. Beim Begräbnis meines Mannes (1993) trat Belas Tochter auf mich zu und tröstete mich mit folgenden Worten: "Nicht traurig sein, jetzt sind die beiden zusammen und angeln in Frieden."

Nun sind wir bei der Fakultät angelangt.

– Ich habe mir nie träumen lassen, an einer Fakultät zu unterrichten. Ich fühlte mich in der Schule sehr gut. Außerdem – wie ich schon gesagt hatte – kannte ich ja an der Fakultät niemanden. Ich hatte aber Glück, dass die Mutter eines Schülers von mir Bibliothekarin im deutschen Seminar war, so besorgte ich mir manchmal über ihn die nötigen Bücher. Hätte ich selber die Bücher holen müssen, dann hätte ich vielleicht auch jemanden kennen gelernt. Aber zu Prüfungen musste ich doch gehen. Eini-

ge davon blieben mir noch heute in Erinnerung, so zum Beispiel die Prüfung bei dem berühmten Professor aus Belgrad, Raschko Dimitrijevitsch, der damals auch in Novi Sad die vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft unterrichtete. Ich zog meine Fragen und begann gleich zu erzählen, ich weiß noch genau über Servantes und seinen Don Kichot. Ich erzählte und erzählte und der Professor, der bestimmt zu früh aufgestanden war, um rechtzeitig nach Novi Sad zu kommen, schlummerte dabei ein. Als ich aufhörte, öffnete er die Augen und sagte: "Na, wollen wir endlich beginnen!" – Zum Glück flüsterte mir sein Assistent zu: "Wiederholen Sie alles!" – Und ich begann vom Anfang. Damals träumte ich gar nicht, dass eines meiner Enkelkinder nach ihm seinen Namen bekommen wird, denn Ivana und ihr Mann waren später in Belgrad seine Lieblingsstudenten und für unseren Raschko blieb der Professor bis zu seinem Tod "der Opa aus Belgrad". – Und erst die Prüfung in Linguistik bei der von den Studenten vergötterten, herzensguten Milka Ivitsch, die später meine Mentorin bei der Ausarbeitung der Dissertation war. Zuerst kam ich zur schriftlichen Prüfung zu spät, d.h. meiner Ansicht nach Punkt acht Uhr. Die Prüfung begann aber schon um sieben, was ich nicht wissen konnte. Als ich mich bei ihr leise meldete, sagte sie: "Das geht nicht, Sie haben bis jetzt die Themen erfahren und sich vorbereiten können." Vielleicht hat sie mein Gesichtsausdruck doch dazu bewogen, mir andere drei Themen zu nennen mit der Bemerkung, dass ich nur noch drei Stunden zur Verfügung habe. Und ich setzte mich hin und – wie dumm – glaubte, dass ich alle drei Themen zu bearbeiten hätte. Zwei schrieb ich nieder, aber das dritte begann ich nur. Nie hat sie mir später gesagt, ob sie über meine Dummheit beim Durchsehen der Arbeit gelacht hat.

Und erst die mündliche Prüfung! Linguistik habe ich schon an der Pädagogischen Schule liebgewonnen und deswegen auch alles gut vorbereitet. Und sie, so spontan und laut, wie sie sein konnte, rief den zuhörenden Studenten immer wieder zu: "Hört zu, das ist eine außerordentliche Studentin, sie war nie bei meinen Vorlesungen!" Und dann kam der Höhepunkt! Sie gab mir ein Buch und verlangte von mir die vier möglichen Akzente in der serbischen Sprache richtig mit dem Bleistift über die Vokale der einzelnen Wörter zu bezeichnen. Theoretisch wusste ich alles darüber, aber ich war nie in der Situation dies praktisch auch einzuüben. Als sie sah, was ich da mit den Akzenten trieb, nahm sie mein Studienbuch, in das sie schon eine zehn eingeschrieben hatte, strich sie durch und schrieb eine neun ein, mit der Bemerkung: "Das müssen sie aber noch einüben!" – Ich habe es leider bis heute nicht getan. – Und dann kam auch die Diplomprüfung! Damals war sie schwieriger als heute. Man musste gleichzeitig drei Fächer im Kopf haben: die Sprachgeschichte, die Theorie der Gegenwartssprache und die ganze deutsche Literatur vom Anfang an bis zur Gegenwart. Später habe ich das geändert, um es den Studenten leichter zu machen.

Vor der Diplomprüfung ging ich, wie immer, früh am Morgen zum Frisör, zog mein bestes Kleid an und war pünktlich zur Stelle. Als dann die Kommission in den Prüfungsraum kam, rief der gefürchtete Professor Mojaschewitsch aus Belgrad meinen Namen auf. Ich erhob mich in der Hoffnung, dass ich als erste gefragt werde (das passte mir immer). Aber er sah mich nur einen Augenblick an und sagte dann: "Danke! Set-

zen Sie sich!" – Viele Jahre später, beim IVG-Kongress in Cambridge, saßen wir in der Pause zusammen und ich fragte ihn, ob er sich noch erinnert, warum er mich vor der Prüfung aufgerufen hat. Ja, ja, sagte er, er wollte sehen, welche Studentin so viele Seiten fehlerlos über den Roman des 20. Jahrhunderts geschrieben habe. Und dann setzte er zaghafit hinzu: "Damals dachte ich bei mir, na ja, eine Frau, die nicht weiß, was sie mit sich und ihrer Zeit anfangen soll, so studiert sie eben." Und die mündliche Prüfung verlief auch anders als es die anderen Studenten gewohnt waren. Da wurde ich, außer anderem, gefragt, was ich über die Novelle "Immensee" zu sagen hätte. Und ich: "Mit sechzehn war ich hoch begeistert, und jetzt, als ich sie wieder gelesen hatte, kam sie mir wie Limonade mit viel Zucker vor!" Ein leises Raunen im Saal, danach sagten mir die Zuhörenden, dass sie Angst um mich hatten, so gelassen hätte ich nicht mit diesem Professor reden dürfen.

Als ich dann nach einem Jahr zur Fakultät kam, war alles anders, vor allem viel leichter. Ich hatte nur 16 Stunden, die Assistenten aber zwei. Diese arbeiteten aber an ihren Dissertationen und ich dachte darüber überhaupt nicht nach. Wozu auch! Als Mitarbeiterin hatte ich dies gar nicht nötig gehabt. – Später kam die Arbeit an der Dissertation irgendwie von selbst. Ich sammelte neben den Phraseologismen auch Fehler, die die Studenten in ihren schriftlichen Aufsätzen machten, und stellte fest, dass die meisten auf Grund der negativen Interferenz der Muttersprache entstehen. Aber die Arbeit am Phraseologischen Wörterbuch schien mir wichtiger zu sein, vor allem interessanter, obwohl der damalige Dekan, Prof. Novakovitsch, oft wiederholte, dass ich den verkehrten Weg gewählt hätte. Aber mir ging es ja nicht um meine Karriere, ich wollte bloß den Studenten helfen. Langsam kamen dann noch weitere Stunden hinzu. Zuerst neun Stunden an der Landwirtschaftlichen Fakultät, dann acht an der Höheren Wirtschaftsfakultät und später auch noch Stunden für die Magisterstudenten an der Medizinischen Fakultät. Privatstunden blieben auch nicht aus. So erinnere ich mich noch an einen Vorfall, als ich mit dem Fahrrad von so einer Stunde aus Peterwaradein zur Premiere ins Theater eilte und dabei auf einer vereisten Krümmung fiel und das Knie verletzte. Im Theater zog ich dann den Rock immer wieder übers Knie, um die verletzte Stelle zu tarnen. Mein Mann wartete vor dem Theater auf mich und schimpfte natürlich darüber, aber ich versuchte immer das Nützliche mit dem Schönen zu vereinen; das Schöne waren Theatervorstellungen und Konzerte, die ich mir nicht nehmen ließ.

Sind auch deine Kinder ins Theater gegangen?

– Selbstverständlich. Zuerst führte ich sie ins Puppentheater, dann zu Ballettvorstellungen, aber auch in die Oper und ins Kino. Im Theater gab es sonntags auch Nachmittagsvorstellungen, so führte ich Mila und Ivana schon sehr früh, mit fünf, sechs Jahren in die Oper. Ich weiß noch ganz genau, wie Mila mit ihrem scharfen Verstand auf "Karmen" reagierte (den Inhalt habe ich ihnen sowieso vor der Vorstellung erzählt). Beim Hinausgehen, ungefragt, sagte sie: "Nicht töten hätte er sie sollen, nur anspucken!" Und nach dem Film "Moderato cantabile" – ich versäumte, mich über den Inhalt zu informieren, so dachte ich, dass es sich um einen Film mit Musik handelt, es ging aber um die unglückliche Liebe einer reichen und gelangweilten Frau – so sagte wieder

die schlagfertige Mila: "Die hat bestimmt nie eine Bürste in der Hand gehabt!" – Ich habe bestimmt nicht viel Zeit mit den Kindern verbringen können, wenn, dann aber sehr intensiv und immer mit einem bestimmten Ziel. So weiß ich noch genau, wie ich Milosch, als er schon im Gymnasium war, die ersten Seiten vom "Krieg und Frieden" vorlas. Nicht dass er das Lesen nicht mochte, im Gegenteil, aber das dicke Buch schien ihm zu viel des Guten. Und auf das Vorlesen war er, und nicht nur er, gewohnt. Mein Vater hat jahrelang allen Enkelkindern, nicht nur meinen Kindern auch denen von meinen Geschwistern, vorgelesen. Sie sammelten sich um ihn und hörten mäuschenstill zu. Milosch hatte ein besonders gutes Gedächtnis und wenn der Opa etwas zum zweiten oder dritten Mal vorlas und dabei etwas (absichtlich) übersprang, rief Milosch laut: "Opa, da fehlt etwas!"

Jedes deiner Kinder ist eigenartig.

– Könnte man sagen, obwohl alle drei verantwortungsvolle und fleißige Schüler waren, im Haus geholfen hatten und nie besondere Probleme machten. Ich war der Auffassung, dass das Beispiel der Eltern ein wichtiger Erziehungsfaktor sei, so fassten auch sie die Arbeit als Bestandteil des Lebens auf und nie als Zwang oder Last.

Ich befürchte trotzdem, dass es Milosch am schwierigsten hatte, vor allem im Gymnasium, als ihn die Lehrer immer auf seine älteren Schwestern aufmerksam machten, die brillante Schülerinnen waren, in allen außerunterrichtlichen Tätigkeiten glänzten und er dies nicht immer im gleichen Maße erreichen konnte oder wollte. So hatte mir einmal ein junger Lehrer in diesem Gymnasium, als ich meine Studenten zur Hospitation führte, etwas unhöflich (er sah mich damals zum ersten Mal) gesagt: "Du bist also die Mutter von diesen Mrazovitsch' hier!?" – Warum hast du nicht noch mehr solcher Kinder zur Welt gebracht?!" – Und gerade bei diesem Mathematiklehrer bekam Milosch einmal eine Eins (die schlechteste Note bei uns), weil er keine Hausaufgabe hatte oder auch aus irgendeinem anderen Grund. Das war unmittelbar vor seinem Abitur. Und ehrgeizig, wie er war, änderte er schnell sein schriftliches Abiturthema aus der Biologie (bei seiner Klassenvorsteherin, die ihn vergötterte, er sie auch!) und nahm ein damals völlig neues und noch ganz unbekanntes Thema aus der Mathematik "Mengenlehre und Operationen". Nächtelang saß er bei der Ausarbeitung dieses Themas und bei der Schlussprüfung konnte der Mathematiklehrer ihm keine andere Note geben als die beste, eine Fünf. – Ähnlich benahm er sich auch beim Jurastudium. Da gibt es bei uns keine Diplomprüfung, sondern, wenn man die letzte Prüfung abgelegt hat, bekommt man einfach das Diplom. Und bei dieser letzten Prüfung bekam Milosch eine Acht, und anstatt sich zu freuen, dass er sein Studium in so kurzer Zeit hinter sich brachte, ließ er diese Note annullieren, machte diese Prüfung noch einmal und bekam seine Zehn. – Ich bin überzeugt, dass meine Kinder nicht krankhafte Ambitionen hatten. Niemand hat sie gezwungen, die Besten zu sein, sie wollten einfach nur alles perfekt machen. Dabei waren sie nie aufdringlich oder frech. Im Gegenteil. – Jetzt fällt mir wieder eine Begebenheit mit Milosch ein. Als Kind kam er einmal weinend aus der Schule. Der strenge Vater fragt, warum er weine und Milosch: "Der und der hat mich geschlagen". – "Warum hast du nicht zurückgeschlagen?" Und Milosch sehr erstaunt:

“Aber Tata, das hätte ihm doch weh getan!” Oder als er schon Anwalt war, kam er zum Vater, Rat zu holen. Er sollte einen Polizisten verteidigen, der ermöglicht hatte, falsche Banknoten zu verbreiten. Der Vater riet ihm dazu. Milosch aber: “Das ist doch sträflich!” – Der Vater riet ihm dann, die Kanzlei zu schließen, er tat es nicht, aber verteidigt keine Kriminelle, es gibt ja auch andere juristischen Tätigkeiten.

Begonnen habe ich vom jüngsten Kind, meine Töchter würden sagen vom Schoßkind, sie nannten ihn sowieso “Mutters Herz”. Ich bemühte mich aber gerecht meine Liebe, Aufmerksamkeit und Sorge zu verteilen, dass dies mir nicht immer gelang, liegt nicht daran, dass ich Unterschiede machte, sondern einfach weil ich zu viel um den Kopf hatte und nicht immer richtig auf manches reagieren konnte. Ein klassisches Beispiel dafür ist ein Kindergewehr, das ich (angeblich) Milosch zum siebten Geburtstag versprochen hätte. Waffen als Spielzeug kamen nie in Frage, das wussten die Kinder sehr gut. Trotzdem bekam Milosch eine und zwar deswegen, weil er behauptete, dass ich sie ihm, während ich etwas gelesen hatte und nur mit halben Ohren zuhörte, zugesagt hätte, nur in Ruhe gelassen zu werden. Das gegebene Wort musste eingehalten werden, aber seit dieser Zeit hörte ich alles, was die Kinder sagten, mit beiden Ohren. Er übte das Zielen im Hof und schoss auf leere Konservenbüchsen. Viel später erzählte er, dass er deswegen beim Militärdienst der beste Schütze war. – Geschenke gab es sonst nur zu Geburtstagen und zum Neujahr. Für gute Noten, für die viele Eltern ihre Kinder zu beschenken pflegten, für die gab es keine Geschenke. Das Lernen und Arbeiten gehört ja zum täglichen Brot, ist Bestandteil des Lebens.

Dass ich mich bemüht habe, jedem Kind die gleiche Möglichkeit zum Lernen und zu seinem Fortschritt zu geben, soll nur ein Beispiel dazu dienen. Alle Drei konnten mit 17 Jahren ins Ausland fahren, nicht als Touristen, das war niemandem von uns gegeben. Auch ich fuhr ins Ausland nur zu Seminaren (zuerst 1959 auf eigene Kosten nach Wien), zu Tagungen und Kongressen mit Referaten oder mit deutschen Stipendien zu Studienaufenthalten, wobei ich dann bis zu 14 Stunden täglich an bestimmten Projekten arbeitete. So fuhren auch meine Kinder, der Reihe nach, in den Sommerferien nach Stuttgart, um in der Bibliothek des Institutes für Auslandsbeziehungen zu arbeiten. Wie Mila und Milosch damals nach Stuttgart fuhren, weiß ich nicht mehr, aber Ivanas Abfahrt blieb mir auf die Dauer in Erinnerung: Ivana steht am Fenster des Zuges und ich darunter. Um mich herum Frauen und Kinder, die laut weinen und den Männern im Zug immer wieder etwas zurufen. (Das war zur Zeit als die ersten Gastarbeiter nach Deutschland fuhren). Ivana, ernst und etwas traurig, ruft mir zu: “Du bist mir aber eine Mutter! Schau, alle neben dir heulen, nur du lachst!” – Und ich lachte wirklich, vor Freude, dass mein Kind etwas Neues sehen, lernen und erleben wird. Als sie aber wieder zurückkam, war sie zufrieden und dankbar. Weniger zufrieden war sie, als ich sie später als “au pair” Mädchen in eine mir bekannte Familie unterbrachte, damit sie am Nachmittag am Slawistischen Institut in München Vorlesungen des berühmten Professors Alois Schmaus und auch anderer hören konnte. Die Unzufriedenheit kam daher, weil alle in der weiteren Familie dagegen waren, das Kind zum “Dienstmädchen” zu machen. Ich war aber überzeugt davon, dass dies gut für sie, für jeden Studenten sei,

vor allem auch deswegen, weil meine Mutter im Haus immer ein Bauernmädchen aus reichen deutschen Häusern hatte, die zu uns kamen, um gut kochen oder auch gutes Benehmen zu lernen. – Besser erging es Mila, die nach ihrem Diplom ein Stipendium bekam, um in Bonn ihr Postdiplomstudium zu absolvieren.

Es wäre nicht schön, wenn ich meine Misserfolge in der Erziehung meiner Kinder verschweigen würde. Es geht nämlich um klassische Fehler der Eltern, die ihre unerfüllten Träume an den Kindern zu verwirklichen versuchen. So schickte ich Mila und Ivana gleichzeitig sehr früh – mit sechs, bzw. fünf Jahren – zum Ballettunterricht. Ich kann nicht sagen, dass beide ungern zum Unterricht gingen, im Gegenteil. Sie hatten auch mit anderen Schülerinnen mehrere Auftritte in schönen Ballettkleidern, aber dabei blieb es auch. So erging es auch mit dem Klavierunterricht. Da Vaters Klavier im Hause war, wäre es normal gewesen, dass entweder er – geduldig und gut, wie er war – oder auch ich diese Aufgabe auf uns nahmen. Nein, es musste eine qualifizierte Klavierlehrerin sein. Sehr schnell stellte sich aber heraus, dass beide, vor allem Ivana, bevor die Lehrerin ins Haus kam, einfach verschwunden waren. Und das wiederholte sich mehrmals. Als wir die Kinder danach ernsthaft zur Rechenschaft zogen, stellte sich heraus, dass die strenge Lehrerin bei jedem Fehler die Kinder mit dem Lineal auf die Finger schlug. Wie schmerhaft das sein musste, konnte ich es mir nur vorstellen, denn ich bin nie weder beim Klavierspielen noch beim Geigenspiel geschlagen worden. So nahm für mich auch dieser Versuch ein trauriges Ende.

Einen Fehler habe ich wohl auch gemacht, dass ich den Mädchen keine auf besondere Art gefalteten Röcke und Jeans aus Triest tragen ließ. Alle Freundinnen von ihnen trugen sie, und gerade deswegen, wegen der verdamten Uniformiertheit, wollte ich sie nicht so einheitlich angezogen sehen, obwohl dies zu jener Zeit irgendwie zum Image der „besseren“ Leute gehörte. Dieses prahlerische Tragen dieser Kleidungsstücke störte mich auch, sogar heute noch. Meine Mädchen waren trotzdem schön und mädchenhaft angezogen und sie klagten auch nie darüber. Geklagt hat aber der kleine Milosch oft, weil er Hemden mit abgerundeten Kragen zum Tragen bekam (geerbte Blusen von den Schwestern!). Aber nicht lange, sehr bald bekam er auch echte Männerhemden.

Auf Grund des Gesagten kann der Eindruck entstehen, dass ich manchmal den Kindern meine Ansichten aufzudrängen versuchte. Kann sein, aber nie ohne Begründung oder vorherige Besprechung. Verbote gab es sowieso keine. Wenn dann doch bei mir Zweifel aufkamen, dann denke ich immer an Ivanas Worte, die sie einmal ausgesprochen hat: „Du weißt ja gar nicht, was wir alles versäumt hatten, weil wir alles durften!“ – Wie oft saß ich am Abend voller Sorge um Mila, die noch nicht von ihrer Folklore- oder Theatersektion zurück war. Aber sie mochte das, sie hatte auch Talent und unterhielt uns jahrelang mit ihren eingeübten Rollen oder mit ihren imitatorischen Fähigkeiten. Dass sie nicht Schauspielerin geworden ist, ist schuld ein Arzt, ein Freund von uns, der bei ihr schwache Stimmbänder feststellte; so wählte sie das Literaturstudium und unterrichtet schon dreißig Jahre ohne Probleme. – Auch bei Ivanas Wahl, in Belgrad Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft zu studieren, mischten wir uns nicht ein, obwohl in der weiteren Familie Zweifel laut ausgesprochen wurden, was ei-

nem Mädchen allein in Belgrad alles passieren kann – Drogen, schlechte Gesellschaft usw. Darauf konnte ich nur antworten: "Wenn ich meinem Kind bis zu seinem achtzehnten Lebensjahr nicht beigebracht habe, was gut und was schlecht ist, dann wird sie auch hier, neben mir Schlechtes tun." Und wie recht hatte ich! Eine Freundin von mir in Belgrad, die Ivana manchmal besuchte, sagte einmal: "Du kannst ruhig schlafen, Ivana sitzt bei mir und strickt." Sonst bereitete sich Ivana jahrelang für das Studium der Medizin; als Kind hatte sie alle ärztlichen "Geräte", um ihre Puppen zu behandeln und mein Mann war glücklich darüber, denn dies war auch sein Wunsch gewesen, den der frühe Tod seines Vaters und der Krieg verhinderten. Darum studieren aber Ivanas Mädchen, Alja und Pavica, Medizin. Der Sohn Raschko studiert aber Musik, scheint ein Erbe von meinen Eltern zu sein! – Warum Milosch Jura studierte, obwohl er auch, wie seine älteren Schwestern, von der schönen Literatur "angesteckt" war, weiß ich genau. Da nahm mein Mann das Wort und sagte: "Du wirst kein armer Lehrer werden!" – Sein gutes Gedächtnis kam ihm auch da zu Gute und er beendete sein Studium mit vorbildhaftem Erfolg. Er heiratete seine Studienkollegin und seine beiden Kinder, Jelena und Milan, studieren auch Jura, obwohl Jelena künstlerische Talente (bildende und Theaterkunst) zum Vorschein brachte und auch einige Theater- und sogar Filmerfolge erleben durfte. Erwähnen muss ich noch die jüngste Enkelin, Milas Tochter Wana, die ganz aus der Reihe tanzt, sie ist erfolgreiche Tennisspielerin, mit über 80 Pokalen, aber die schlimmen Zeiten in unserem Land, unsere finanzielle Ohnmacht, hinterlässt Spuren auch auf ihre weiteren Aussichten. Schade.

Du hast wohl in deiner Ehe keine Konflikte gehabt?

– Nein. Keinesfalls. Es herrschte beiderseitige Toleranz. Mein Mann tolerierte meine Studien und Reisen zu verschiedenen Germanistentreffen, obwohl er nie mitfahren wollte, trotz meiner Bitten, so fühlte ich mich oft als alleinstehende Frau. So müssen mich auch manche Kollegen betrachtet haben, denn ungefragt kann ich ja nicht über mich und meine Familie erzählen. Wenn man mich aber fragt, dann nimmt das Erzählen kein Ende, wie zuvor, da kann ich dann nicht aufhören und ich muss mich deswegen hier auch entschuldigen. Ich wieder tolerierte seine Gebundenheit an seine Bank (dort musste nämlich alles stimmen, ob aber auch im Haus alles in Ordnung war, das war meine Sorge!) und seine manchmal übertriebene Sorge um die Seinigen. Dabei, wenn er das Wort "die Meinigen" aussprach, dachte er nicht an mich und unsre Kinder, sondern an seine Mutter und die Schwester. Er hat nämlich seinem Vater am Sterbebett versprochen, sich sein Leben lang um die Mutter und die Schwester zu kümmern, und das tat er auch.

Es störte ihn aber manchmal, dass er mit mir nicht "streiten" konnte. Schon am Anfang unserer Ehe sprach er einen Satz aus, den er öfters wiederholte: "Was hat man schon von einer Frau, mit der man nicht streiten kann" – und etwas streitlustig war er schon. Aber ich wollte bewusst nie streiten. Auch am Lehrstuhl habe ich oft jüngeren Kollegen erklären müssen, warum ich nicht streiten will und warum mich auch verschiedene Klatschereien nicht interessieren. Dazu braucht man Zeit, (und die fehlte mir immer), Energie und oft mehr Bosheit, als ich auftreiben konnte. Es ist doch besser all dies – Zeit und Energie – für vernünftige und positive Zwecke zu verwenden.

Ich muss noch eine positive Einstellung meines Mannes betonen, die seine Toleranz bestätigen kann. Er erlaubte niemandem (weder den Kindern, noch anderen Familienmitgliedern oder Freunden) etwas Unschönes über mich zu sagen. Er fühlte sich als mein Beschützer. Wie oft wiederholte er den bekannten Satz, wenn zum Beispiel jemand provokativ fragte: "Was, deine Frau verreist wieder?" – "Was geht dich das an? Sie ist ja meine Frau!"

Kannst du mir sagen, was du im Sozialismus geschätzt hast?

– Darüber habe ich mir wenig Gedanken gemacht. Vielleicht die kostenlose Ausbildung der jungen Menschen, auch an der Fakultät. Alle hatten die gleiche Chancen zu studieren, nicht nur diejenigen, deren Eltern Geld hatten. Die Krankenversicherung scheint mir auch in Ordnung gewesen zu sein. Zwar wussten wir nicht, wie viel wir dafür monatlich vom Gehalt bezahlen mussten, aber damals dachte ich nicht darüber nach. Auch die Gleichberechtigung der Frauen war gesichert, bloß dass die Frauen dadurch leider nur noch schlechter davonkamen. Die berufstätige Frau behielt ja im Hause auch weiterhin alle Verpflichtungen, so dass sie mit doppelter Arbeitszeit zu rechnen hatte. Die Mentalität der Männer lässt sich schwer oder nicht so schnell ändern. Vielleicht wird die kommende Generation daran etwas ändern können, aber noch heute gilt als Ausnahme, wenn der Mann im Hause sich die Schürze umbindet. – Auch das Recht der Frau, über ihre Nachkommenschaft zu entscheiden, ist positiv zu bewerten. Zwar gibt es da bestimmte Eingrenzungen, die ich leider nicht kenne, aber in vielen anderen Ländern wird darüber noch heute sehr heftig diskutiert, was mich immer wieder zum Staunen bringt. – Dass wir aus dem noch geeinigten Jugoslawien ohne Probleme überall reisen konnten, ist ja nicht typisch für die anderen sozialistischen Länder von früher. Uns war das gegeben und das fand ich gut, vor allem für uns, die am Projekt "Kontrastive Grammatik" gearbeitet haben. Da habe ich das Projektgeld nicht für die Gehälter uns Mitarbeiter benutzt, sondern für die Reisen zu Tagungen oder Kongressen, damit jüngere Mitarbeiter linguistische Berühmtheiten kennen lernen und etwas Neues hören und lernen. Hätte ich es anders gemacht, wie viele andere Projektleiter, wäre meine Pension heute viel größer, aber damals dachte ich ja nicht an mich, sondern an das Projekt und die Zukunft des Lehrstuhls.

Du warst auch Prodekanin an der Fakultät.

– Ja. In den letzten zwei Jahren meiner Tätigkeit an der Fakultät (1983-85), obwohl es auch früher mehrere Vorschläge gab. So kamen zum Beispiel zu uns nach Hause der Dekan mit noch jemandem, wohl aus dem Parteikomitee, und sie fragten mich, ob ich die Funktion einer Prodekanin übernehmen möchte, sie bräuchten nämlich eine Frau, die Serbin sei – das ging so nach bestimmtem "Schlüssel". Da musste ich antworten, dass ich zwar eine Frau sei, aber keine Serbin und schlug eine Kollegin vor, die mir nachher das Leben zur Hölle machte. Nicht weil sie Prodekanin wurde, sie wusste ja nicht, dass ich sie vorgeschlagen hatte, sondern weil sie auf meine Arbeitserfolge neidisch war und jetzt die Gelegenheit ausnützte manches zu verhindern oder schwierig zu gestalten. Auch die Funktion der Dekanin sollte ich mal übernehmen. Was dagegen nur von einem "wichtigen" Kollegen kam, um dies zu verhindern, ist nicht erzählbar,

es ist viel zu schmerhaft. – Und mir ging es ja nie darum, bestimmte Funktionen zu bekommen, die nehmen ja viel Zeit in Anspruch und ich brauchte diese, um viel Wichtigeres zu tun. –

Außerdem hatte ich ja immer bessere Beziehungen zu Putzfrauen oder zu jüngeren Kollegen als zu verschiedenen leitenden Personen. Nie habe ich versucht, mich bei jemandem lieb Kind zu machen und war fest davon überzeugt, dass man durch die anständige Arbeit fast alles erzielen kann. Deswegen bin ich auch auf das Erreichte so stolz, weil mir niemand vorwerfen kann, je bestimmte Privilegien benutzt zu haben.

Jetzt bist du im Ruhestand. Du hast aber eine Zeit lang in Szeged an der Fakultät gearbeitet. Kannst uu Ungarisch?

– Passiv. In der Kindheit hörte ich oft meine Mutter (die die ungarische Schule besucht hatte) mit ihrer Freundin, Tante Mitzi, ungarisch sprechen. Meine Mutter sprach sonst akzentfrei Deutsch, Serbisch und Ungarisch. Sie hatte ein so gutes Gehör, dass sie zum Beispiel nach zwei Tagen in Kastav akzentfrei Tschakavisch mit den Einheimischen sprach. – In den Monaten Mai und Juni 1941, als wir unter Ungarn die vierte Klasse der Lehrerbildungsanstalt beendet hatten, besuchten wir einen Intensivkurs des Ungarischen und als ich dann im Jahre 1992 den Ruf an den deutschen Lehrstuhl in Szeged bekam, erfrischte ich etwas meine Kenntnisse. Aber am Lehrstuhl brauchte ich ja das Ungarische nicht. Alle Vorlesungen und Seminare sind in Deutsch gehalten worden und die Studenten konnten sehr gut Deutsch. Übrigens die Studenten dort waren sehr fleißig und das Studiumsregime sehr streng – anders als ich es hier gewohnt war. Am schönsten war es bei Prüfungen. Alle feierlich gekleidet, die jungen Männer mit obligatorischer Krawatte – und zur Prüfung kamen alle gut vorbereitet. Ich hatte es in diesen sechs Jahren dort wirklich sehr schön. – Am Ende, im April 1999, machte ich dann auf Wunsch der Studenten noch eine Exkursion mit ihnen nach Berlin und Weimar. Und während ich ihnen am Frauenplan manches über Goethe erzählte, fiel mir mein erster Weimarbesuch (bei einem der ersten Seminare, die ich mitmachte) im Jahre 1965 ein. Da schritt ich auf Goethes Pfaden, durch den Park zum Gartenhaus und die Tränen kamen von selbst. Ich konnte es nicht glauben, dass dies mir geschah. Deswegen betrachtete ich sehr aufmerksam die Gesichter meiner braven Studenten. Ich sah Interesse, sogar Neugier, aber keine Rührung, so verschwieg ich ihnen meine Tränen.

Weniger schön war die wöchentliche Pendelei zwischen Novi Sad und Szeged. In den letzten drei Jahren bekam ich dann sogar eine Wohnung und ich hätte ruhig länger in Szeged bleiben können. Aber das waren ja Jahre, in denen bei uns kaum etwas zu kaufen war und die sechs Enkelkinder sollten ja wenigstens etwas zu essen haben. So schlepppte ich mich ab, aber ich war froh, dass ich noch nützlich sein konnte. Schlimm war es auch in den überfüllten, kalten, schmutzigen und unregelmäßig fahrenden Zügen oder manchmal auch Bussen (wenn es Benzin gab). An der Grenze dann bei Sonne und Regen, Schnee und Eis, alle Passagiere raus – nicht immer, aber sehr oft – in Reih und Glied gestellt, wie im Lager – und in den Beuteln gewühlt – auf beiden Seiten, sowohl die ungarischen als auch die unsrigen Grenzbeamten. Wie erniedrigend! Aber

ich habe nie meinen kleinen rollenden Koffer öffnen müssen, vielleicht sah man an meinem Gesicht, dass ich nichts schmuggelte, bloß paar Kleinigkeiten zum Essen mithatte. Auch während der Bombenangriffe 1999 fuhr ich hin und her, immer in Angst, ob ich alle Lieben lebend antreffen werde. – Trotz alledem war das ein schöner Abschnitt meines Lebens, an den ich gerne zurückdenke, vor allem an die immer hilfsbereiten Kollegen, die mein Alter und meine Hilfe zu schätzen wussten und mich durch eine Festschrift und ein Kolloquium mir zu Ehren belohnten.

Verlief in deiner professionellen Karriere alles glatt?

Nein. Nein. Schon gleich am Anfang gab es Probleme. Als mir Prof. Kostitsch im Juni 1960 nach der abgelegten Diplomprüfung vorgeschlagen hat, mich für eine Mitarbeiterstelle zu bewerben, tat ich es auch. Danach fand sich jemand, der bei der Ratssitzung, bei der die Wahlen neuer Lehrkräfte stattfand, an meiner Durchschnittsnote beim Studium seine Zweifel zum Ausdruck brachte. So wurde meine Wahl von der Tagesordnung gestrichen. Aber bei der nächsten Sitzung verlief alles glatt, so begann ich im Oktober 1961 am Lehrstuhl zu arbeiten. – All dies erfuhr ich aber viele Jahre später, wie auch viel anderes, das meist hinter meinem Rücken geschah.

Du hattest aber deine Vorstellungen, was du an der Fakultät erreichen möchtest?

– Selbstverständlich. Ich kam ja an die Fakultät aus der Praxis und alles, was ich tat und getan hatte, war für die Praxis gedacht. An der Fakultät bei uns werden ja Deutschlehrer ausgebildet (ich versuchte im Laufe meiner Tätigkeiten auch die Fachsprache, bzw. verschiedene Textsorten als Unterrichtsfach einzuführen, nicht nur die Literatursprache – viele Lehrer unterrichten Deutsch an verschiedenen Fachschulen, ohne dass sie an der Fakultät je etwas darüber gehört hätten – und ebenso einen besonderen Studienzweig für die Dolmetscher – ohne Erfolg). Aus eigener Erfahrung wusste ich, was den Deutschlehrern bei der Ausübung ihres Berufs fehlt, denn ich war jahrelang vom Pädagogischen Institut beauftragt, als Inspektorin den Deutschunterricht in den Woiwodinaer Schulen zu beaufsichtigen. Erst während dieser Tätigkeit wurde mir klar, warum so viele Delegationen von Fachleuten und Lehrern aus dem ganzen Land zu meinen Stunden in der Experimentalen Schule kamen. Ich dachte, dass ich ganz normal arbeite, nichts mehr. Aber erst als ich die Unterrichtsstunden anderer miterleben durfte, sah ich, was die Lehrer an der Fakultät nicht gelernt hatten: – wie man eigene Kenntnisse anderen, den Schülern, zu übermitteln hat – die Methodik des Unterrichtens. So begann mein erster Kampf mit den Zuständigen, den ich erfolgreich gewann. Schon im Jahre 1963 durfte ich den Studenten Methodik des Deutschunterrichtes beibringen und sie in verschiedene Schulen zur Praxis führen. Langsam führten dann auch andere Lehrstühle dieses Fach ein, immer mit einem leisen Gefühl, dass dadurch das „hohe Niveau“ des Studierens herabgesetzt wird.

Um die Notwendigkeit der Einführung dieses Faches auch exakt zu beweisen, führten eine Kollegin aus dem Pädagogischen Institut und ich eine Untersuchung in 16 sehr präzis ausgewählten Schulen in der Woiwodina durch. Wir wollten feststellen, in welchem Maße die vom Lehrprogramm erforderten Unterrichtsziele erreicht werden.

Und da kamen wir zu zwar erwarteten, aber nicht in diesem Maße schlechten Ergebnissen. In keiner Schule erreichten die positiven Ergebnisse 50% von den geforderten – nicht besonders hohen – Zielen. Viele Lehrer wollten solche Ergebnisse den keinesfalls guten Lehrbüchern zuschreiben, aber alle bestätigten, dass sie nie etwas von Didaktik und Methodik während ihres Studiums gehört hätten. Dadurch schien mir mein zweijähriger Kampf nicht erfolglos gewesen zu sein. Auch spätere Bemühungen um einen Fortschritt in der Unterrichtsgestaltung, um den wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchs, besonders in der Sprachwissenschaft, die im Vergleich zur Literaturwissenschaft zurückgestellt war, forderten von mir viel Überzeugungskraft und viel Geduld, manchmal auch bis zu fünf Jahren, wobei nicht immer alles verwirklicht werden konnte.

Die Initiative für die Gründung des Sprachlabors, später auch des multimedialen Zentrums kam zwar nicht von mir, aber mich haben sie zur Leiterin ernannt (1970-80), ich weiß gar nicht warum. Wahrscheinlich wollte damals niemand die undankbare Pflicht auf sich nehmen, etwas ganz Neues zu organisieren und zu leiten. Ich tat es aber mit Begeisterung, weil ich sehr gut wusste, wie wichtig eine gute Aussprache für die künftigen Fremdsprachenlehrer sei und welchen Vorteil der individuelle Unterricht hat. Ich stellte Programme zusammen, bewarb mich ums Geld bei zuständigen Stellen und kletterte zusammen mit dem Laboranten und einigen fachkundigen Kollegen am Gerüst des Neubaus der Fakultät mit einem Helm auf dem Kopf herum, um die nötigen Installationen für das Labor zu kontrollieren. Ich besuchte auch viele Messen mit Unterrichtsgeräten und lernte selbst viel dabei. Aber alles war umsonst. Als das Gebäude fertig war, zog in die Laborräume das Dekanat, später auch das Sekretariat ein. Für die Arbeit mit den Studenten blieb nur ein eingerichteter Raum übrig, in dem jahrelang nur eine Kollegin vom Deutschen Lehrstuhl Phonetikunterricht gab. – Noch schlimmer erging es mir mit dem multimedialen Zentrum. Die zuständige Finanzstelle änderte auf mein Gesuch sogar ihre Satzung, um für die Philosophische Fakultät das nötige Geld für den Ankauf von Computers zur neuen Ausstattung des Zentrums bereitzustellen. Als das große Geld dafür kam, (ich erfuhr nie wie viel!) wurde es hinter meinem Rücken – ich war in Mannheim, um mit Prof. Engel an der Kontrastiven Grammatik zu arbeiten – für die Erhöhung der Gehälter aller Angestellten verwendet. Ich dachte mich trifft der Schlag, aber die Begründung dafür gab ein Professor, dass die Fakultät eine wissenschaftliche und keine dienstleistende Institution sei. – Heute klingt das fast unwahrscheinlich, wo doch niemand mehr ohne Computer auskommen kann, aber damals...

Diese zwei misslungenen Vorhaben haben meine weiteren Bemühungen, um die Verbesserung des Unterrichtes doch nicht gehemmt. Ich schrieb das ganze Geschehen der Nichtinformiertheit und der inerten Einstellung der Zuständigen an der Fakultät zu und machte meine Sache weiter.

Es wäre ungerecht, wenn ich behaupten würde, dass ich bei allem, was ich tat oder tun wollte, auf Hindernisse stieß. Niemanden störte zum Beispiel mein Sammeln von Phraseologismen oder Sprachfehlern der Studenten. Da ließen mich alle in Ruhe.

Am Anfang wollte ich ja nur ein kleines Büchlein von häufigen Phraselismen zusammenstellen, um den Studenten beim Lesen der Literatur und beim Übersetzen zu helfen. Dass das Sammeln zehn Jahre in Anspruch nehmen wird und dass ich nachher noch zehn Jahre auf den Druck warten sollte, wusste ich am Anfang nicht. Kein Verlag im Lande hatte eine Ahnung, was auf den 5500 Seiten stand, die ich in den zehn Jahren getippt hatte. Hätte ich ein Kochbuch zum Druck angeboten, (und das hätte ich wohl auch schreiben können, denn viele gute Rezepte kannte ich!) wäre es sehr schnell gedruckt worden.

Alle anderen Pläne und Projekte konnte ich nur dank meiner Beharrlichkeit verwirklichen. Dabei denke ich vor allem an das Projekt "Kontrastive Grammatik – Deutsch-Serbokroatisch". Fünf Jahre lang schrieb ich Begründungen, Gesuche an verschiedene Stellen, damit zuerst die Zusammenarbeit mit Prof. Engel und dem Institut für deutsche Sprache in Mannheim zustande kommt und danach auch die finanziellen Mittel gesichert werden. Ich ließ mich nicht kleinkriegen. Da kam zum Ausdruck das, was mein Mann "passive Ausdauer" nannte. Ich hatte aber für dieses Projekt wenigstens drei wichtige Anregungen und blieb deswegen fest bei meinem Vorhaben.

1. Da bei meinen häufigen Gesprächen mit den Lehrern, diese oft über die schlechten Lehrbücher klagten, entschloss ich mich. Ergebnisse der Arbeit im Anfangsunterricht bei Verwendung von zwei verschiedenen Lehrbüchern zu untersuchen. In der einen Klasse wurde das übliche Lehrbuch verwendet, zu dem gar keine anderen audio-visuellen Hilfsmitteln vorhanden waren und in der Parallelklasse ein sehr gelobtes Lehrwerk mit allen möglichen dazugehörigen Mitteln (Arbeitsheft, Wandbilder, Tonbandaufnahmen usw.), das mir das Goethe-Institut für 30 Schüler zur Verfügung gestellt hatte. Nach zwei Jahren zeigten die Ergebnisse, dass das einheimische Lehrbuch sogar etwas besser war. Die Lehrerin, die mit viel Begeisterung mit dem so gut ausgestatteten Lehrbuch gearbeitet hatte, konnte den Ergebnissen nicht glauben. Mir war es klar. Die Autorin des Lehrbuches, das für die serbisch sprechenden Schüler geschrieben wurde, berücksichtigte die aus der Praxis bekannten Schwierigkeiten (die Aussprache bestimmter Laute, die Wortstellung, die Negation usw.) und widmete ihnen mehr Aufmerksamkeit; der Autor des so gut gestalteten Lehrbuches schrieb aber sein Buch für unbekannte Benutzer (Franzosen, Japaner...). – Oft wurde ich aufgefordert bessere Lehrbücher zu schreiben. Ich antwortete aber immer, dass ich es noch nicht tun kann. Es muss zuerst eine wissenschaftliche kontrastive Analyse beider Sprachen durchgeführt werden, dann eine Pädagogische Grammatik, eine Schulgrammatik (für bestimmte Schultypen) geschrieben werden, um erst dann bessere Lehrbücher schreiben zu können. Als ich mein Projekt durchsetzte, wurde die Kontrastive Grammatik in fast zehn Jahren geschrieben, auch danach Lehrbücher, eine Lücke blieb zwar, denn die Pädagogische Grammatik, obwohl begonnen, blieb ungeschrieben, weil ich in den Ruhestand musste und niemand fand sich, obwohl versprochen, dies zu Ende zu führen. Dabei betonte ich aber immer, dass Lehrbücher nur einer der Faktoren im Unterricht seien. DER LEHRER, gut ausgebildet, ist der wichtigste Faktor! Das werde ich nie aufhören zu wiederholen.

2. Der zweite Grund, das Projekt ins Leben zu rufen und es zu Ende zu führen, war mein Wunsch und die Notwendigkeit, die Sprachwissenschaft an allen Germanistischen Lehrstühlen im Lande auf ein höheres Niveau zu bringen und zwar dadurch, dass die Mitarbeiter am Projekt durch ihre Arbeit am Projekt zu wissenschaftlichen Titeln kommen, um dadurch auch der Sprachwissenschaft die ihr gebührende Gleichsetzung mit der Literaturwissenschaft zu ermöglichen. Das gelang auch im großen Maße, denn im Rahmen des Projektes entstanden mehrere Dissertationen und Magisterarbeiten und der wissenschaftliche Nachwuchs in der Sprachwissenschaft war gesichert. Ich konnte damals leider nicht ahnen, dass die mehr als zehn Jahre andauernden bösen Zeiten fast alles Getane zu Grunde richten werden. So frage ich mich manchmal, was habe ich denn in den vielen Jahren an der Fakultät getan!

3. Der dritte, nicht weniger wichtige, Grund, war der in den 70.er Jahren aufgekommene Trend in der Linguistik kontrastive Studien und Analysen, Grammatiken zu machen. Viele waren in Arbeit, aber wenige zu Ende geführt. So fragten sich die Zuständigen im Institut für deutsche Sprache in Mannheim, wie dies mit den Leuten vom Balkan funktionieren wird. Aber dank der Disziplin von Engel, seinem wunderbaren Verständnis für unsere Schwächen (nicht rechtzeitiges Einreichen von Manuskripten, einer gewissen Leichtfertigkeit und vieles andere mehr) und auch meiner Überzeugung, dass wir das schaffen werden, wurde das Ziel auch erreicht. Und Engel sagte in seiner Dankansprache, als ihm unser Botschafter in Deutschland den tausend Mal verdienten Orden der jugoslawischen Fahne mit goldenem Kranz (14.03.1991) verlieh, unter anderem auch folgendes: "Und ich rede, vor allen anderen, von Pavica aus Novi Sad, die den ersten Funken schlug und, dank einer einmaligen Kombination aus Emotion und Ausdauer, die Kollegen bei der Stange hielt und so dem Buch einen späten, aber erfolgreichen Start sicherte. Ich werde nie aufhören zu sagen, dass ihr das Hauptverdienst an unserer vergleichenden Grammatik zukommt. Wenn ich der Zuchtmeister gewesen sein sollte – es gibt ja Leute, die mir das zutrauen -, so war sie das sprühende Herz des Projekts. ... ein bisschen Preußen, ein bisschen Balkan – das konnte nur funktionieren dank Pavicas ausgleichendem und vorwärtsdrängendem Elan."

Hier darf ich auch nicht vergessen, dass uns bei diesem Projekt das Goethe-Institut in Belgrad und in Zagreb bei unseren Sitzungen (wenigstens zwei Mal im Jahr) ihre Räume zur Verfügung stellte und mit Wohlwollen die Arbeit unterstützte. Außer dieser Arbeitssitzungen organisierte ich für alle Teilnehmer am Projekt Seminare, zu denen ich auch ausländische aber auch einheimische Linguisten immer einlud. Diese fanden dann meist an schönen Orten statt, um wieder das Nützliche mit dem Schönen zu verbinden. So fragte mich einmal der damalige Dekan, warum das Seminar in Dubrovnik und nicht in Novi Sad stattfinde, und fügte hinzu: "Geht ihr baden oder arbeiten?" Und ich, die selten schlagfertig sein kann, antwortete prompt: – "Beides!" Gerade über dieses Seminar hat eine Kollegin aus Belgrad einen ausführlichen Bericht drucken lassen. Da sagt sie unter anderem: "...Alle waren einstimmig in der Meinung, dass wir all dies vor allem Frau Prof. Dr. Pavica Mrazovitsch zu verdanken haben, die durch ihre Beharrlichkeit, ihre Herhaftigkeit und vor allem ihre Selbstlosigkeit, ohne

eigene Interessen oder die Interessen ihres Lehrstuhls in den Vordergrund zu rücken, alles tut, um uns näher zu bringen und dadurch die jugoslawische Linguistik fördert. Dabei gilt ihre Aufmerksamkeit den jüngeren Kollegen, die einmal selbst diese Last übernehmen werden. ...“ Božinka Petronijević, in: *Zbornik radova Instituta za strane jezike i književnosti*, Heft 3, Novi Sad 1981, S. 418-421.

Sonst waren das Organisieren und die Teilnahme an verschiedenen Seminaren seit dem Jahre 1955 fast zur Verpflichtung geworden. Viele Vorlesungen hielt ich für die Deutschlehrer im ganzen damaligen Jugoslawien, auch nach dem Zerfall, z.B. in Ohrid drei Mal für die mazedonischen Deutschlehrer. Das waren immer schöne und nützliche Wochen des Zusammenseins. Von den über achtzig Referaten an verschiedenen Kongressen, Symposien und Tagungen im Lande und an fast allen europäischen Universitäten und Fachtagungen wäre zu viel hier zu reden.

Es wäre ungerecht, wenn ich nur über Schwierigkeiten bei der Verwirklichung meiner Pläne an der Fakultät reden würde. Für viele Aktivitäten an der Fakultät selbst oder auch in Ausland wusste man am Lehrstuhl wenig oder gar nicht, oder das interessierte kaum jemanden. So zum Beispiel meine Untersuchungen zusammen mit dem Prof. Dr. Wilfried Stölting aus Oldenburg über die Kenntnisse der Muttersprache unserer Gastarbeiterkinder. Für diese Kinder schrieb ich sogar eine sehr verkürzte Version der Kontrastiven Grammatik, wobei auch die Phonetik einbezogen wurde. Eine ausführliche Analyse der Interferenz des Deutschen auf das Serbokroatischen (über 40 Seiten) blieb ungedruckt – Gott weiß, was damals wichtiger für mich war. Aber die gekürzte Version erschien doch, wie auch eine zusammen mit Stölting geschriebene.

Ebenso störte niemanden, dass ich eine Zeit lang die Studenten im Rahmen meiner Tätigkeit im Roten Kreuz zur Blutspende führte. Das Blutspenden ist Tradition in unserer Familie, vor allem weil sowohl ich als auch Mila und Ivana RH negativ sind. Wie viele Neugeborene bekamen mein und ihr Blut, um überleben zu können. Milosch sorgt, wie er auch in dieser Tätigkeit den Schwestern nachkommen könnte. Schwer, denn Mila hat 90 Mal Blut gespendet.

Auch die vielen Exkursionen, die ich für die Studenten organisierte, waren kein Dorn im Auge. Das alles kostet ja viel Vorbereitungen und viel Mühe, und wer möchte schon dies freiwillig auf sich nehmen. Nur die letzte blieb mir in böser Erinnerung, nicht durch die Studenten! – Aber das habe ich ja schon zuvor angedeutet, dass ich darüber lieber nicht reden möchte.

Auch viele bekannte Germanisten aus Deutschland waren Gäste an unserem Lehrstuhl. Weil ich sie meist eingeladen hatte, damit die Studenten die Autoren der Bücher, aus denen sie zu lernen hatten, auch sehen, hören und mit ihnen sprechen können. Meine Aufgabe dabei war, sie am Flughafen in Belgrad abzuholen, mich um sie zu kümmern und zu uns einzuladen. Das waren schöne und nützliche Gespräche. Unser Haus war immer offen, voller Gäste, zuerst die Gäste meines Mannes und die Meinigen, dann die der Kinder. Ich glaube, dass sich alle gut in unserem gastfreundlichen Haus fühlten.

Zum Schluss muss ich noch einen langandauernden aber erfolgreichen Kampf erwähnen. – Wenn meine misslungenen Bemühungen bei der Organisation der Arbeit im Sprachlabor und im Multimedialen Zentrum das Ergebnis der konservativen Auffassung der Leitung der Fakultät gewesen waren, und die doch zustande gebachten Arbeiten (nach fünfjährigem Kampf) am Projekt der Kontrastiven Grammatik wohl aus der Angst der Zuständigen an der Fakultät vor einer Zusammenarbeit mit deutschen Institutionen herrührte, oder noch schlimmer durch bestimmte Direktiven gestoppt werden sollten, dann können die offenen Verhinderungen der Vorschläge von mir, am Institut für fremde Sprachen und Literaturen eigene Publikationen herauszugeben, als reine Bosheit derjenigen aufgefasst werden, die nichts zu publizieren, die nichts in ihrem Fach getan hatten. Zu der Zeit (Mitte der 70.er Jahre) erschien das Jahrbuch der Fakultät nicht mehr, weil die Fakultät in mehrere Institute aufgeteilt wurde, so ergab sich die Notwendigkeit eigene Publikationen ins Leben zu rufen, in denen Lehrkräfte und auch Studenten ihre Arbeiten, Studien und anderes mehr drucken könnten. Und weil ich das Begonnene nicht lassen konnte, „durfte“ ich nach zwei Jahren wieder verschiedene Begründungen schreiben, die Konzeption zusammenstellen, die billigste Druckerei suchen usw. usw. (Entschuldige dieses“ usw.“, aber das Aufzählen dieser Tätigkeiten würde zu viel Platz in Anspruch nehmen!) -In der Zeitspanne 1979 – 1985 (als ich emeritierte) wurden sieben Sammelbände der Arbeiten von Lehrkräften des Instituts herausgegeben, mehr als zehn Lehrbücher und Sprach- oder Literaturstudien, Dissertationen, Sammelbände von zwei Symposien der Gesellschaft für angewandten Linguistik (die inzwischen zur Tradition geworden sind) und ein Sammelband des Symposiums der österreichischen und jugoslawischen Germanisten. – Die Kollegen in der Redaktion waren nett, aber die Arbeit war mein. Ich allein trug die Manuskripte nach Belgrad (dort war die billigste Druckerei) und schleppete die gedruckten Bücher mit meinem Wagen zurück. Einmal nur traf mich bei dieser Arbeit an den Treppen ein Kollege, verwundert was ich da tue. – Vielleicht war ich selber schuld, aber das Befehlen oder Betteln hab` ich bis heute nicht gelernt. Nun genug davon, sonst verfalle ich in eine ganz schlechte Stimmung und das möchte ich nicht.

Unerwähnt darf die BIBLIOGRAPHIE der Lehrkräfte an der Philosophischen Fakultät (1964 – 1984) nicht bleiben, die ich als Prodekanin zusammenstellte und herausgab (1015 S.). Auch diese Arbeit war mit einer Menge von Schwierigkeiten verbunden, sogar Beschuldigungen und Zweifeln an meinem gutgemeinten Vorhaben. Keine Arbeit fiel mir je schwer, weder die ich mir selber ausdachte, noch die mir auferlegte (wie das mit der Bibliographie der Fall war), aber schmutzige Sachen, die fast jede meiner Tätigkeiten begleitete, hinterließen Bitterkeit und oft Schwermut, die zu meiner Natur gar nicht passen.

So endete mein „Leidensweg“ an der Fakultät. schön, aber auch traurig. Schön, weil ich doch eine bleibende Spur über meine Arbeit hinterlassen hatte, die selbstverständlich andere noch zu bewerten haben, und traurig, weil ich in den Ruhestand musste in vollen Kräften, voll neuer Ideen und begonnener Arbeiten. Ich habe nämlich früh zu arbeiten begonnen und dem Gesetz nach musste man damals mit 40 Arbeitsjahren

mit der Arbeit aufhören. Ich hörte natürlich nicht auf. Jetzt hatte ich Zeit, die längst versprochenen Lehrbücher zu schreiben und das tat ich auch. Die geplante und mit allen Mitarbeitern besprochene und teilweise begonnene Pädagogische Grammatik der deutschen Sprache blieb auf der Strecke, obwohl die Kollegen versprochen hatten, weiter an ihr zu arbeiten. Schade!

Auch eine Grammatik der serbokroatischen Sprache habe ich mit der Slawistin Zora Vukadinovitsch geschrieben (740 S.) und bin sehr stolz darüber, obwohl ich den Eindruck habe, dass mir die Slawisten diese "Frechheit" doch noch nicht verzeihen können. Sie ist aber als "Nebenprodukt" der Kontrastiven Grammatik entstanden. Um kontrastieren zu können, musste man ja zuerst auch das Serbokroatische nach dem gleichen grammatischen Modell beschreiben, wie das Deutsche von Prof. Engel schon beschrieben war. So hatte ich einen guten Anhaltspunkt. Die Arbeit war trotzdem nicht leicht, aber es hat sich gelohnt, denn soweit ich informiert bin, wird an fast allen Slawistischen Instituten in Europa, und nicht nur da, nach ihr gelehrt und gelernt und die erste Auflage ist schon längst vergriffen. Ob ich noch Kräfte aufbringe, eine veränderte und verbesserte zweite vorzubereiten, bin ich nicht sicher.

Solltest du mich jetzt zum Schluss noch fragen, ob ich – wenn ich es könnte – in meinem Leben etwas ändern, anders tun würde, kann ich mit Bestimmtheit sagen: "Nein!" Es ist ganz gewiss, dass ich unter den Bedingungen und in den Verhältnissen, in denen ich mein Leben verbracht hatte, bestimmt die gleichen Fehler gemacht hätte, wie auch alles andere, mit Liebe und Freude Verwirklichte, wiederholen würde.

Es möge mir noch gestattet werden, Auszeichnungen, die ich für meine Arbeit bekommen habe, aufzuzählen. Ich bitte dies nicht als Prahlerei aufzufassen, sondern als Dank an diejenigen, die meine langjährige, mit Liebe und Freude getane Arbeit zu schätzen wussten.

1. – 1973. – SILBERNE MEDAILLE "Hermann Gmeiner" des SOS-Kinderdorfes (für die aktive Teilnahme im Initiativausschuss zur Gründung des SOS-Kinderdorfes in Novi Sad). Meine Tochter Ivana leistete auch ihren Beitrag dazu, indem sie das Buch vom Gründer so vieler Kinderdörfer in der ganzen Welt, von Hermann Gmeiner, ins Serbische übersetzt hatte, um die Zuständigen, die sich zuerst mit dieser Idee nicht so leicht befreunden konnte, von der Nützlichkeit dieser so humanen Idee zu überzeugen. Bei der feierlichen Eröffnung und der Rede von Titos Frau, Jovanka Broz, (deren Rede ich zu übersetzen hatte) saßen aber alle in der ersten Reihe des Saales und Herrn Gmeiner und mir wurden die letzten zwei Sitze rechts zugemutet.

2. 1987. – GOETHE – MEDAILLE in Gold, die mir in der Residenz, in München der Bundespräsident Richard von Weizsäcker persönlich überreichte und in seiner Laudatio unter anderem auch folgendes sagte: "So hat sich Pavica Mrazovitsch um die deutsche Sprache vielfältig verdient gemacht. Sie hat durch ihr Wirken die Wissenschaft von der deutschen Sprache an Jugoslawiens Universitäten wieder zu Ehren gebracht. Sie hat Kontakte und Kooperationen unter den Vertretern der Germanistischen Linguistik in Jugoslawien zuerst eingeleitet und später ausgebaut. Die von ihr vertretene Art der Sprachbetrachtung hat daher im ganzen Lande Schule gemacht."

Wenn die jugoslawische Germanistik heute ein anderes Gesicht hat als vor 25 Jahren, so hat Pavica Mrazovitsch zu diesem Wandel entscheidend beigetragen.

3. -1992. – DAS GROSSE VERDIENSTKREUZ des Verdienstordens der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Die gleiche Auszeichnung erhielt auch Prof. Dr. Strahinja K. Kostitsch, so fand die Feier der Verleihung an der Philosophischen Fakultät in Novi Sad statt. Den Orden überreichte uns im Auftrag des Herrn Bundespräsidenten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland der damalige Botschafter, Herr Dr. Hansjörg Eiff, der unter anderem ein für mich neues Charakteristikum hervorhob: "Vor einigen Jahren,..., nannte sie einer der Direktoren des Instituts für deutsche Sprache, Herr Dr. Gerhard Stickel, die 'philologische Herkula'. ... Durch ihr Lebenswerk schlügen und schlagen Sie Brücken zwischen Kulturräumen. Das ist ein Werk, auf das Sie stolz sein können, für das wir sie bewundern und das diese Auszeichnung verdient hat."

4. – 1999. – MEDAILLE DES UNTERRICHTSMINISTERIUMS UNGARNS für erfolgreiche pädagogische Tätigkeit, das mir der Rektor der Szegeder Universität im Festsaal des Rektorats feierlich überreichte, mit der Bemerkung, dass ich die erste ausländische Professorin bin, die diese Auszeichnung bekommt. Diese Medaille erhielt ich auf Vorschlag der Studenten, was ihr für mich einen besonderen zusätzlichen Wert zukommen lässt.

5. – 1999. – Vom Leiter des deutschen Lehrstuhls, Prof. Dr. Peter Bassola, in Szeged bekam ich vor dem Beginn des Kolloquiums, organisiert mir zu Ehren, eine FESTSCHRIFT unter dem Titel "Schnittstelle Deutsch" überreicht. Im Vorwort dieses Buches steht auch folgendes: "Der Anlass für diese Festschrift ist ein besonderer, nicht alltäglicher. Sie ist keiner runden Jahreszahl gewidmet, vielmehr möchten wir mit ihr eine hochgeschätzte Kollegin ehren und ihr danken für die Jahre, die sie mit uns gearbeitet hat."

Der eventuell interessierte Leser dieser Zeilen wird umsonst nach Auszeichnungen aus meinem Lande suchen. Mich interessierte nie, warum ich in meinem Lande, in meiner Stadt, nie öffentlich ausgezeichnet war, obwohl es mehrere Vorschläge von Kollegen an der Fakultät gab. Ich habe ja nie etwas darum getan, um ausgezeichnet zu werden. Für mich war immer die größte Freude, wenn ich ehemalige Schüler oder Studenten auf der Straße traf und die mich dann freudig begrüßten, oder wenn mir jemand ihre Grüße überbrachte. Eine solche Freude hatte ich vor einigen Monaten, als mir die Kollegen vom Lehrstuhl eine schriftliche Prüfungsarbeit einer Studentin schicken ließen. Das Thema der Arbeit war: – Kennen Sie einen alten Menschen, den Sie um sein Leben beneiden? Und die Studentin, die einige Male bei mir war, um Rat zu holen für die Ausarbeitung eines Referates für ein Studententreffen in Pula (Kroatien), schreibt ohne meinen Namen zu nennen, folgendes: "Diese Frau besitzt eine Kraft, die man wirklich selten finden kann.... Eine solche Person lernt man nicht oft kennen, manche sogar nie in ihrem ganzen Leben. ... und ihre Kraft und Besonderheit liegt darin, dass sie ihre Erfahrungen uneigennützig mit anderen teilt. Diese Dame ist eine Größe im kleinen Körper, der ständig in Bewegung ist; ihr Geist ist immer dazu bereit, neue Ideen zu ergreifen."

Nur einmal habe ich zufällig erfahren, warum mir keine Auszeichnungen zustehen. Es soll einmal ein zuständiger Parteimitglied gesagt haben: "Ja, ja, ich weiß genau, wie fleißig sie ist, aber sie hat sich niemals politisch betätigt!"

Macht ja nichts! Es ist ja auch nicht wichtig! Es heißt ja, dass niemand Prophet im eigenen Dorf sein kann!

Du scheinst die Zukunft pessimistisch zu sehen!

– Vielleicht hast du Recht, obwohl ich mich mein Leben lang bemüht habe, nur die schönen Seiten des Lebens zu sehen und alles Schlimme so schnell wie nur möglich zu vergessen. Ich konnte es mir nicht erlauben, dass mich Ungerechtigkeiten, Missgeschicke und Niederlagen (die gab's ja auch) zu Grunde richten und mich in meinen Bemühungen, allen um mich ein inhalts volleres und besseres Leben zu ermöglichen, hindern. Ich habe mich früher auch nie über schlimme Begebenheiten beklagt oder gar geklammert (jetzt schon). Auf die übliche Frage: "Wie geht es?" antwortete ich immer "Ausgezeichnet! Nie besser!" – und dann glaubte ich auch selbst mit der Zeit, dass es wirklich so ist.

Ich war nie pessimistisch veranlagt. Die Hoffnung wollte ich nicht verlieren. Traurig bin ich trotzdem, dass meine Enkelkinder ihre Kindheit und Jugend in den so lang andauernden bösen Jahren verbringen mussten. Die Jüngsten kennen ja gar kein normales Leben. Ich sehe im Augenblick keine Zukunft für sie, sie selbst auch nicht. Ihre Pflichten tun sie brav, lernen und legen an der Fakultät ihre Prüfungen ab, fragen sich aber oft: "Wozu?" Unser Elend und die allgemeine Armut stimmen mich pessimistisch und ich weiß genau, dass ich keine besseren Zeiten noch erleben werde, außerdem wusste ich auch nicht, wie schwer das Altsein sein kann.

Wie empfindest du deinen Witwenstand?

– Das ist eine traurige Geschichte. Mein Mann ging von uns zu schnell, unerwartet, in vier Monaten weg. Ende Oktober 1992 spürte er die ersten Schmerzen im Rücken, dann wurde er im November operiert und im Februar war er nicht mehr unter uns. Nach der Operation hat er sich besser gefühlt, das neue Jahr haben wir noch wie üblich alle zusammen gefeiert. Ich wollte gar nicht glauben, dass er ernst krank ist. Ich war überzeugt, dass ich ihn mit verschiedenen Kräutern retten werde. Ich konnte mir nicht vorstellen, dass mir das nicht gelingen wird, dass ich versagen musste. – Und so blieb ich allein. Das Alleinsein an sich macht mir keine Probleme. Oft habe ich mir's früher gewünscht, in Ruhe, ohne viel Rummel um mich sein zu können. Jetzt hab' ich es und kann es gar nicht so richtig genießen, im Gegenteil. Sehr oft bin ich traurig, obwohl mich meine Kinder regelmäßig besuchen und sich um mich rührend kümmern, – dafür bin ich ihnen sehr, sehr dankbar.

Aber am traurigsten war sein Begräbnis. Alle Begräbnisse sind traurig, aber das Seinige war trauriger als alle anderen, denen ich beiwohnte. Während ich das Begräbnis organisierte, meldete ich zuerst seinen Tod der Bankleitung, mit der Bitte, dass jemand aus der Bank einige Abschiedsworte am Grab sagt. Niemand kam, oder doch einige Kolleginnen und Kollegen mit einem großen Blumenkranz, aber sprechen wollte niemand. Einige Tage später erfuhren wir durch Zufall von einer Freundin von Ivana, wie

sie am Tag des Begräbnisses in der Bank verweinte Gesichter antraf und als sie fragte, was passiert sei, bekam sie zur Antwort, dass heute ihr bester Direktor gestorben sei. Alle haben ihn geschätzt und geliebt, aber die neue Leitung wollte sich die Mühe nicht geben – ich könnte fast sagen – ihre Pflicht zu tun. – Dann rief ich den Verein der Befreiungskämpfer an, in dem er jahrelang Sekretär war.

Da sagte mir jemand am Apparat, dass die geänderten Verhältnisse für sie nicht günstig wären, niemand würde sich trauen öffentlich zu reden. Auch die berühmte "Matica srpska", in der er jahrelang im Aufsichtsrat war und vieles für sie getan hat, schickte bloß ein ausführliches Telegramm, dasselbe tat auch meine Fakultät, wo er ebenso viele Jahre im Fakultätsrat als Delegat der Bank saß.

Und als niemand den Mut aufzutreiben konnte, einem bescheidenen aber doch in der Stadt sehr bekannten Menschen das letzte Wort zum Abschied zu sagen, fasste ich mich zusammen und ich tat es. Es fiel mir wirklich nicht leicht vor so vielen Verwandten und Freunden (auch der Kinder) zu reden. Aber hinter mir standen meine Enkelkinder, jedes mit einer Blume in der Hand, und meine Kinder, Ivana hielt mich fest an den Schultern und ich verabschiedete mich im Namen der Enkel von ihrem geliebten Opa, im Namen der Kinder vom guten und strengen Vater und in meinem eigenem. Ich dankte ihm für alle schönen Jahre, die ich mit ihm vergehen durfte und versprach ihm, dass wir ihn nie vergessen werden. Ein Männeroktett sang (für wenig Geld) seine Lieblingslieder, die ich ihm früher auch gerne sang.

Es wäre traurig, viel zu traurig, sich von jemandem für immer zu verabschieden, ohne ein einziges Abschiedswort zu sagen. Wie viel Ungutes und Schlimmes in bösen Zeiten auf der Oberfläche erscheint! Wie die Menschen, indem sie sich selbst zu beschützen glauben, andere tief verletzen können!

(*Svenka Savić, 1999 und 2001*)

(Hier noch einige Auszüge aus verschiedenen Rezensionen meiner Bücher, die als Anhang, oder irgendwie anders außerhalb des obigen Textes gedruckt werden können)

I. NEMAČKO-SRPSKOHRVATSKI FRAZELOŠKI REČNIK

1. "Das Werk stellt einen wertvollen Beitrag dar, nicht nur für die Germanistik sondern auch für die Slawistik, demzufolge auch für die kontrastive Linguistik." – Velimir Petrović, Osijek, in: *Zbornik radova Instituta za strane jezike i književnosti*, Heft 3, 1981, S. 453-455.

2. "Das Phraseologische Wörterbuch ist eine unversiegbare Quelle des Wortschatzes einer Sprache; das ist nicht nur ein einfaches Wörterbuch, in dem man Erklärungen für unbekannte Redewendungen nachschlagen kann, sondern ein Buch, in dem man stundenlang blättern und immer wieder neue und neue Ausdrücke finden kann, die auch dem besten Germanisten unbekannt sind." Stanko Žepić, Zagreb, in: *Strani jezici*, Heft 3, 1981, S. 245

3. „Das ist gleichzeitig ein Pionier- und Kapitalwerk unserer germanistischen Lexikographie, das vor allem durch die Fülle von bildhaftem, wertvollem und bedeutendem Stoff der deutschen Sprache den Benutzer anzieht, aber ebenso durch die serbokroatischen Entsprechungen. Es kommt selten vor, dass ein Wörterbuch als erstes gleichzeitig auch so umfassendes (um die 20.000 Stichwörter) Wörterbuch der Ausgangssprache ist, wie auch das erste zweisprachige dieser Sprachsorte und die erste umfassende Veröffentlichung einer Sammlung von Phraseologismen der Zielsprache, wie dies hier der Fall ist. Zum Kapitalwerk zählt es auf Grund der echten wissenschaftlichen Grundlage des umfangreichen und repräsentativen Corpus der deutschen Gegenwartssprache, wie auch die gründliche und vielschichtige Bearbeitung des Sprachmaterials. Die prunkvolle Sammlung bildhafter Ausdrücke in der deutschen Sprache (aber ebenso zahlreicher bildhafter, sprichwörtlicher und prächtiger Übersetzungen in das Serbokroatische) ist gleichzeitig auch eine umfangreiche stilistische Studie, die die Möglichkeit eröffnet weitere stilistische, soziolinguistische und psycholinguistische Forschungen zu treiben. Das ist ein echter LINGUISTISCHER SCHMAUS für alle Liebhaber der Sprachforschung des Deutschen und des Serbokroatischen.“ Aleksandar Nejgebauer, Novi Sad, in: *Suvremena lingvistika*, Zagreb, 23, 24, 1981, S. 70

II. – KONTRASTIVE GRAMMATIK – Deutsch – Serbokroatisch (die nie ohne Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Ulrich Engel hätte geschrieben werden können!!!)

1. „Die von Ulrich Engel und Pavica Mrazovic herausgegebene Kontrastive Grammatik Deutsch – Serbokroatisch stellt, was den serbokroatischen Teil anlangt, die umfassendste und modernste Grammatik des Serbokroatischen in deutscher Sprache dar und erfüllt insofern auch ein dringendes Desiderat für Lehre und Studium, aber auch für die Forschung.“ Dr. Christiane Thim-Mabrey und Klaus Trost, Regensburg, in: *Kratylos* 33/1988, S. 150.

2. „Das Werk stellt insgesamt eine anerkennungswerte Leistung dar; sein Stellenwert für die Serbokroatistik dürfte den für die Germanistik noch übertreffen. Nicht geringer ist er für die Theorie und Praxis der kontrastiven Grammatik.“ Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Fleischer und Dr. Holm Fleischer, Leipzig, in: *Zeitschrift für Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft und Kommunikationsforschung*, 41, 1988, S. 256

III. DIE STELLUNG DER SATZELEMENTE IM DEUTSCHEN UND IM SERBOKROATISCHEN, Heidelberg 1982 (Dieses Buch schrieb ich viel früher als es veröffentlicht wurde, jedenfalls vor der Kontrastiven Grammatik)“ Pavica Mrazović entschied sich für eine Kombination des dependentiellen Modells der verbalen Zentriertheit mit dem Drachschen Satzrahmen, somit ist ihr Modell ein dependentieller und linearer. Dies zeigt vor allem eins klar, dass man so schnell wie möglich von dem Begriff der freien Wortstellung, ablassen muss, weil auch Wörter in Wortgruppen, wie auch Wortgruppen im Satz sehr bestimmte Positionen einnehmen müssen. Die Tatsache, dass wir nicht im Stande sind Mechanismen, die diese Positionen regeln, präzis zu bestimmen, gibt uns keinen Recht, die Wortstellung in irgendeiner Sprache als frei zu erklären.“ Prof. Dr. Ljubiša Rajić, Belgrad, in: *Zbornik radova Instituta za strane jezike i književnosti*, Heft 5, Novi Sad 1983, S. 455-459

IV. GRAMATIKA SRPSKOHRVATSKOG JEZIKA ZA STRANCE

1.“Man kann mit vollem Recht sagen, dass die ‘Gramatika srpskohrvatskog jezika za strance’ von Pavica Mrazović und Zora Vukadinović ein wertvolles und gründliches Handbuch für all diejenigen, die diese Sprache als Fremdsprache unterrichten, sein wird, ein unumgängliches und nützliches Lehrbuch für die, die diese Sprache erlernen möchten, aber auch eine gute, ernstlich und detailliert ausgearbeitete Grammatik der serbokroatischen Sprache.”

Vera Vasić, Novi Sad, in: *Zbornik Matice srpske za filologiju i lingvistiku*, nr. 35, 1993, S. 257-259.

2. “Die Tatsache, dass die Autoren ein neues Modell bei der Beschreibung der serbokroatischen Sprache als System angewandt haben, spricht für sie, weil die Anwendung dieses Modells neue Erkenntnisse auf die Sprachphänomene der serbokroatischen Sprache mit sich brachte, wobei dadurch neue Perspektiven für künftige Deskriptionen eröffnet worden sind und unsere Linguistik sich den zeitgemäßen Trends näherte. – Wir sind der Meinung, dass jeder, der sich mit der serbokroatischen Sprache befasst (nicht nur als Fremdsprache) diese Grammatik zu Rate ziehen muss, wobei das Niveau, das durch diese Grammatik aufgestellt worden ist, als verpflichtender Standard für künftige Autoren bleiben wird.” Branislava Popović, Beograd, in: *Strani jezici*, Vol. XXXIV-XXXV (1992-1993), S. 218-220.

3. “Es geht um ein Buch, dessen Titel mehr als bescheiden ist. Nach dem, was diese Grammatik bringt und auch nach der Art und Weise, wie die Sprache präsentiert wird, das ist ohne Zweifel bis heute die *beste* Grammatik der serbokroatischen Sprache überhaupt, deswegen würde ihr viel besser ein anderer Titel passen: “Erste wissenschaftliche Grammatik der serbokroatischen Sprache”. ... Die größte Anzahl der wissenschaftlichen Neuigkeiten befindet sich in demjenigen Teil der Grammatik, den Pavica Mrazović, die bekannte Germanistin aus Novi Sad, geschrieben hat, so kann man sagen, ohne den Beitrag von Zora Vukadinović zu verringern, dass man dieses grammatische *Kapitalwerk* doch mit dem Namen Pavica Mrazović verbinden muss.” Prof. Dr. Miloš Kovačević, Sarajevo, in: Oslobodjenje, 21.5.1991.

Interviewerin: Svenka Savić, 1999, 2001; Übersetzung: Zoran Velikić

Elza (1926), Novi Sad



I'd like you to tell me about your childhood.

– I was born in Novi Sad on 7th February, 1926. Back then, it was the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. I'd had a happy childhood until 1941. I had a brother who was seven years older than me. My mother was from Budapest, my father was Czech, his mother was Austrian, born in Novi Sad, but he never stayed long in Novi Sad. He mostly travelled from Budapest to Vienna and Novi Sad, his mother was from Vienna. My father spoke German, Czech, Russian, Hungarian and Serbian. Two hundred years ago, my great-grandfather came from the Czech Republic to Novi Sad under Maria Theresa's rule, it was Austria-Hungary back then. They had been doing fine, they had been wealthy, hard-working people, until everything was taken away from them.

My father met mummy in Pest, they also got married there in 1926, and in the same year my father was recruited by the army in Russia. My brother was born in Pest in 1919, when daddy came home from the army. He was never a member of any political party. He had listened to Lenin's speech at a convention in Nyzny Novgorod together with many other people, and when they came back home, Hungarians arrested him immediately and put him into Chilag (that is a prison in Szeged). The word spread of course, my family and relatives were frightened, mummy's brother sent her out of Pest, as it was clear that she could be mistreated. She escaped to her father-in-law's in Novi Sad while my father was in prison, for eight months. Thanks to some connections he had, my uncle took daddy out of prison and that's how he came to Novi Sad. Daddy died when he was seventy-nine, he never ever joined any political party. He was a Catholic.

This is how the life of our family started in Novi Sad. I was born in 1926. Back then, we lived in Primorska street, the former Georgi Dimitrova. Novi Sad wasn't as big as it is now. Daddy used to tell me how he used to go by boat in this park, near the present Park hotel. There was a by-channel of the Danube there, a swampy part of Novi

Sad spread all the way to here. When I was a child, I remember there was no Dunavski Park back then, there was a swamp around two metres deep and four-five metres broad, walled in large bricks. It had been built under the rule of Maria Theresa, there was, reportedly, a tunnel under the Danube that spread all the way to Roman Trenches.

I remember clearly that there was a big church in the Danube, by the bridge – on the right hand side of Váradinski bridge, at the place where the Danube quay is now. The main entrance was facing the east, it was all in the water, you could see just a part of the windows, there was no roof. I think the church was destroyed during the Hungarian occupation in 1941, during a raging flood. When they speak these days about what Novi Sad looked like in those days, they never mention that church.

So, my parents were actually forced to come to live in Novi Sad. My mother was Hungarian from Pest, her ancestors had come from Erdelj. She was educated in Pest, she had private lessons in German. She lived at a countess's in Buda. She was a reformist. They lost all their property after their parents had died. We spoke German and Hungarian at home. We celebrated holidays of both religions, catholic and orthodox. When my parents came to Novi Sad, my mother never worked, she was mostly a housewife.

After she had given birth to my brother, mummy wasn't allowed to have any more children. While she was carrying my brother, an accident happened. In Pest, she fell on her stomach at the beginning of the eighth month of pregnancy. It was winter, 1st February, daddy took her quickly by coach to hospital, but it was a bit too late, my brother was born in the coach. When they came in front of the hospital, doctors had already come out, it was snowing heavily, when they took my brother by the legs and raised him and when they began to spank him, he started to cry – he was alive! Doctors recommended that mummy shouldn't have any more children. I don't know what my parents used for protection, anyway, I was born quite unexpectedly, seven years after my brother had been born. Daddy was so happy to have a daughter. We lived happily as a family: we had Christmases and Santa Clauses and Easters, the house was always full of relatives, friends. We got along with our neighbours, there were different religions and nations, we never paid any attention to the differences among us: we celebrated their Christmas, we went to their house, they came to us, orthodox, Catholics... We also had Jewish neighbours. We got along with them as well. I'm always happy to remember my childhood.

I finished primary school in German, here in Novi Sad, because daddy had been planning to take me to Vienna. I don't exactly know what he wanted me to do, maybe to help him with his business, anyway he insisted that I should learn German. I always spoke German with him at home, I spoke Hungarian with my mother since she had never had a good command of Serbian, and in the street, with other children, I mostly spoke Serbian, while I spoke mainly Hungarian with my brother. The German School in Novi Sad was situated at the place where there is Evangelistic Church today. It was relatively far away for a little girl so my brother usually walked me there. He went to Hungarian primary school. What I'm saying is that we never had any problems with the languages at home.

Did you have any teacher that you are glad to remember?

– I had a teacher, Olivera Markovic was her name, she was a great woman. She was a primary schoolteacher of German. I went to Serbian grammar school – I actually finished school in three languages. I went to Serbian grammar school until Hungarians invaded us in 1941. Then I enrolled in Commercial Academy in Hungarian, because there was no Serbian one in the autumn of 1942. Hungarians invaded us, everything was disrupted.

I went to Commercial Academy with Margita Beckehezi, a good friend of mine (She disappeared after the war, I don't know where. She probably went to Austria.) I was very unhappy in my class, pupils that had come from Hungary to Novi Sad Commercial Academy used to call me 'chetnik'! As a Hungarian, I had the right to put my foot down and tell them that they were the ones who didn't belong there, that they had stolen everything from us, we didn't even have any soap, they had taken everything to Hungary and left Vojvodina without a thing. Anyway, children from both Hungary and Vojvodina, from Novi Sad, to be precise, they all went to Commercial Academy. For example, there was this Serbian girl, Andjelka Plavsic was her name, she was one of my best friends, she went to Academy with me, and she had to learn Hungarian to attend the lessons. There were no schools held in Serbian, they were all held in Hungarian. All teachers had come from Hungary. We wore uniforms, each school had its distinctive cap: our school had a gray one, pupils from grammar school wore dark blue caps. Our class was composed of girls only, but there was also a class of boys.

That was the time of anti-Semitism, it was felt in town. A friend of mine, Vera Sebek, a Jew, we went to the same class, they had a lovely house in Skolska street. She used to come to us, I went to them, we walked along the promenade together. She had a brother so the three of us used to go for a walk together. When my friends, who were of the same age as me, when they saw that I had Jewish friends, they warned me if they saw me one more time with a Jewish girl they would beat me. That happened in 1943-44, and of course I didn't take it seriously, so I kept being friends with Vera. She was a lovely girl, we were fond of each other. Then there was this incident in spring: we were walking along the promenade when a group of boys from our school stopped me:

– Didn't we tell you we don't want you to mix with the Jews! I got a bit beaten. I don't know if they were organised, anyway they were against the Jews. At school, teachers never spoke against the Jews. Where they'd got that idea, I don't know. Probably, the propaganda...

I dropped out of Commercial Academy in 1944, I didn't go back there in September. We were heavily bombarded by the Americans, every day, every single day since the spring while I went to school. Some Italians from Sicily kept these huge balloons near the school, they were as long as 20 metres. Novi Sad was covered by those 20 balloons. When they were informed that the Americans were coming, they bombarded us every day at 10,15, they would release the balloons up in the sky so they covered the whole town and the Americans couldn't get their planes any lower. That was a sort of defence. Those balloons were put very high in the sky, they were huge, but they couldn't cover

the whole town. For example, there was no Maksim Gorky street at all. Everything was destroyed there. I remember there was a shop there, painted blue, turquoise blue. We found parts of that house near the Danube. The house didn't actually collapse, but the facade fell off, there were no windows. The Americans targeted on the bridge, they wanted to destroy it, the railway bridge that lead to Belgrade over the tunnel. But they didn't succeed. One bomb went through the boards of the bridge and went straight to the Danube. They struck the powerplant first, then the printing office of German newspapers Kulturbund in the former Madjarska street... then the club of the German youth in Vase Stajica street (it is Zeleznicka street now), that was a huge building, it got struck by a chain bomb. There were holes made by bombing. Then, the place where Grbavica is today, there was nothing there, only the holes, so deep that water, green water spurted from the holes when they hit the railway station, because the powerplant was right beside it. They mainly hit centres of German power, not the town itself.

I never managed to finish the fourth grade of Commercial Academy because I got married. That was in 1944, my future husband's father was the manager of the central station in Novi Sad. We were pupils, he was finishing the fifth grade of teacher-training school. He completed that school. We saw each other all the time in spring. He used to come somewhere near Skolska street. He lived in Mileticeva street, I lived here. So we met each other, we stole surreptitious glances at each other. He was also a Hungarian, one of those who had come from Hungary. He was born in Budapest and his whole family, together with his father had moved to Novi Sad. So we would glance at each other till the end of the school year. One rainy day, he came to me and said:— 'Excuse me, miss, let me introduce myself, I'm N. S.' I was confused, what with being only 18. I said: —'It's nice to meet you!', for we actually knew each other, we had been throwing glances at each other for months, but neither of us could approach the other one. So he walked me home and we said goodbye to each other. We saw each other every day since then: we would talk, we would go to the Danube banks if we had some spare time, usually in the afternoon (there was no quay back then). There was war on. We got engaged in August 1944, during the worst wartime, love flourished, bombing went on...

There was no curfew, but we weren't allowed to hang around for long: we would meet for an hour, half an hour. He would run home quickly. The Americans bombed us from 10 to 10,30 every single day, and the worst of it was that in autumn Russians began to fly over us at night. They didn't bomb us, but I heard airplanes flying over Novi Sad, and of course, nobody could sleep.

How did you make love back then?

— Well, no one made love back then. It wasn't like it is these days, it was only platonic: a man could hold your hand, kiss your hand, and that was it. Until we got married. We got married in October, not here but in Kaldo. My husband's father was the manager of the central station, he made it possible for me to leave Novi Sad by the last train, when the allies came. When we reached Baya, it had already been bombed: that big forest was full of Hungarian soldiers! We came right after the bombing, there were corpses lying around everywhere. The train came through Baya, and then we came to

the next village, and there was bombing again... the station was on fire. We went further, came to Kaldo. No, we went to Balaton Foldvar, since my father-in-law was appointed as manger of the station by the Ministry of Hungary. There was nothing private about it. We stayed in Balaton Foldvar for three days I guess, since my husband got a job by the Ministry in Kaldo. That was near the Austrian border. He was a cantor in a catholic church, he played the organ, he also taught at higher grades at school, from the fifth to the eighth grade. He was from a catholic family. I was a Catholic, too, since my father was a Catholic, my mother was a reformist. My parents got married agreeing that their first child would be a reformist and the second one would take the father's religion. So I'm a Catholic.

We got married in Kaldo immediately. Of course, the priest from that parish was against my husband, he wanted to push him out of the parish, because he had a nephew that he wanted to take my husband's job as a cantor. He managed to do it. We got ready on December 6th, we went through a lot of trouble to get a truck to go back to Pest to his family, his grandparents. When we came to Szekesfehervar, there had been this bombing again, dead people, horses lying everywhere. Me and my husband somehow always arrived somewhere right after the bombing, but we managed to save our lives. We arrived at Buda at around 10 o'clock in the evening. My husband's grandparents had this lovely villa in Buda. My husband's mother had already died (I never came to know her) before they came to Novi Sad, his father was a widower, but he got married later. That's why we came to stay with his grandparents, because my father-in-law had already married another woman.

On Christmas Eve on December 24th, 1944, my husband was ordered by Hungarians to join the army immediately, down there by the Danube, in ... Obudo. In the morning, right on Christmas, I saw him off, and at 5 o'clock in the afternoon Russians invaded Buda. Those who know their way around Buda, they know it's a hilly area. Russians took Germans and Hungarians by surprise, they arrived at Buda from the old road that led to Vienna, they didn't expect them to come that way, so we saw them coming in. Of course, there were many Germans in Buda. After a few days, Russians took them all prisoners, hundreds of them... they drove them away somewhere... I don't know where. It was terribly cold, the beginning of January 1945. Those were terrible times. Not terrible, horrible! Germans violently resisted the Russians. The Russians stole everything that could be eaten. For example, all the villas were detached and our granny had this little chicken house with ten hens in it. We found nine heads in the morning, all the hens were gone, and the smallest one hid up there in the chicken house, they didn't find her, so she stayed alive. We had two Angora rabbits, they took them as well, potatoes, everything, everything they found. The soldiers were obviously hungry. And the worst of it happened in February: a neighbour of ours was a widow, her husband had been the post-office manager, they had a lovely villa, after Christmas she went to live with her sister in Pest and she couldn't come back because all the bridges had been blown up. There was no bridge to cross the river (there were six bridges as Petefi bridge hadn't been built yet). Her house was totally robbed by the Russians.

There was no raping?

– Wait a minute, I'll tell you about it later. There was so much raping, I can't tell you how much! There was this old woman who lived in a nearby villa, she was seventy-two. Two young Russian soldiers pointed their guns at her. And their coach driver, the one who drove groceries by the coach, an elderly man, they forced him to lie on his old woman. They made him rape the old woman and the old man was so tired that he fell asleep right there, on her. Our neighbours used to talk about that. The old woman wanted to get away: -No, no, babushka! So he woke up, but he couldn't do anything, that's what our neighbours said at least. That's only one example. As for the young women, I can't tell you how terrible that was... When the Russians invaded Buda on Christmas, two Russian soldiers came to our house. We stayed on the lower flat, the upper one was locked, that's where my aunt and uncle used to live, but they had escaped earlier, he worked for the Ministry. I remember how she tried to persuade me to leave as well: -Come along with us! I didn't want to go, I wanted to stay closer to my house. So I stayed with grandmother and grandfather in that big house. When those two soldiers came in... my grandparents had this little pig, my grandmother was a very clever woman, she slaughtered this little pig and it was there lying on the table, already cut into pieces when these two soldiers came in: one of them had a bandage on his head, and the other one had Mongolian eyes. I had this lovely wristwatch, 'anker' was its make. As I was a good pupil, I didn't have to pay any tuition, 300 pengs a month, so my daddy used to give me that money and say: -You've earned this, it's your money! So I bought the watch with that money. When he saw it on my hand, the one who didn't have a bandage on his head came to me and took it off my hand. Since I spoke Serbian I said: -Don't, I'm not rich, give it back to me! I started to cry. I was young, I was only nineteen. The other one with a bandaged head said: -Give the watch back to her! And this one behaved as if he hadn't heard the other one. Then the other one shouted: -Give the watch back to her! I understood, of course. He put the watch back to my hand. So they left. It turned out later that one of them was in charge while the other one was just an ordinary soldier. Then my grandfather said: -Take off all the necklaces, all the watches! He put them all into a box and buried it under the coal, and my grandmother gave me the ugliest dress I had, she even put some soot on my face, but you could tell that wasn't real. I was already pregnant at that time. The other one, the one who had taken my watch off, came back in the afternoon, but the situation was quite different: no watches, no necklaces, no rings. My grandmother was a dressmaker and she had these big scissors, she worked together with twelve workers, all girls. He grabbed the scissors and took them away. What did he need those scissors for? That was in the spring of 1945, at the beginning of March, at Easter. Easter came early that year. I had this neighbour, she was an actress, I went on foot with her from Buda to Pest. No house was left undestroyed. When we came to the Erzsebet bridge on the Danube, we saw that its middle part was untouched. Two sides of the bridge fell down into the Danube, so they put some thick planks and we could cross the bridge. It was the same as it is now in Novi Sad. They would let only two or three people cross the bridge at a time.

I should say one more thing first. Germans were walled in the tunnel under Buda, under the royal court, resistance took almost two months, unless Russians practically drove them out of there. Anyway, we just crossed the bridge and we separated, as my husband's uncle lived in Muvestelep. I went to their place, I went from barracks to barracks looking for my husband. I'll never forget that day. On Szazados avenue there were these huge barracks where prisoners of war came from Germany, they were mostly from Ukraine. We communicated with those in the barracks like this: we would take a stone and tie a letter to it, we would throw it over the avenue, over this high wall of the barracks. We would write something on the paper, usually asking if such and such was there, those things. Some of us managed to throw the stone over the wall, but most letters fell in front of the wall since we weren't allowed to step down from the pavement, where there was this Russian soldier walking. He was just a boy, he wasn't more than 14, 15 years old. One pregnant woman, heavily pregnant she was, eight months for sure, maybe even nine, she was looking for her husband and she couldn't throw the stone, so she stepped down from the pavement... She was killed on the spot by this soldier. It was so horrible that we all left, we didn't feel like looking for our relatives any longer. I didn't find my husband.

I went to my uncle and aunt Maria's, she was clairvoyant. Marika told me this:- Listen, there's this clairvoyant in Vacy street (that's a very long street, almost 5 kilometres long), go there and she'll tell you where your husband is. I had a couple of million pengs, but that wasn't enough, since there was inflation, so she gave me some more money and I walked to that clairvoyant. I was already five months pregnant, it was springtime. So I found that woman. She lived in a house with a yard. I knocked, she looked at me and said: -Sit down on that bench, I'll call you. She had someone in there already so she told me to wait in this little park in front of the house. I sat there and waited. When that person she had inside left, she told me to come in. We sat there at the kitchen table, facing each other, the curtains were drawn. She asked me: -Would you like me to use the cards? -No, just tell me my fortune. She watched me and started to talk: -You and your brother, his name is Djura, isn't it? I said: -Yes. -You're going to meet. Your husband... And I said: -Tell me about my husband! -Yes, yes, I can see him as well. He is imprisoned somewhere, wearing a white coat. His name is Nandor? I said: -Yes. She said: He is doing something with a doctor, but he's not a doctor, he's just giving medicines. He's in a terrible situation, but you're gonna have two live sons. Two live sons. At that moment, I didn't pay too much attention to what she said. – It's over now, you may go. I said: -How much do I owe you? She said: -Nothing, because that money isn't yours. Just go. I started to cry. The money really wasn't mine, she knew it and somehow I came to believe her. While I was going out, some women came, they'd heard me crying. -What's the matter? What happened? There was this woman yesterday, a nicely dressed one, she wouldn't let her in, she kept saying: – Go away, go away, I'm not telling you anything! She begged:- I have money, I have gold, please tell me about my husband! -No, I'm not telling you anything. No sooner did she go out when she got run over by a tram and she got killed. I said: -It's not the same with me. I'm not

gonna die, but what she said about the money was true. I went home and told Marika what had happened. She said: -You may be sure that will really happen. I would really have two sons – I'll get back to it later. That Muvestelep place was near Kerepesi Cemetery, and right beside the cemetery there was this huge lawn, that's where those men from Ukraine were staying, prisoners-of-war who had come back from Germany. There was no water there, no toilette, nothing. They stayed there only for a while, two or three days and they went further on by train. I guess they couldn't stay anywhere else, they put up a tent, but they were all contagious. I was passing by that place and I got this terrible disease, dysentery, I began to bleed. But, a miracle happened! In that city of Pest with million citizens, I met my brother while I was walking down the street. -My! Elsa! -Djuro, what are you doing here? He said: -Hush, I ran away from the army. He was already in civilian clothes. -I'm going back to Bekes. Come along with me. Mummy had a sister in Bekes, and my brother was married to a Hungarian. He got married in 1942. Since he worked at the post-office, he could travel by mail-coach, not on the roof like many other people, so many people running away from Pest. They were all starved. As I was heavily pregnant at that time, I was allowed to travel by mail-coach with my brother, we went to Bekes Caba. And then, by this little train eight, nine kilometres more to Bekes.

Why didn't you return to Novi Sad?

– Why, we couldn't! No way! Those were huge transportations, the army came and went... How was I supposed to go there? Walk, pregnant? Maybe some people in good shape could walk, but I couldn't. There was no railway, roads were filled with soldiers and military cars. When I came there with dysentery, they immediately took me to Bekes Caba hospital. I was eight months pregnant, I had to be on a diet as my leg was terribly swollen. My legs felt like pillars. I couldn't eat anything salty, anything spicy, I ate even bread with no salt in it. I lay in the same room with a peasant woman, she was about to give birth. On Sunday her relatives came to visit her and brought her a fried chicken... My eyes went up and down like yo-yo, I ate salt-free food, I couldn't bear to see potatoes, soup, everything I got, this salt-free food. But that kind of diet saved my life, otherwise I would've got this eklencias cramp, I would've surely died. The child can survive, but the mother can't. So when the visitors went home, that woman started to cut the chicken into pieces, she took this drumstick, looked at me and said: -You want some? I wanted some, of course, and she gave me the drumstick when the nurse came into the room and slapped me on the hand, the drumstick flew across the room! They moved the woman out of the room immediately. There was also this woman, she had this eklencias cramp (I don't know the Serbian for this), she lay in bed with this fence one metre high around her. She jumped over the fence, came into my room, there was this bucket full of water there, and she drank half the bucket, her eyes were wide open, as if she was mad or something... She died. She gave birth to a live girl. That was the fifth or the sixth child she had given birth to, but she died. And then the nurse came back and said: -You see, that woman is dead. If you hadn't listened to me and if I hadn't taken a good care of you, you would've died as well, you were terribly ill.

I gave birth to my son in 1945, on July 7th, and I called him Laszlo. My brother came to pick me up from hospital, I came back to my mum's sister. Unfortunately, I didn't have any milk. I was young, what with being only nineteen and a half.

I was with my mum's oldest sister, without any foreknowledge about babies, I didn't have the faintest idea what to do... We were starving, we hadn't seen any sugar for a year, our diet was awful... The army had taken everything they could. At the end of August 1945 I got a letter from my husband saying that he'd been taken Russian prisoner in Temisoara. I've kept this letter so far, though it's all faded now. He drew me a plan how to get to the prisoner camp and he described everything in detail. He didn't know that the baby had been born. He just assumed that it was about to be born, but that clairvoyant woman in Pest told me: -Your husband will come back home at the end of August. And I got his letter on August 23rd or 24th, and a few days after, on August 29th, my husband showed up. I didn't recognize him. He was all swollen. His face was round as if he'd put some oil on it. I ran to him and said: -Cuci, is that you? He said: -Who else could it be? He was very ill. My little son was ill, too, he was undernourished, I didn't have any milk. I breast-fed him every now and then, my nipples were sore, my baby sucked at my breasts, but there was no milk. My husband was dying in bed. He lay facing the wall, I lay in the middle, and beside me, in the cot, my son was dying. I didn't know what to do. Those were terrible days. After eight weeks, my son staved to death. I gave birth to three sons. Two of them lived, just as that woman had said. The first one died when he was eight weeks, less than two months old. My husband was also dying, he was very ill. My brother took him to the doctor on his bike, there were no buses or cars back then. But somehow, he recovered.

In the prisoner camp, he got a typhus, and typhoid fever and a scurvy. He used to say that the diet had been awfully bad in the camp. They didn't have anything to eat. There were 44 thousand prisoners. It was a huge camp. Overnight, 100, 110 people died, every single day. They had to dig large graves that they knew would be filled the next day. It just went on day after day. Those men who were stronger and healthier were taken by the Russians to Siberia. Those who were weak – they stayed, my husband among them. He'd never been a strong man, he was tall, slim.

He spent eight months in prisoner camp. Russians captured them in Visegrad on the Danube, they made them walk all the way to Baya... then to Temisoara, I don't remember well now... Anyway, the camp waited for them in Temisoara. It was in 1945, I think in February, it took them a month to get to Temisoara. I remember him telling me about the rats they had in the camp. Those that were bit by a rat at night, they were dead in the morning. They hardly got any medicines. That's why a typhus spread, then typhoid fever... scurvy spread because they didn't take any vitamins. Peasants used to come, they threw them vegetables, onion, garlic, tomatoes, cucumbers, later when corn was ripe, they threw it in the camp, so they had something to eat... Out of 44 thousand of them, only 300 were released at the end of August, when the camp was closed down.

How did he find you?

– He first went to Pest and looked for me there... My granny knelt in front of Jesus and Mary's icon and swore that I hadn't been raped by the Russians. So he came to Bekes. I'll tell you about the raping now. One night, some neighbours egged on a Russian soldier to come to me. I was wearing an old dress of granny's, when this Russian soldier came by. We had some Russian officers staying with us on the upper floor, but unfortunately there was no one at home at that time. But my granny claimed that we had some GPU officers up there. This Russian soldier didn't believe her and he went upstairs with granny. On her way up, she told me to escape to our neighbours, the Horvats, who lived across the street. So I went there, up to my stomach in snow, I knocked at their door, they let me in and I told them that a soldier was chasing me. Mrs. Horvat said: – It's impossible! Her son was at home, he'd escaped from the army, and he said: – Elsa, we won't let him hurt you! I'll kill him! I won't let Cucika's wife get hurt by the Russian soldier! Their daughter had a little two-month-old son in the cot and the only light they had was in that room, because the baby was there. Not five minutes had passed when someone knocked at the door. I said: – Here he is! And I rushed to that room. They had a large hall and three or four rooms, and I rushed to the room which was the only one lit and I said: – A Russian soldier! I hid under the bed, she hid in the wardrobe, and her husband stood beside the door, the baby in the cot beside him. The Russian soldier started to look everywhere. Her son held a gun in his pocket, if anything happened, he would kill him... and then everybody would be killed. He came to the lit room, opened the door, looked around, I saw his heavy soldier's shoes and half his leg from under the bed. But he looked at the baby and said: – There, there! and he went out of the room. It's interesting how the Russians respected children. When he left, we came out, I didn't know where she'd hidden, there she was, coming out of the wardrobe... And then Horvat's son came in and said: – Here you are, free at last, he's gone! It's good we didn't have to use force. I slept at their house for a week, under the dining-room table, I didn't dare to go home. Later on we found out that a woman from our neighbourhood egged the soldier to come to me, she told him there was a young girl in our house.

Another terrible event was the murder of a Russian soldier. Someone dug him in the cellar, the Russians found him and the whole street was decimated. That means that people from the street were lined up in a long row and every tenth one was killed on the spot. This is what decimating in retaliation means.

Did your husband begin to recover slowly?

– Yes, slowly. When water withdrew from his body, he became very thin. Spring came, there was plenty of fruit. We had a good diet. He liked apples very much, he used to eat three-four kilos a day. He got a job as a teacher in the primary school, from the fifth to the eighth grade. The school building was rather devastated, windows were taken out... I don't know if Russians did that, or it was from bombing... Anyway, we settled in and later on we went to Sarvar, we had a lovely school there with two acres of land. One acre was used as an orchard, the other one was arable land. I got some flower seeds from the Netherlands, very nice flowers, so I grew those flowers, they paid good

money for the seeds. Then I got pregnant again, it was my elder son, Lacika. I used to grow corn or wheat, I don't remember. I had some peasants do that for me. Children used to dig because they had agriculture classes. Those were peasants' children, they knew how to do it. Everything seemed to be OK.

However, my husband fell ill again. He had a kidney tuberculosis and he went to hospital in Pest to have one kidney taken out. I had to take over teaching at school, and of course, I had all the chores to do. Those kids were taller by a head than me, but I had to teach as there were no proper teachers. So I spent two months with them, headmaster often came to visit us: – Why don't you stay with us? You just have to pass one exam and you can teach. I said: -You know what, I have no patience with them. I'm just replacing my husband while he's being operated on in Pest, and I'll be replacing him while he is on sick leave, but I'm not gonna commit myself to this job. And the children liked me. I was thin. I didn't weigh more than 40 kilos, together with my bed. Meanwhile, my mum got a passport and she came to visit us.

Did you have a Hungarian passport?

– I had no passport at all. I got married in Hungary and automatically lost Yugoslav citizenship. I became a Hungarian citizen without having to sign anything. Mum came to us. He said to mum: – Elsa seems to have a tuberculosis, too. It was because I was so thin, I taught at school... Indeed I had this woman, she used to come every day to help me, she fattened geese, cooked, took care of the baby... The baby was still in the cot. Eventually I got this goat so that we could have some milk. Goat milk is so good for babies. We didn't have any money, any pengs. While we had pengs, inflation was so rampant that we counted money in billions, even trillions. Eventually we couldn't count but we sorted all banknotes by their color, we put different colours in a basket and went to market, and the grocer took money, knowing the banknotes only by their colour. At the end, there wasn't even that, there were only adopengs. That money didn't have any value. And then, barter started. We gave eggs, and with eggs we could buy some potatoes and everything we needed. I'll never forget giving 50 eggs for a rubber panties for my son. Later on, when I had poultry and when Sarika fattened geese, I had 10 geese – each weighed over 10 kilos: I didn't know what to do with so many of them. I told the relatives from Pest to come and take the fat and liver that I'd put into jars, then smoked drumsticks and breast... Who could eat all that? For example, I had so many hens that I didn't actually know exactly how many. One day, I would just see a hen waddling with her chicks. Where all the chicks had hatched from, I couldn't tell. That was a huge yard, poultry could go out of the yard. That farm, that's how we made a living.

I got pregnant for the second time. I went to the market and bought some roast pumpkin. I'd never liked it, but at that time I felt like eating it. I strolled around the market, women knew me, they greeted me: -Cokolom! (that's how it was in those days). When they saw me eating the pumpkin, the next day children brought me a whole bowl of roast pumpkin to school. God knows how much pumpkin they roasted!

One day I said: – Children, I'd love to have a cat! They brought me five cats the following morning. I had this big dog, Kocos called in and said: -Could I take only one,

please? And Kocos grabbed the cat by the neck and went for a walk with it every day. They were great friends. But, what should happen one morning: the cat was lying dead on the stairs, Kocos was watching her, lying on the ground. The cat seemed to have scratched him, he just shook her a little bit and she was dead.

One day my husband fell ill again. That was already in February, 1948. He went to a meeting and caught a cold. And that was it, he fell ill again. We took him to hospital in Djula, tuberculosis ward. Every other day I went there by bike. It was about fifteen kilometres away from us. I often went there when it was raining, carrying the bike on my back, I looked for a shortcut, so I went through fields, it was very, very hard. In those days, professor Lazslo was the greatest expert in tuberculosis. Late in February, he called me and said: -Prepare for the worst, but don't tell him anything. He's going to die. I'd got this penicillin from America and I said: -Professor, this penicillin... And he said: -It might help him to live two or three months longer, but it's not gonna help him. You'd better sell it. You'll have the money to bury him and to live on it for at least as long as it lasts. At that time, the forint was a strong currency. When I left the doctor's office, I stood in front of my husband's room and tried to smile. I came in, we didn't mention his illness, I kissed him and remembered what the doctor had told me: that his lungs were full of tiny bubbles, that they were beginning to disappear and they he would suffocate because he wouldn't have anything to breathe on. And that's what happened. On March 9th, I got a letter from hospital informing me that he'd died. When I came to the hospital, I asked a nun when he'd died, she said at night, maybe after midnight, he just suffocated.

You'd buried one child and your husband, you were a single mother and were pregnant?

– Yes, I was five months pregnant. Then I moved to Bekes Cabu and gave birth to my second son there, on July 7th, on the same day when I had my first son who'd died. There I was, burying my husband with a big stomach, my relatives had come from Pest, my husband's father couldn't come. When I gave birth for the second time, my brother was with me.

Then I applied for a permission to go back to Yugoslavia. I went to the Yugoslav embassy in Pest two or three times a month, Saler was in charge there. Everybody knew me there: I would come in, I was never kept waiting, I went immediately upstairs, but they never had any news from Yugoslavia. However, something happened that changed everything.

My parents couldn't come to my husband's funeral because of the political situation in 1948. But they had taken steps for me to go back to Yugoslavia as a widow, with two small children. Lacika was two at that time, Ecika was six months old when I returned. But what happened to my parents? They couldn't do anything from Novi Sad, so they went to Belgrade, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and so they waited there in the lobby. My God, said my father, we sat there on a bench and cried. There was this tall man who came by, he said: -Why are you crying here, old man? Daddy complained that his widowed daughter was in Hungary with two little sons: she'd asked for permission

to go back home to Novi Sad, she was born there. That man gave him his visiting card, wrote something on the back and showed the door to my father to go in there and everything would be OK. So daddy came in, and in less than two months I was at home. I asked my daddy why he hadn't enquired about that man. He answered:-Son, you don't understand it. We could hardly wait to bring you back home, it never crossed my mind to ask who he was. I just stared at that door and rushed inside with your mother! After that, they invited me from the Embassy to go to Pest. Saler said: -Listen, something strange has happened! You're going home!? Go home and get ready, but be careful what to take with you, fix everything with the Hungarians here first. I went to Hungarians, of course, and told them what it was all about, that my husband had died, that I wanted to go back to my birthplace, I didn't have anything in Pest... I had to sign that I didn't want anything from the Hungarian authorities, not a pension, I couldn't take any of my husband's things with me, not a carpet, pictures, nothing, nothing at all.

I packed up everything, I left the furniture to my brother, the radio, and everything I had, all that was already in Bekes Cabi, so he got it all from me. So I went to the border, with my brother, of course. When we reached Kelebija, the train stopped there and waited for a long time, my brother got off the train, only me and the kids were to cross the border. I cleared everything through customs in Pest, so I didn't have to declare anything here. I had a 5 kilo loaf of bread baked for my father as a present, a big loaf. I took that with me, I had some forints left so I told my brother to buy some chocolate at a kiosk. I was so happy, I offered the chocolate to the whole coach... People hadn't seen any chocolate for years. I came to Subotica, mum and dad met me there, the little one was only six months old, Lacika was two (he is 18 months older).

While I was still in Bekes Cabi, my mother wrote to me to say that I would get a job immediately in Novi Sad, I would work for GIOS APV in the Ministry of Vojvodina. When I arrived on January 7th, 1949, they came to take me to work immediately. I got a cold on the train, so I started working on February 1st. My Serbian wasn't good, but they said it didn't matter, they needed educated people. At that time Baki Franja was my superior officer, they put me beside my Hungarian friend, but I didn't have to speak a lot of Serbian, it was mostly mathematics, planning, it was a planning department for the whole Vojvodina.

Elza, that was in 1949, you were 22 at that time, you lived in Novi Sad, that was the time of Information Bureau, do you remember it at all?

– Sure I do. Well, as for Information Bureau, I worked for GIOS APV and I felt good there. I worked mostly with figures... but what should happen? In the middle of February, I noticed a man standing across the road, in front of the Goldsteins, that used to be a Jewish house, he was wearing civil clothes. We started work at 8 o'clock, I used to leave home at half past seven, I would walk as there were no buses in those days (trams were just being introduced), so I noticed that man was following me. All the way to the Executive Council. I didn't pay any attention to that, I never went in for politics and I didn't know what it was all about. We worked till three o'clock and then we went home, but sometimes the chief would ask us to come back at nine so we would work

until three in the morning, especially when we were working on some planning. In those days, we had to work without a break. I noticed again that he was following me, I just joked about it: at least nobody would attack me, I was being accompanied. That lasted for about a month. I told my dad about it, he was surprised. I also told people from work that someone had been following me. Well, they said, it's probably because he likes you. But, in April, I submitted 13 original documents to obtain citizenship, since I was treated as a foreign citizen here. I had this big pink card, everybody else had blue ones already. So I went to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Belgrade and gave them all the documents. I waited for a month or two, nothing happened. I went there again, nothing again. I met this Hungarian woman, she had also applied for citizenship, she was born there, she didn't have citizenship so she couldn't leave her residence. I wasn't allowed to go anywhere either. When I wanted to travel somewhere, I had to go to UDBA to ask their permission, I would get one in writing, and then when I returned, I had to have a stamp in my passport as the proof that I'd really been there. So that woman told me that my documents might have been lost. God, what would I do, I couldn't request documents from Hungary, Information Bureau Resolution had already been adopted, Tito was harshly criticized in those days. We couldn't even send a letter to Hungary, they were completely isolated. That woman said we should go to see Rankovic, he would help us. I knew where he was, so we went there. They said he was on the first floor, in the Parliament, that building in Belgrade. So we went upstairs. She said she'd wait for me and then she would go there. OK, so I went there. His secretary saw me, I explained why I'd come, in Hungarian more than in Serbian: I wanted to apply for citizenship. You can't, he said, and I started to bang on his desk. What do you mean, of course I can! At that moment, Rankovic came out of his office and asked what was wrong. I said: I know you (his pictures were everywhere). He said: -So what's the problem? I explained: - I came here on January 6th... Hungary... two little sons... of course I spoke very poor Serbian, he even smiled when he heard me speaking, he said: All right, comrade Elza, I promise you, by law, you have to live here for five years before you can get citizenship, and then you'll obtain it. - No, I'm going to see Tito! -I said. -Not even Tito can help you here, everything has to be by law, trust me, I promise you! In five years, on January 7th, you'll get our citizenship. I looked at him, I realized that the documents had been lost. It's OK, he said, I have your documents, I know you'll get citizenship, Tito can't help you with this. I left and told that woman what'd happened. She never saw him, she went home. And of course, a year and a half after that day, I got fired. Why? It was this strictly confidential letter of Tito's stating that all those who'd been in prison, those that were citizens of other countries... and God knows who else, weren't allowed to work as civil servants. My friends pulled a few strings, Gacesa was the head of the department, and Baki Franja was in charge. So they pulled a few strings, but nothing could be done, strictly confidential and that was it. So I had to leave. Meanwhile, Baki Franja was appointed as manager of Central Dairy. And I began working for them.

There's something more I want to say. They usually sent me to see the head of the district to get his signature on the map. One day I went to see him: -Good morning,

come in, Elza... I used to type his speeches in Hungarian, the speeches he gave in villages. He liked me very much. It was at the end of March, the beginning of April, the sun was shining, the snow was melting, I was standing by the window while he was signing the documents. I said: -Thank God it's nice outside! And he said:- Why do you thank God? I was startled to hear that, I knew I wasn't supposed to say that, so I said: – You know, an apple or pear, that's the same thing, I say God, you say apple or pear, that's the same thing. He laughed:- How on Earth did you remember to say that, you rascal! That was it. He said: – In five years, look me up wherever I'm the manager, I'll give you a job. And five years passed.

What did you do during that time?

– I had a very difficult time. I knitted sweaters for other people, socks, gloves, shawls, caps, that's how I made a living. I lived together with my mum and dad, we supported one another.

On 7th February, after five years, I was at home, I saw a man from UDBA coming. I recognized him at once: he was wearing a leather coat, leather boots, I said oh, my God, what is he doing here? He came in, saying he was looking for Selesi Elza. That's me, I said. Camarade, go to UDBA, you're getting your citizenship today. Take two pictures of yours and 50 dinars, or something like that. I said: -Rankovic! He stared dumbfounded. I said, Rankovic promised me five years, January 7th, he did. He promised me and kept his promise. And to this very day I've had this citizenship document with my picture, and a very nice document that is. Right after that, I got a job as a civil servant. I found Baki at the Central Dairy, he gave me a job, because I spoke several languages: German, Hungarian, Serbian. So I began to work for the Dairy in the commercial department.

Are you going to tell me anything about Information Bureau Resolution, not about what happened to you, but what happened to the whole society?

– I'll tell you first what happened to me. The man who kept following me day and night... I was summoned to come to UDBA. No, it wasn't like that... There was this officer, wearing a uniform, he told me to come to UDBA. A nice building it was, there it is, standing there even today. So I went there. That had happened before I obtained citizenship. He talked about how I'd come from Hungary, asked me what I did. I said, well, I'd got this job in GIOS APV, but since I was a citizen of another country, I got fired, and now I supported myself, I didn't have a job. Well, he said, you're a spy. Me, a spy!? No. So they kept telling me that I had brought some flyers with me and someone gave those flyers to me through the window, we had a small window. You know what, I said. If I'm the one who receives those flyers, why didn't you arrest me immediately, and the one who brought them as well, if you saw me doing that. I didn't receive them, so you couldn't. What do you want from me? That happened twice, I think. I didn't want to go there anymore, I told that to dad and he agreed. The third time, the same officer came again and said: Elsa, make sure you show up there tomorrow. He was a dark man, with bushy overgrown eyebrows. He had a black hair and looked like the devil himself. So they started, two or three of them to cross-examine me. I said: Listen, why don't you

just leave me alone, I'm neither a spy nor did I receive any flyers, nor anything, I've got nothing to do with it, I have two small children, I have old parents, what do you want from me? But they kept cross-examining me so I burst into tears. I cried through tears: -What do you want from me? Then it turned out that near Zemun they had this school for spies and they needed intelligent people like me, who spoke several languages. They knew that I had relatives and a friend in Vienna, that I had an aunt in Paris, they knew all that, they knew what I ate, what I had in my stomach. So they told me to sign some papers and come to that school, that I would have as much money as I wanted and that I would be able to travel anywhere I liked. And I said: – You know what, thanks very much. I'm not risking my life here, I have two small children and I have to raise them, and I also have old parents. I'm not doing it so please leave me alone. That was the last thing I said and they never called me again. They actually wanted to recruit me to be their spy, to go to that school of theirs.

Were you aware, at the time when Information Bureau resolution was adopted, since you weren't a member of the party, were you aware that some people were disappearing, losing their jobs or being sent to Goli otok?

– Well, you know... Two stores were taken away from us; one night a man from UDBA came and took the key from daddy. That happened after the war, in 1946-47. I hadn't come back home yet at that time. Daddy used to tell me about it, but daddy never went in for politics. So I heard of Goli otok from other people, but somehow, I never paid attention to it. I can't tell you anything about it. That was something quite different. I've already told you what happened to me. When they wanted to recruit me for espionage, they told me they knew I wanted to go to Vienna, but that I never would and that I would never get a passport. In 1952 I applied for a passport, and I was rejected. In 1952, I applied for a passport again and I got one. I went straight to Vienna.

In Vienna, I mostly visited my friend, I somehow avoided my relatives. The two of us were born here, we went to school together, but in 1939 they were expelled from here because they were from Vienna. Her father was a butcher in Kulpin. So, they had to leave. Since they left during the war, we lost contact with each other. In 1939, I spent my summer holiday in Dubrovnik, with my mum. We came back on August 20th, and they moved out of here on September 1st and of course we went to the station to see them off.

When did your father die?

– He died in 1971. Mum died first on June 28th, and three months after dad died, on October 9th. They'd been helping me with my children until then. In those days we went to work on Saturdays as well. I spent Sundays with my children. After lunch, I would take them to town, or we would go to Fruska Gora instead. Sunday was a family day. I'll never forget, they were about 5, 6, or 7 (I don't know exactly, but they were still little), we went to Beocin on that hill, we sat there for a bit, we'd taken some food with us, some water, what we had... when suddenly they ran to us. God, they were so winded. I asked them what had happened, who was chasing them. The devil's coming, the devil's coming! What devil, I asked. Then I saw an orthodox priest from a monas-

tery coming toward us, he had this big cap and black robes, with a long beard. For God's sake, children, I said, that's not the devil, it's a priest. Children weren't allowed to go to church back then. It wasn't forbidden... or was it ... I don't know.

Maybe for communists, not for you?

– You know what. We celebrated Christmas with a Christmas tree and we celebrated Easter with the nest and eggs. We always did that. On Mikulas (that's on December 6th), we had this chocolate boot, we gave the children everything we could. If we didn't have the boot, we had at least an orange – I used to get that when I was a child: big chocolate boots and Santa Clauses. And they would get a fig or an orange, they always got it.

Were your children baptised there?

– No, they were baptised here. But I never went to church since I'd buried my husband, since 1948. Why? Because I had two incidents with priests. I mean those worldly priests. Excuse me, I never knew any other priests. First, when my husband was expelled from Kaldo, and second, at my husband's funeral: my brother was standing on the left, and the priest was so drunk, and the one who was burning incense was also so drunk that they could barely stand on their feet. They had previously buried a butcher and they had already eaten and drunk there. So they came to my husband's funeral already drunk. If my brother hadn't kept his head and dragged me, practically pulled me back, I would've pushed the priest into the grave. Since that time, I haven't been to church, for fifty years, but I've believed in God. Every single night (except when I was very tired), I've said the Lord's Prayer. And I celebrated all holidays. Every Sunday, my mother went to church with my father. They'd been married for 56 years. I had a kind of aversion to priests. First because they expelled my husband from work, and second because of his funeral. That upset me so much that I always kept away from church. But I had faith. Anyway, I've travelled a lot and I've never visited a place without going into a church. It's never happened, but I don't attend the Mass, I don't do that.

You were a young woman and yet you decided not to get married again?

– I did. First, I didn't have the time for that. I worked very hard. I had to raise my children, but I suppose it was God's will. I had one suitor from Argentina. I don't know... I decided overnight that I wasn't going there, that I wasn't leaving my parents. I suppose that was God's will. So I remained a widow, I've been one for more than fifty-two years now.

And you don't regret it?

– Well I don't, to be honest. I have good children, grandchildren, I have good daughters-in-law... I love them very much. And I believe they love me. And they help me. Sometimes they skirmish with me. One of my sons is here, the other one lives in Osijek. They have a lovely villa, he works in Ulm. He also found a job for my grandson Sasa there. They work for a tourist agency, they drive a bus, and not just an ordinary bus. They drive tourists, so my grandson's been to Spain five times already, he's been to Paris a couple of times, to Belgium, Venice, Sicily, let alone my son. He's been around the whole of Europe. I haven't been there since visas were introduced. They come here

from Germany. My daughter-in-law from Osijek visits me, so I have two sons and three daughters-in-law, because my younger son got divorced, the one who is a bus driver, he married a Croatian girl. He lives in Osijek now, but he gets on well with his ex-wife. So I have three daughters-in-law and all three of them visit me and love me. I have six grandchildren and one great-grandson, he is two months old. My Natasha was born here, so I have Julius, my great-grandson. He is such a lovely child. And I also have two grandsons, Nandika in Germany and Sasa, he lives here, and I also have four granddaughters. One of them is in Las Vegas, USA, she is married, and two of them live in Ulm, and one lives here. My daughter-in-law who lives here is Serbian, one of them is Hungarian, and the other one is Croatian. I don't have a problem with anyone's nationality. I love them all. And we get on well. I've never had a birthday without them coming to see me or at least phoning me, bringing me a present, a bag or something, sending me something from Germany, usually some food, for example some cheese, I like it very much. Especially those smelly ones, my first daughter-in-law knows that because she is fond of them as well. I used to go to Germany a lot. Two or three times a year.

How did you transfer from the Dairy to Madjar Szó?

– Well, the Dairy went bankrupt, so a man was appointed as trustee in bankruptcy. I resigned because when I was acting commercial director at the Dairy (that had lasted for almost a year), I managed to bring the iceplant into operation again. UNICEF had built the Dairy but the iceplant had never worked. When I found out that we had an iceplant, it could make 25 and 50 kilo ice cubes, I went to town and visited all pastry shops, starting from Parlac, asking them if they wanted to order some ice from us. They did order, but they requested that it should be delivered at six a. m. in front of their doors. I told the workers to fill the crates with one 25-kilo cube and two 50-kilo cubes. They did it and I told the workers to be at the Dairy at 5 a. m., because the ice was to be put in warm water so that the cubes could come out of the moulds and get in time to the pastry shops. The next day, there was no one there except for Dzemail, the driver. We took out the moulds and made them ready for transport. After that, I never dared to get into such an adventure.

How did you spend your holidays once you got a job?

– At home, working, I'd almost never had a proper holiday until 1971. My granddaughter was born in Ulm, Germany in 1971, so I went there for the first time. Then my granddaughter gave birth to her second child, after a year and a half, and I often went there, as my son had a job there. In 1972 I had my house built and I started to travel a bit, across our Yugoslavia, from Ulcinj all the way to Pula. I've been to all these places. Then I went to Egypt for the first time. After Egypt... God, I can hardly remember where I've been. In 1972 I spent two months in America, at my daughter-in-law's sister's. After America, I went to Egypt, then to India, to Nepal, Ceylon, then to Burma, Bangkok, Pataya, Singapore, then to China. I've been to all European countries...

Elephants are your hobby. Can you tell me something about that?

– Yes, they are. Well, I have a very nice collection. I have more than 200 elephants. I brought them from my trips abroad, but I also got them from my friends, sons... On

Women's Day, whenever they didn't know what to give me, they'd buy an elephant. For my birthday, an elephant again, so I've put together a nice collection of museum pieces. In Novi Sad, they know about my collection. I exhibited them at the Trade Fair, so I became a grand master right after the exhibition. That's my title, but I exhibit them rarely these days because there's always some damage, an elephant breaks, and when it happens, I feel sorry for it.

Why did you choose elephants?

– When my son went to the fourth grade of the primary school, he went on a school excursion to Arandjelovac. He brought me a big elephant from there, 'Arandjelovac' was written on it. That's how it all started, I don't know why. As if someone had suggested that I should collect elephants. So I started to collect them, and I've been doing it for forty-two years now.

You told me that elephants are very intelligent animals.

– They are. I've experienced it myself. I even rode on an elephant, it was in Agar, India. They are lovely elephants, so intelligent and grateful. When I gave an elephant a banana, I'll never forget that look in his eyes. The eyes of that huge elephant, I came very close to him, and the moment he took the banana, that breath of his when he looked at me, that could make one want to cry. They are wonderful, wonderful animals.

Do you have any other hobbies, Elza?

– No, I don't. Except that I've travelled a lot, but that's not a hobby. I seem to have got this desire to travel from an ancestor of mine, since my mum also liked to travel. It's most important to get to know other places, other people. Whenever I went somewhere, I always ate local food, because I think you should try to get to know other nations, through their customs and their way of living. For example, when I was in Egypt, I saw the pyramids, I even climbed the pyramid of Cheops all the way up, from the inside. That was fantastic! I had to crawl on my stomach in some places so that we could go further. But there was a sarcophagus there, empty of course, some thieves had already been there maybe 1000 or 2000 or 3000 years before.

We met each other while we were on a trip to Jerusalem.

– I've been to Jerusalem several times. That is a wonderful experience. I used to say I didn't want to go anywhere twice, although I went to the Himalayas, Katmandu in Nepal, but I only wanted to go to Egypt for the second time. What I saw there couldn't have been hand-made. That's something fantastic! But I haven't been lucky enough to go to Egypt for the second time, but I've been to Jerusalem three times.

Did your trip to Jerusalem have anything to do with your restoring your faith in God?

– It did. I've always believed in God, but I haven't attended the Mass for fifty years, I've never joined the community. And what happened? When I was in Israel for the first time, I came back home crying because I'd been travelling by Komp-tours and everything was so badly organised. The guide was from Belgrade, one of us, but he couldn't explain almost anything. When I went to this small church in Futoska street to pay my annual contribution for the church, they told me that people from Franciscan

church were going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The next day I got the itinerary and I signed up for the trip. That was my revival. That man meant so much to me. I heard of Franciscans when I was a child, they had a community in Brace Ribnikara street. So, when we came back from Israel, about two weeks after, I went to the Mass. I had some friends there, of course, we'd made friends during the trip, they were nice people, so I started to attend the Mass regularly. It was in 1996, and since then I've been with them and I've been to Israel two more times.

What does it mean to you to be a member of a religious community?

– Let me tell you one more thing. When I retired in 1982, I started to read the Bible. The Bible helped me a lot to go to Rocos church and pay annual contribution. I've learnt a lot about Christianity from the Bible, a lot really. But when I met the Franciscans, that was my salvation. Since then, I've gone to church every single Sunday. I don't have the time to go there on weekdays, and then there are these Biblical lectures, I attend them regularly, that is my spiritual sustenance and liberation. It's been like this for the last five years. Now I have a life that serves a purpose, on the one hand, and on the other, it's time I drew a line and summed up my life. I shudder to think of the hard life I had when I was young, I had my cross to bear in those days. Because I've been a widow for fifty-three years now, more than half a century. Maybe I wanted to share my life with someone, but some major force prevented me from doing it.

You had some company and you didn't want to be too much isolated.

– No. I had my parents, two sons, I had a lot of work to do. I had this house built in 1961. We moved in on January 1st, it's been 40 years since than, ten years after that I buried both my parents, first my mother, and then, after three months, I buried my father. They both died at a ripe old age. And then, I was left alone. My sons got married, I had six grandchildren, four from my younger son, and two from my elder one, and I have a purpose in life. I've always believed in God. I often take the Bible in my hands, almost every evening, now that I'm somehow stuck with this TV in the evenings. During the day I don't have the time to watch it, but the programme is so bad that I prefer reading the Bible.

You haven't mentioned your career. What did your career mean to you?

– As soon as I turned 55, I retired, because I knew they needed me at home. I had two little grandsons, I always took them somewhere with me by car, we both walked and went by car... My son and my daughter-in-law had to go to work, so I was mostly at home with the children and I was glad to be. I often went to Germany as well, because I had four grandchildren there. But they came here two or three times a year, so there was a fulhouse of them again. Six grandchildren and five of us. I worked very hard as every honest citizen, but I might not have got sufficient emotional satisfaction from it. I changed firms I worked for. From the Dairy I went to Angros, and then from Angros to Kemikalija, from there I went to Madjar Szo, and then I retired. I worked there for twenty-one years and I can say I had a nice time, my health wouldn't allow me to continue working, and they needed me at home.

You haven't mentioned any health problems in your story so far.

– I had a very weak gallbladder. When I first went to have it x-rayed, the doctor told me I was so full of gallstones, like a real stone-pit, and that I should have an operation. I didn't let them operate me. As a pensioner, I went to Katlanova Banja, 35 kilometres away from Skoplje. I'd never heard of Katlanovo before, but when I read in the Madjar Szó that there were thermal springs there and that pensioners could go there very cheaply (Skoplje and Novi Sad were brotherly towns), I went there. And really, Katlanovo is a wonderful place. It's in the hills, you go there by bus from Skoplje. There are cold and warm thermal springs, I don't know how many, around ten I guess, maybe more. So we climbed up there. It used to be a volcanic area. They were medicinal springs. I had pains in my spine, so they told me:-Come on, Elza, sit in the water, we'll run it for you. The water flew into a little lake. I sat there for about ten minutes and never again have I had any pains in my spine.

One spring, I went up there again, there were no trees, just rocks and there was this spring in a rock which had been there for many centuries. Bushes and herbs. I noticed a man picking a lot of those herbs and I asked him what he needed them for. He looked at me, he couldn't speak any Serbian, he started to speak but I couldn't understand him: he was neither Albanian nor Macedonian. He pointed to his stomach and heart. So I went there and picked up some herbs and took them to my room to dry a bit. A school friend of mine was my roommate, she went to Skoplje one day and came back all pale and yellow, she felt sick. I made some tea of the herbs I had picked up and she got better in ten minutes. I went downstairs to see the hotel manager and told him about that, that they should use it in some way, but they didn't know anything about it. I took that herb back home with me every time, I dried it and cut it and that herbal tea made my gallbladder much better. When I went to the doctor last time, they said I had these two stones, but they are OK. I've never been operated on. I eat everything, but my diet is moderate, I eat beans, cabbage, I've never had gallbladder problems since then. And I've never learnt what that herb is called.

Elza, you worked for several firms, did you ever feel any kind of discrimination against yourself, either as a woman or as a Hungarian, or any other kind of bad relations between you and your colleagues?

– No, never. Neither in a political way nor because I'm a Hungarian. They liked me because I was hardworking; I can't say they had anything against me. They were always fair to me and I was fair to them. It may be my attitude, I don't know, but they liked me and I liked them.

You were a very efficient woman and I suppose you could have been a manager of some of those departments or even managing director of firms you worked for, although they were all very big companies. Is it because they never offered it to you or because you never wanted that?

– No. They never offered it nor did I want it. I'd been only acting commercial manager in the Dairy for a couple of months, until a new managing director was appointed. What can I say: they didn't have anything against me because I was a Hungarian nor did they ever ask me to join the Communist Party, nor did I ever want to. They

probably knew that I came from a patriarchal family and that they shouldn't bother me with that. And they never asked me nor did I want it. My whole family never joined any political parties. I was a member of the union. Well, you were supposed to be a union member in those days, we paid our dues regularly, but I was never on the management.

In the early days, there was AFZ (Antifascist Women Front). Did you take any part in its activities?

– I know about AFZ. When I came back home with my children in 1949, they asked me to distribute food coupons in the tenth basic organisation, my street was a part of the second organisation. At that time I also got a K3 card, since I didn't have a job. I was the secretary of the tenth basic organisation, but that wasn't AFZ. That was a regional organisation, the second region encompassed Cipranova, Georgi Dimitrova i Bore Prodanovica Streets. That lasted for a year and a half and then food coupons were discontinued. We got sugar, flour and other food with those coupons. There was a separate coupon for firewood and coal. That was a K card, I don't remember it any more, it happened such a long time ago, 50 years ago.

How did you live before the dissolution of Yugoslavia?

– If you worked hard, you earned enough. I mean, if you drank and gambled and squandered money, you didn't have enough even when Tito was in power. But if you were hardworking, if you put something aside, you had enough. That is how I built this house. Everyone could, if they worked hard enough. You could buy things on credit, it's how I bought my first car, it was in 1968 when I bought my first "fica", I remember paying 300 dinars in at the bank, and in three years I paid it off. I didn't have any problems paying the installments. Well, that is the whole point, you could have a good life, but you had to work hard. You couldn't do anything without working hard. Health care was good. There were many good things in socialism. If you worked you could earn enough to save a little and put it in a bank and get it whenever you needed it, plus interest.

I worked and earned and travelled and built and raised my children and grandchildren, so I can say I've had a good life. And now... I have a good life now as well. Even now, I put aside a little although I'm often without any money, pensions are small, but I manage somehow. I don't squander money, I economize as much as I can, I mostly save on food. I never buy anything for fun, but I save on food so that I can pay my bills, it's my duty, that's how I was raised. Because if you want something, you have to pay for it. My father always said that and I stick to it. If I want electricity, I have to pay for it. If I use water I have to pay for it, I have to pay tax.

Have your wishes come true?

– I've never had any extraordinary wishes or dreams. Somehow, everything just happened. It's the same with this house that I built in 1960s. It just happened. There was expropriation, land was taken away from its owners and used for building houses. I told my mum: let's build a house, a nice and modern one, with all utilities on our own land. It just happened and I built it, I could build it in those days. That dream of mine came true. Another of my dreams was to raise my children and prepare them for life.

That also came true. I got grandchildren and a great-grand son. Now, I have only one wish: to live two or three years more, to see him begin to walk. Then, I liked to travel and that also came true. Unfortunately, I can't travel that much now, at least I can't go on long trips and I don't want to. I can't because of my legs, and I also can't stand the heat. I could travel in winter, but in summer, I couldn't.

Do you feel a bit sorry for not getting a better education?

– No, not at all. I was able to find a job with my Commercial Academy diploma. I spoke several languages. I've been to the whole world speaking German. It helps a lot if you know foreign languages. My mum was Hungarian, my grandmother was from Vienna, my father spoke several languages, but somehow, I always felt like Yugoslav. Because I was born here, I spent some time in Budapest after I'd got married, and then there were those wars, there may have been 40 years without a war, but after that, there were always wars. So I remained Yugoslav, Hungarian. When there is a census, I'm a Hungarian, otherwise I'm a Yugoslav. I fell more comfortable when I speak Hungarian. I make grammar mistakes in Serbian as you can see, I also like German very much. I've been to Vienna many times, maybe 80 or 100 times. I guess I know Vienna better than Novi Sad, I've grown very fond of it. I'm so sorry I can't go there any more. This is what really hurts most. My relatives invited me and said they would arrange everything, but I can't go to Belgrade and queue for ages to get a visa. It's agony to me, so I refused them. My daughter-in-law who lives in Germany also invited me to visit her, she said she'd send me everything. I said I couldn't stand going to Belgrade, I'd have to leave in the evening and spend the whole night queuing to get a visa in the morning, not to mention that I might not get it at all.

What's made you really happy in your life?

– Well, maybe my grandchildren. Now I have a great-grandson, Zlatan is his name, he makes me happy, among other things.

What was the most difficult period of your life?

– The decade between 1947 and 1963 was the most difficult one. I had a very heavy cross to bear at that time. I worked and built the house, and here I am now. I guess that's why God had mercy on me, now he's accepted me and all my wishes come true. Not immediately, but after a while. There is God, there is Christ, and if you wish something from the bottom of your heart and if you ask for it, you'll get it.

Would you like to send word to young people?

– I advise them to be hardworking and honest. It's very important. To believe in God and Christ, and if they have time, and they do, to take the Bible and read it. At least for a half an hour a day, or ten minutes. This will take them to the straight path, out in the light, and it's very important, because God took me to the straight path, out in the light, and I finally made it, I have faith... What can I say? I'd jump for joy to have made it.

Interviewed by Svenka Savić, 2000; translated by Jasna Trifunović

Vera (1927), Novi Sad



Vera Schosberger was born May 16th, 1927 in Novi Sad.

Had circumstances developed in a different way, these days she would have celebrated her 73rd birthday with us in a city in which she, as a child, played first pieces of music on the piano, danced her first ballet steps, rushed down the staircase from the first floor. It was future ahead of that little girl back in the thirties. On the Women's Section of the Jewish Community, her mother prepared various celebrations and holidays, just as women do these days in the Community. We have gathered in her memory, without her, though. Just as there are talented children who are being paid attention to over here; it was the same case 70 years ago as well.

Childhood: Let us try to unroll the scroll of Vera's life, just as a scroll of Torah is unrolled in order a portion of a text important for the history of the Jewish nation be read. This is an opportunity to feel as if an extraordinary piano player who had no equal in Novi Sad were with us, comprising the tradition previous to her and following her: the cultural one, the pianistic one, the familiar one. We would like to enclose her artistic personality into our memory like a jewel of this town's cultural and artistic life, where some other pianists preceded her or came after her.

In Vera Schosberger's birth certificate (copy in Hungarian, issued September 2nd, 1941, signed by chief rabbi Dr Kiss Henrik), beside the date (May 16th 1927) and place (Novi Sad), we also find some data on her parents: Jeno Schosberger, born 1891 in Novi Sad; mother Lili, maiden surname Furst, born 1903 in Pozsony. Both of them Jewish.

The first place of residence in Novi Sad was Futoska Street, after that being Magyar Street number 76 (somewhat later renamed Avgusta Cesarcica Street, nowadays it is Danila Kisa 44). After the war the family lived in Karadziceva Street 5. From the father's identity card, issued 1942 on the occasion of moving to Budapest, we learn his description: high, strong, dark haired, dark eyed, without particular distinguishing marks. From the mother's identity card we see her personal description: middle high, oval face, red-brown

Hair, brown eyed regularly shaped mouth. The photograph in the identity card witnesses her extraordinary beauty and Vera's similarity with her mother. Her mother was educated, spoke Hungarian and German, which, presumably, she passed on to her daughters. In the heading occupation, it says she is a tradesman's wife – she had no career despite her remarkable education, which was usual for wealthy men's wives of that time in the city.

Thus, Vera was born in the family of a wealthy Jewish tradesman, Jeno Schosberger, as second child. Her elder sister Mira worked as an eminent scientist in Paris for many years (at the Institute of Psychology Rene Zazzo). The first names of the two daughters – Mira (Rahela) and Vera (Lea) are supposed to symbolize the basic philosophy of this family: they lived in peace with each other and others, believing that it was the only right way of living.

Both girls received good education as early as in their childhood, thanking to the prosperousness of the family. Both of them finished elementary school and gymnasium in Nov Sad, along with other Jewish children, and attended classes of Jewish teachers. Both implicitly and explicitly, they cherished the tradition of the nation they belonged to. As for example, Mira and Vera , as children, took piano lessons, learned French and somewhat later English from Victor Dmitrijev's mother Claudia, a Jew of Russian origin. It should not be forgotten that back in 1940, the Novi Sad Jewish community amounted to 4,101 members (only 1,200 survived by the end of war, according to 'Jews in Yugoslavia', 1989, pg. 77). By their presence – culture and wealth– they enriched the multiethnic milieu of the city. In that milieu, the Schosbergers are unavoidable.

Vera showed talent for music in her early childhood, so piano studies followed as a natural result of that gift. Girlfriends from childhood remember Vera as a cheerful girl who would present her special show at children's gatherings, such as birthday parties: she would lie down and blow her belly up as a balloon. The children knew about that secret of hers, so, when the party got into its stride, they would ask her to show her secret. Vera would do it readily, because in that situation she was superior over others – being able to act out something others were not. That awareness of superiority will follow her throughout her life, either as a performance of real gift or as an obsession she should be like that. Superiority in this sense should be understood as human need to surpass the usual, the known, the common to everybody and to rise up beyond the truth of human power by which human consciousness gets changed and improved. Music is, for sure, one of the means by which such an aim can be achieved, believed Vera.

That is why she wanted from her early childhood to reach beyond, for what is unknown to others (those ordinary ones), reach for something others did not even seek. That need of attaining the truth beyond was characteristic feature of her whole personality and destiny. To gain ability of interpretation of other's musical thoughts in a way these thoughts become superior in creating a better world, this meant for her a basic demand for living. I have been told that in the moments of complete devotedness to looking for that beyond, she could be seen in various kinds of moods or conditions, estimated by ordinary observers as unusual, absent minded, being beyond real.

Youth: As for many other Jewish families in the world, for Vera's in Novi Sad as well, the beginning of World War II meant a turning point. Well ordered civic life with all the special days throughout the year (marking the Jewish holidays, birthdays and other remarkable dates for both the family life and the community) lost any sense. Time was ripe for finding out a new way of life in order to survive, because the German Reich issued special orders for the extermination of Jews all over Europe.

One of the ways to survive, Vera's parents estimated, was to move to Budapest in 1942 (about what we get informed from her father's preserved identity card, issued in Budapest August 17th, 1942, with the address in Buda, 3rd district, Kolosi square 1/III). That is where the Schosberger family bought a flat, while the two girls, Mira and Vera took up false identities – they had identity cards of their friend Jelka Pecic and her sister, dyed their hair blond, trying to hide their identity, so they got jobs in a factory in Budapest. In the Schosbergers' flat intellectuals gathered mainly from Novi Sad, but from other places as well, who estimated Budapest to have been safer from other places in the war waged Europe.

Their flat was a kind of intellectual oasis in the belligerent storm of chaos and human sufferings, an attempt young Jewish intellectuals overcome the times of war: Vera would play the piano; Ladislav Schlesinger, the blind pianist from Novi Sad (born in Subotica) was Vera's councilor and critic in her pianist acrobatism; Fredi Aschner from Zagreb would entertain the circle with jokes; Vera's elder sister Mira would play the role of the hostess; Viktor Dmitrijev was the one who would lead fiery political talks, while Lidija Dmitrijev would translate from Hungarian some useful texts for the circle of friends. Some other people were around as well, trying to make up together the appearance of pleasant life. However, when Hungarian fascist took over power in Hungary in 1943, life worsened a lot for the Jews in Budapest. Vera, hardly having reached 16, must carry the yellow ribbon as well, as a mark of the nation that is ostracized among the others; possibilities for moving are limited, and control over the family becomes strong. Such a psychical terror is possible to be endured by a young person only if he or she has certain support – Vera did have such a support in her family with which she bore that sort of human offence.

Although it was expected the situation would worsen, the family was left with the hope that the worst would not happen to them. Although Vera's family was offered to move to America (for a lot of money of course), they stay in Budapest to be taken away June 1st 1944. They were taken away to a camp. From a statement given in Novi Sad 1963, signed by Vera's good friends Jelena Kasovic (teacher of music at the Novi Sad music school) and Ruza Kraus (retired at the time), we learn that "Vera Schosberger, a musician from Novi Sad was kept in a concentration camp in Germany , at Bergen Belsen, from June 1st 1944, till December 6th 1944". After that, thanking to favorable circumstances, her family, due to its respect abroad as well, was exchanged for trucks from Switzerland, so the rest of the war Vera's family spent in Switzerland, under much less bound living conditions than at the camp. She returned to Novi Sad from there with her family at the end of war. Lidija Dmitrijev (who lost almost all her family in the

Novi Sad raid in 1943, so each reunion with friends in the newly liberated city was dear to her) evokes her memory on meeting her after the war: "We were walking along the Danube, when I caught sight of Vera, her sister Mira, father and mother with suitcases in their hands. That reunion made me happy, it was good to see them together".

Vera lived through four years of horrors of war. When I say *lived through*, that verb has two meanings. Firstly, she was not liquidated by advanced mechanisms of ethnic cleansing so well developed by the German power. Secondly, *to survive* means, "to accumulate certain experience which afterwards could be,

A locomotive for certain behavior ". Both meanings of this word affected Vera Schosberger's further life in Novi Sad. The experience she gained as burden of war affected her life for sure in the future, but how and how much, we will never be able to measure. That very experience might have been activated in a segment of life difficulties of another kind. It must have contributed to that particular recognizable sensitivity mentioned by everyone that ever listened to Vera's piano playing. That ability of hers for an empathy with the composers whose thoughts she interprets into our experience, that high ability of feeling sympathy with other's destinies is only possible if we ourselves experience such depths.

Education: Upon return to Novi Sad with her whole family August 1945, both sisters started up with academic life: Mira got a grant in France and never ever returned home again, Vera enrolled in the Academy in Belgrade. From her student booklet (index) from the State Academy of Music we can see she

Matriculated on the Department for piano studies (September 29th, 1945) as regular student. She was taught by the most prominent domestic music experts of the time: Ciric Licar – piano; Stanojlo Rajacic – harmony; Milosevic – punctuation; Binguac – form studies; Kozina – intonation and choir singing; Manojlovic – History of music; Marko Tajcebic – counterpoint; Dragutinovic – choir singing; Krstic – piano methodology (she also had lectures in pre-military training, taught by captain Nikola Jancic). At the end of her student booklet it says: "She passed her final degree June 14th, 1949 with A in piano, musical aptitude outstanding". It was signed by B. Dragutinovic on behalf of the Rector of Music Academy.

So far we have no data about her life as a student in Belgrade. From an acknowledgement having been kept (hand written) we can see that Vera acquired a piano (October 2nd, 1946 in Novi Sad) from Gutman Rene, which fact shows the readiness of the family to enable Vera devote herself to music:

"To Ms.Vera Schosberger, N. Sad.

I hereby state that I have sold my property: a piano of "Bluhtner" branding num. 109710 for 65,000 Din. In letters: sixty five thousand."

Gutman Rene

From the transcript of the diploma (issued as late as June 30th, 1951, num. 785) we see that her teacher in major was Ciril Licar, head of department Emil Hajek, Rector Mihajlo Vukdragovic.

As a student Vera got II award for piano at the competition within the framework of the Youth Festival of Yugoslavia in Belgrade (November 11th, 1948). Upon getting her degree, Vera wants to devote herself to pianist career and that is why, on one hand she keeps intensively in touch with pianists in her city – Milica Moc and Jelena (Ila) Kasovic, who at the time already had had remarkable pedagogic results and, on the other hand, she wants to receive advanced training in world centres. First of all she goes to Zagreb to professor Stancic, after that to Switzerland to Edwin Fischer, the most prominent pedagogue for Beethoven's music. Somewhat later she goes to Paris, to Ciccolini, which was followed by an invitation from Clara Haskil to Switzerland. She travels to other music centres as well in order to receive advanced training and to deliver concerts. She does not want to devote herself to pedagogical work at that time. All her effort is aimed at performing art.

Professionalism: From the very beginning of her career, upon getting her degree, Vera Schosberger showed an expressive musicality and devotion to her profession. She did not have a permanent job, although she regarded herself to be a piano soloist of Novi Sad. She accepted this kind of individual artistic engagement convinced that a career of a pianist must be devoted to completely and she thought she would disperse her energy in vain working with pupils at the school (she taught for a while, though, at the Music School in Novi Sad in 1956).

Dura Rajkovic, a pianist from Novi Sad, recalls Vera as a very educated person with refined musicality, who was "born as a pianist". He remembers interpretation of Stanislav Preprek's songs (on Vladimir Nazor's words), with the vocal interpretation of Anica Cepe, opera soloist from Novi Sad. He remembers Vera playing at Milica Moc's farewell recital when Milica Moc played together with her pupils and colleagues, including Vera Schosberger.

There is very little, more precisely hardly anything we know about Vera's intimate life, her loves, about her friends she was seeing and trusted. It seems she had no lady friends at all, or she had only a few, who gradually, from one reason or another, abandoned her. One must bear in mind what Ilya Vrsajkov said about her, namely that "Vera was not a usual person", she was too peculiar to be followed. She was completely devoted to music, highly professional, she did not particularly cherish friendships because they drew her away from that great obsession of hers. It was hard to cope with frequent travelling and obligations that friendship demand, especially new lady friendships and which would have meant she belonged to someone she can confide in (especially after 1954, when her mother was not beside her anymore).

Among the property bequeathed, among the few documents, there is a certificate (issued by National Board of the Novi Sad Municipality, Department for General Administration November 19th, 1963, "at Vera Schosberger's request, living in Novi Sad, Karadziceva Street 5, based on article 171 and 172 of Regulation on General Administration), which says that "a certificate is issued that Vera Schosberger, a musician from Novi Sad, has not been married so far... The Certificate is being issued "in order to be presented abroad".

Vera never founded her own family: her friends cannot remember her having talked about children, about any wish to have them, some even recall her mentioning frequently that she did not want to get married. She felt completely lonely when her family lessened – when her parents died, first her mother in 1954, after that her father in 1957; her sister Mira had been in Paris ever since 1946. At first sight, this fact should not necessarily have caused her feel lonely. Many people live alone nowadays, especially among Jews, but not all of them feel loneliness the same way. Vera was very close to her mother, because she was her great support in life. Since her mother was not only a beautiful woman, but educated as well, according to friends' recollection, she passed over to her daughters the same values. Presumably mother's support, her guarding over Vera like an umbrella enabled her daughter devote herself completely to the advancement of her profession and not to getting to know the needs of everyday life (cooking or preparing something for others). That is why her mother's death meant for Vera a new burden in life causing emptiness. Nobody ever could take over her place. To all that disappointment in love life could be added, what, altogether with other misfortunes made up a life burden, indivisible with others.

Years of full life accomplishment arrived, years when one runs back over the past to see what one had done and where one would go – the decade between one's forties and fifties. It became clear that her status as a free lance artist did not enable financial security, not even the minimum inevitable to survive, nor did it enable the necessary professional feedback showing she was on the right professional track. Her gift, built up with her education and later on with her work and high professionalism, could not be valued by appropriate criteria in a society she had been moving in. The first positive criticism and first successes meant in the same time the first disappointments meaning that she would not reach the destination if she continued to go that way.

Reviews: The pianist career of Vera Schosberger did not last for long, but as long as it lasted, her recitals took place frequently and the reaction of public was always favorable. Her first record with the Novi Sad Radio was made 1954 and the last one 1965. Altogether she had about 30 concerts both in the country and abroad. The beginning of her professional career could be regarded year 1948, when she took part at the already mentioned Youth Festival in Belgrade. The very beginning could be put even earlier, if by "playing in public" we mean playing during the war in Budapest before a selected circle of friends in her home. As early as in 1965 (writes Mihalek), she stops playing in public after a recital dedicated to Mozart, at which she played perfectly his Rondo. She preferred recording at the studio – she felt more secure in a closed space than in front of public playing live, when she had stage fright and felt nervous. Her admirers remember various pieces of music she played: for one it was Schumann, others remember Brahms, for some it was Scarlatti and Debussy, while it says somewhere that she played "all the more important soloist pieces of piano literature". The majority of her admirers think she played Mozart with an exceptional sensitivity, with a dose of specific humor. The list of piano pieces Vera Schosberger played and the collection of

criticism that is, regrettably, hard to obtain due to the fact criticism is printed in daily newspapers, following public concerts and not in the occasion of recordings at the studio, what became her preoccupation.

At the guest performance of the Novi Sad philharmonic orchestra in Belgrade February 1956 (at the Kolarceva National University), in the occasion of celebrating the 200th anniversary of Mozart's birth) the soloists were Vera Schosberger and Anton Eberst. Vera played the Concerto for piano and orchestra in c-minor and Symphony in g-minor. A critic wrote on Vera's part in the success: "Pianist Vera Schosberger played her part of the c-minor Concerto correctly, with good musicality, a little bit too loudly, though and not completely cleared in style, especially when Mozart's transparent, rapid passages are in question (signed with the initial P. "Republika" February 14th 1956). The same recital was played in Novi Sad (January 10th 1956) written about by critic Mihajlo Vukdragovic: "Pianist Vera Schosberger played the soloist part of the Concert in c-minor with an intensity of refined musicality and culture and on a serious technical level (Borba February 15th 1956)".

Andrija Preger (periodical "Savremenik" July-August 1956, 173-174) estimates Vera's musical performance in detail: "Vera Schosberger, a young pianist from Novi Sad, who has already drawn attention on herself by her performances so far, especially by an impetuously refined and ripe in style performance of Mozart's Concerto in B-major (with the Belgrade philharmonic orchestra) last season, played at the beginning of May at the Kolarceva National University Hall. She successfully performed a diverse program comprising old classical composers, through the Vienna classics and Romantics, all to the impressionists and the contemporary maestro Slavenski.

In Bach's Prelude and Fugue in a-minor for organ (in Liszt's transcript), in the rendering of Schosberger, the strength and grandeur of the architecture of the maestro as well as the plasticity of sounds got full expression. At the beginning, the fugue was interpreted too fast, but upon its gradual development the initial rush calmed down, giving space to the monumentality of the masses of sounds. The refined tissue of Mozart's beautiful sonata in C-major (K.330) gained its real fulfillment under Vera Schosberger's fingers. The pianist managed to pass from Bach's massive and full style onto Mozart's transparent music with great sense for real values regarding this sunny and cheerful art. She did not insist on the rococo character of this music, but emphasized its masculine and refined but still virile character. One must laud the rendering of the dreamy slow movement played with refined poetry and a lot of sound fantasy, as well as the capricious Rondo of the Sonata. Schumann's "Butterflies" (that a bit obsolete, naively romantic piece of music) was given by Schosberger a real fantastic character, emphasizing contrasts of the sentimental and capricious, while Brahms Intermezzo and the Balade she gave the necessary dramatic character and that melancholic longing so typical to that late romanticist from the north. Undoubtedly the highest peak of the evening Vera Schosberger performed rendering the impressionists: Debussy and Ravel. She knew how to conjure up the true luxury of the tonal of a refined palette which nuances and reflections were fluid just as the water itself that is being painted by these

authors with a lot of subtlety and richness in color. She closed this successful concert with a strong and brilliant interpretation of the Yugoslav Suite by Josip Slavenski.

The young artist once again confirmed her expressive musical and pianist talent by which she successfully interprets authors of the most versatile styles, reviving their music in a vital and convincing way. "From this criticism we can understand the general estimation of Vera's repertoire – she played all the important soloist pieces of piano literature, or "concerts, sonatas and concert pieces of domestic and foreign composers" (Eberst, 1997, 95).

In his review *Saula* writes back in 1954, following her guest performance in Zagreb, that at the very beginning of the career of this artist, a nice sound can be perceived in her playing, rich in nuances, with no insisting on external means, but rather on the internal strength and imaginative interpretation – quoted by Mihalek in the already mentioned radio program.

We learn about Vera's piano playing from her friends as well. *Antonia Toth* assesses Vera played so well together with her sister Claudia, the cellist, due to the fact they had similar ideas about the ways of interpretation, as well as about the contents and the emotions that should be visible in the course of interpretation. They performed together in 1958-59 and it was Vera who in a way helped Claudia get job engagement in Dubrovnik, back in 1960, where she still works. Antonia recalls the extraordinary interpretation of Cezar Franck's Symphonic variations. These are just some of the elements to depict the versatile repertoire of Vera's. Vera gathered around artists in her home, those first years after the Academy Enriko Josip and Glid the sculptor were coming.

Mihajlo Kelbli remembers working together with Vera for a short while and talks about her high professionalism and energy to complete each task she once had begun. He regrets they worked together only for a short while.

Ilij Vrsajkov says (in the before mentioned program of Dusan Mihalek) the already quoted statement that "Vera was not an ordinary person". He talks about a good idea of hers from 1955, which was never implemented, but it was good to have existed at all, namely that a group of artists get organized in an association and to give cultural life in town an impetus by its artistic strength.

The fact is that Vera recorded more at the Studio than she played in front of the public. Reviews are written only of live concerts, but it should be stated that media promotion of artists was still in initial stage. Recordings stay at the Radio, they get broadcast many times, remaining with no adequate media visibility, though. One of the reasons why Vera has been forgotten by music critics is that recordings were not played over onto contemporary cassettes, neither were they advertised; recollection of her performance has not been kept in a materialistic sense, which would have otherwise led to preserving her music from oblivion. Thus, one of our tasks should be that what is still preserved be played over onto CD and be shown to the public for successors. After the death of the artist, nobody particularly took care about preserving her bequest. These are all reasons why the artistic personality of Vera Schosberger was not

estimated properly neither in her life, nor later, neither was the mechanism of collective recollection of the artist cherished systematically.

In conclusion: She was only 45 when she summed up her life and experience: 16 years of artistic career, with no family, with no permanent job, living in a country where free lance artists mainly starve and where associations of professional musicians mostly care about general issues, not individual ones, Vera Schosberger realized she would never gain that power beyond she had dreamed about as an artist. One thing she knows for sure is that she does not want any compromise either with her surroundings or with herself. At the very beginning of 1972, more precisely, January 9th, one cold winter morning, freezing and full of fear, she decided not to live the life that was not worthy herself. A life over which she did not have power-beyond any more. So death prevailed over her. In the river Danube that was part of her youth, her experience, she found ultimate harmony of her life. Music of waves of the river existing from the times immemorial replaced her life obsession. The gifted life full of music ceased to exist.

Today it is hard to give a rational estimation of the reason that led to such a decision, although she had attempted several times to commit suicide. What happened to Vera after she stopped rendering concerts, after her mother's death, after her father's death and much later, after her friend Ila Kasovic's death (1971) is hard to explain without a close research. Some remember Vera by the fact that she liked being alone, searching for sounds of music she was listening to inside herself and in the nature. Some others saw her wandering through the forest until she got exhausted, having left her shoes on tree stumps and growths on the path covered with leaves. She stopped walking only when tiredness crushed her, when her legs became painful. Some good people found her in such a condition. Time spent in hospital or clinics followed. Was she being healed properly? She underwent medical treatment and escaped from the institutions, which seemed not to have been able to help her. There were attempts to impose guardianship over her. She gradually dissolved her own identity by stopping to be what she wanted to be and what she had really been.

After treatments she felt hardly well enough to sit by the piano in front of the public. Doctors that healed her are not alive any more and most probably the diagnosis of her illness is not so important any more either (depression or schizophrenia it was). The diagnosis could have been a certain sort of depression or schizophrenia, which is not important now. It is important, though, to state that at the time nobody could help her. She found herself in the cleavage between her talent and desire to become first class artist. The society, however, did not have a solved status for such a choice. She, once rich and wealthy, was left after the state nationalization only with basic personal properties, which she slowly had to sell off: first furniture, later jewelry of the family...

The last years of her life were neither nice nor good. Many can mostly remember that last period of her life when she wandered through the city tumult all alone, drugged with medicines and sedatives, overwhelmed with loneliness. It could have been expected she would commit suicide in such a condition. Many a clever lady before her

time did commit suicide. Let us just remember the excellent philosopher Anica Savic Rebac from Novi Sad, who killed herself not being ready to continue living without the man she had lost: her husband. Before her, Milica Stojadinovic Srpsinja, an outstanding pouter, collector of folk literature, an exceptional intellectual of her age and society around her, committed suicide in a time when she lost everything, not coping with life she thought unworthy of her.

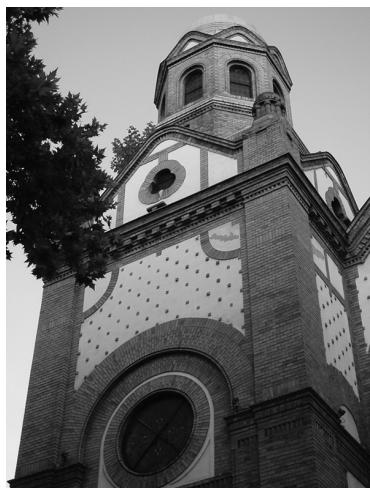
To cut short life that is not satisfactory, not to accept any compromise seemed to have been a natural way for many intellectuals in this region, but not only over here. Women decided to kill themselves in situations they regarded unworthy of their capability – a capability of excellent artists, intellectuals or scholars.

This recollection is a memory on such a lady who did not want any compromise, but was searching for her superiority in the world she found herself too early in. The story of Vera Schosberger is just one of similar ones in the history of exceptional women of our city, but of world culture in general as well, a story of those lonely firs broken by winds of social destiny. That is why I feel the story of Vera Schosberger, both the professional and the personal one, as a rule concerning clever and gifted women who were crushed by the patriarchal society. Indeed, they are victims of their own ideal that life should not be lived in an ordinary way. We support those ones and confirm that opinion by this reminiscence.

I will end with a suggestion that systematic research begin concerning work and personality of Vera Schosberger, as a significant woman of our city. What is that we know about her so far? Very little. A few lines in music lexicons, random notes – and that are all.

Text written by Svenka Savic, 2000; Translated by Edita Jankov

Miriam (1929), Sombor



I was born in Sombor in '29 as the only child to my father, who was a Jew and to my mother, Margit, who was Hungarian. I got my name Ilonka after my aunt. My father was a craftsman when I was born. We did not have electricity installed in our flat, so I was born by a petroleum lamp, in a house in Jevrejska street. I finished elementary school in Sombor. I remember being almost traumatized when I started school. I recall my mother taking me to school the first day. I could not speak any Serbian at that time, because at home we spoke in Hungarian. I felt miserable because I couldn't speak any Serbian, I felt almost lost. I knew nobody at school. Everything seemed so strange to me, but after a while, I could cope with everything. When I finished the fourth

grade of elementary school, I was ten then, it was time to enroll secondary school. However, as early as in the autumn of 1940, the so called Numerus Clausus regulation came into power, by which Jews could not enroll secondary schools, grammar school or higher elementary school, only a certain percent of the population was allowed to, according to the percentage of the Jews in the whole population of the country, which was not too big. My parents simply did not know which school to take me to. In the end, they enrolled me in the fifth (senior) grade of higher elementary school. Children with somewhat poor abilities attended senior grades of higher elementary school, those ones who did not continue their education afterwards. I finished the fifth grade with excellent marks. In 1941, when the Hungarians occupied Backa, I could continue my education. I was attending three grades of higher elementary school, up until 1944.

As early as in April 1944, most of the Jews were deported from Sombor. Father was taken away with other Jews, while I stayed with my mother, as I said, she was Hungarian. Since I was born in mixed marriage, the authorities did not deport me with other Jews right away. However, that asylum lasted short – just until June, when they came to collect all the Jews who were still in town. Then I was taken away as well. I was fourteen then. We were first summoned up to the police station. We spent the night there and the next day they took us to the railway station, where we got on board to passenger wagons and arrived in Bacsalmás, the ghetto. I was going alone, without my mum and there was just one girl without parents there, the others were with their fami-

lies. The two of us children all alone in the entire group. We were carrying rucksacks with the most important things. That night, when I was being kept at the police station, my mum approached the captain crying, asking him for an advice what she should do, as her only child was taken away and her husband even earlier, leaving her behind. The captain proved to be human after all, advising her to stay at home and safeguard her belongings, because – he said – one day your husband and daughter will return not finding anything. That is how my mum stayed in Sombor. With no income, with nothing, all alone. I just don't know how she could support herself.

Alas, I arrived in Bacsalmás. There was a big ghetto with Jews from Szeged, Subotica and Sombor. Jewish families were staying in that ghetto, while I was accompanied by that other girl, Stefi. We got accommodation at the attic, our beds were lined up on the floor, in dust. I took a quilt from home, we had no more blankets, since father had taken one with him. We put the quilt down and covered ourselves with Stefi's blanket. We spent about a week there, when they began transporting us by cattle freight cars. It was June and very hot. They told us that whoever of us thought he or she had any reason for being excepted, should stay overnight and an officer would be interrogating us. Naturally, I stayed overnight hoping that I wouldn't be deported due to the fact that my mum was Hungarian. I can remember well that night spent in the office. The officer paid no much attention to me. In my childish way, I tried to explain everything I thought could help me. Nothing, however, helped, so I was told to leave. The same night a gendarme (not a policeman, but a gendarme he was) approached me in the ghetto. He introduced himself and told me that he knew me from Sombor, since he had served his duty there. We were walking around whole night. He was talking to me very politely. Knowing that my mother was waiting outside the gate, I asked him kindly to go there and bring her a message from me. He did so and brought a message back from her. Although he was a gendarme, he was human indeed. I can never forget him. I would like to thank him, but he may not be alive anymore. There were such gendarmes as well I can tell you. It is not true that Hungarians were the worst nazis.

When it dawned, we lined up and headed from the ghetto to the station. Mum was walking along on the sidewalk, while I was walking on the road with the group. I found my quilt too heavy, so I threw it away saying to mum: – Bring it home, I cannot carry it with me. I was too young to carry such a burden: a rucksack, a quilt, a winter coat... We arrived at the station, where we were pushed to freight wagons. The whole group had arrived there the previous day, so the wagons were almost full. Stefi and myself were pushed into one of the wagons. Luckily, there were nice people in there, intellectuals mainly, who helped the two of us as much as they could.

The journey lasted for days. The train stopped in Szeged. Jewish forced laborers approached us there, with yellow ribbons around their arms. They opened the door of the wagon and everyone of us, depending what dishes we had, stretched out something for some water. I had just a saucepan so I got some water into it. After all these years I can recall the feeling of thirst, the hardest thing is to be left without any water. It is the most terrible feeling I can imagine! It was very hot, the train suddenly stopped. The

door was left closed. People were swollen, because they could not urinate. The family by the door had the worst possible place. They put a large sheet and a washbowl there, so we were approaching it one by one and urinated, at least those ones who managed. The train stopped at the Austrian border, the gendarmes left their posts and the train was overtaken by the SS. The train went as long as Strasshof, a camp with many barracks, surrounded by wire. It was like a concentration camp. We did not move into the barracks immediately, but spent a few nights outside, in the open. Nobody gave us food there, one ate what one had brought along. I had another bitter experience. My mother's elder sister, who lived in Bacsalmas, gave me no food at all. My mother had no money, but she did and she should have packed something, either some bread or bacon, since I had no food with me at all. Stefi and myself were both without parents and with no food, we just had some potable water. We got some food from the others.

Food at Strasshof was nothing special: in the morning we got some black water with some bread, for lunch and dinner we were getting turnip bits cooked in water, it was called dörgemüse.

Before we got any food, we had to take a bath. Everyone was ordered to take off clothes, men and women separately. I had my rucksack, the others had suitcases...I took off my clothes. It was for the first time in my life that I saw naked female bodies.

There was a counter, where a Russian man or maybe an Ukrainian he was, took over our luggage to be disinfected. We were supposed to hand over all our luggage and to go under the shower afterwards. We washed ourselves all over again, hair, everything. I can remember, two Russian women were standing in front of the door controlling if we had any lice. I had wonderful red hair. One of the women said: – Look, how lovely ginger hair this girl has got! Those were the only nice words addressed to me. After the disinfection took place, everyone took one's luggage, got dressed and went to a barrack. Those barracks were full of bedbugs and lice! How ironical! They bothered us with the disinfection, then threw us into filthy barracks! They registered us afterwards. We spent several days there. We had to line up and foreworkers came to choose those of us who were capable of working in the field. I was well grown and strong for my age, so they chose me to work. We travelled as far as Feldsberg (today that place is called Valtice in Slovakia) at the estate of the prince of Lichtenstein. There were already some Jews from Sombor, who were accommodated at the attic. When they saw the new group, everyone came down to ask questions. I met aunt Vilma there, a lady approximately my mum's age. When she saw me, she said regretfully: – Look at these two poor girls! They have come without their parents! So, Vilma became as mother to me. She was deported with her daughter, who now lives in Sombor. We got our beds down on the floor and also got some food. The food seemed to be better here. Our women were cooking and they tried to make the food as tasty as possible.

As my first job, I was supposed to paw sugar beet. Imagine those people, both men and women, never in their lives did ever hold a hoe... We got up at six every morning. A man was appointed to wake us up in the morning. We had breakfast and from seven we worked at the estate. We would line up in the yard and then the foreworkers would

come. There were also Czecks and Germans. Among them there were both good ones and bad ones. We worked until 1 p.m. when we were brought lunch. We had an hour break and continued work until 6 p.m. in the evening. We worked 12 hours a day free of charge. Others worked in the industry, also 12 hours a day, without being payed. Our work in the field depended on the weather, as well as on the crop in that season. We also threshed wheat with a machine. My dress I had brought with me tore apart soon.

What I suffered from a lot was the sun. I have very sensitive skin, I can't bear sun and heat. My skin was red, burnt and freckles covered my arms. I had nothing to put on my skin to protect it. It was terrible, but I had to be in the sun all day long. It was very hard and very painful.

The following season we had to take potatoes out of earth. It was somehow tolerable, but when we had to take out sugar beet, in November, it was cold winter. My hands were all blue and red from cold and painful. I cried. My hands were terrible, terrible painful. Older women tried to calm me down. But you can hardly calm down when your hands are painful from freezing. I had no shoes at all by then. We got some kind of wooden clodhoppers. I wrapped some clothes around my feet before putting on the clodhoppers, but I couldn't protect my hands. I had brought a small cushion from home, which I put on my back, between my body and coat to get protected from the wind... After all these years, I think I could cope with the situation: I could wash my underwear and also could wash my hair. We had water all the time.

When you are at a camp, you are never on your own, but always surrounded by people. I didn't care, because among people I didn't feel lonely and didn't feel that much my parents were not with me. I don't like being alone even now. When we didn't work in the field, we got our lunch and supper at the camp. I always sat in the kitchen, next to the cook and she would give me as much food as I wanted. In the autumn I got the first letter from my father, who was in Austria, working at a forest farm.

I was overwhelmed with joy when I got the first letter from him. It was a painful and wonderful feeling at the same time. I felt encouraged feeling his love. I got two or three letters from him, but regrettfully, after the liberation my father burned all the letters. I was keeping them. He burned everything, the yellow star as well...

Father was desperate when he learned from mother that I was also deported, since they were exchanging letters. He tried hard to get hold of my address. He managed it through some friends, through Slovenia, Vienna... although he didn't know in which transport to find me, because hundreds of thousands of Jews were transported. Nevertheless, he managed to obtain my address from Vienna, where our registration lists were. In Strasshof, the ghetto, we were registered and the lists were sent to Vienna, so father could find me. He asked his foreman to enable him to join his daughter in Slovakia, or to fetch her. My father was a very skillful craftsman, he could repair just everything. I often say nowadays that father would be ashamed if he saw how ignorant I am for many things. He had skills for many things. He could mend bicycles, shoes, knew how to repair radio sets... He was respected for his talent and was denied permission to leave. His boss asked that I be transferred instead of father, because they needed him.

Even the exact date was settled, when something unexpected happened. In the autumn 1944 my father received an urgent order that he should leave that place and accompany someone leaving for Strasshof. The Germans were looking for trained craftsmen who would evacuate plants into Germany, because they had been expecting the offensive in Normandy and presumed that the allies would destroy everything. Complete production plants were supposed to be transported to Germany. My father was desperate when he learned that he should leave that place. When it seemed almost certain that I would join him, he was transferred to Bergen Belsen. It was a horrible camp! People were dying there just as in Auschwitz. The more losses the Germans suffered, the more eagerly they wanted to exterminate the Jews, as the allies wouldn't see what they had done to us. At the camp, father tried to be always close to the fence, so to be able to ask every newcomer if any fresh group arrived from Feldsberg or Sombor. My father could cope with his situation somehow. German soldiers had a screening room, in which the projector engine broke down. My father repaired it, the soldiers must have asked around who knew how to repair projector engines among the detainees. He spent a few days in the workshop and every time he found some bread in the drawer. German soldiers had left it for him. They didn't dare do it in public, understandably enough, but that way they helped him and showed appreciation for his successful work. They even wanted to give him money, but he refused.

I shall add to this that my father was born with a heart defect. Sustaining forced labor from 1941 to 1944, deportation and having learned that his daughter was also deported, he suffered a lot. But thanks God he survived. He returned home in Sombor in August 1945.

I returned before him, in May 1945. Russians arrived in our camp in Strasshof and simply said we were free and could go home. We left the camp happy, but sad at the same time. We were hungry and desperate. We started off on foot. We spent the night in a village and moved on the next day. Here and there a Russian truck stopped to give us a lift and that's how we reached Bratislava. By then I had no shoes at all, just some clothes wrapped around my feet.

In Bratislava, the Red Cross received us and we got some food there. I was very hungry. I went, along with a woman, to beg for some bread from people, since we were starving. The Red Cross might have no enough money, or they just did not want to feed Jews... It was there when I failed to be registered with the other detainees. All the others have kept their certificates. I haven't got one. My only goal was to arrive home. To see mum and to wait until dad comes home. We left Bratislava and arrived in Budapest by truck. We went to the Jewish Community where everyone of us got two boiled eggs... I asked about father's whereabouts. I asked if they had any register of those who had come to the Community. I was told they got nothing. We embarked on a cattle freight wagon in Budapest and travelled to Subotica. It was Yugoslavia! When we left the train and passed by a school building, there were graffiti all around on the walls: „Down with the king – long live Tito!” I had no idea who Tito was and why down with the king. We were taught at elementary school: – Children, you should respect the king

above all, the Royal Couple and the Crown Prince come first and only after them can you respect your parents.

We were held in quarantine there for a week and I got no certificate there either. It was a big mistake! When they let us free... You can imagine how terrible I looked: with torn clothes, dirty, full of lice. At that time people were transported by cattle freight cars all over Backa. I recall that I felt the need to communicate with people, to tell them about what I had gone through. Hearing my story, women opened their baskets and gave me some food. Nothing in life is important except to have some bread and water. This is what I learned from my life experience and that is how I was bringing up my child. I didn't encourage her to collect material wealth, but to cherish values and be honest and human.

My train arrived in Sombor at night. It was May 1945 and I was 15, when I returned. It was night, but I was walking very courageously through Sombor – I wasn't afraid of anybody! I knocked at the window, mum was alone at home. She cried... I didn't cry, I was very happy. Mum was terribly crying and hugging me. – Mum, please, don't, I am full of lice. That night she rubbed my head with some petroleum. We exterminated the lice.

I can remember another painful event from the war. In April 1945, our train was supposed to be transferred from Strasshof to Teresianstadt. Bombing planes came and bombarded the railway tracks. Vienna was close, a railway knot was there, so American planes bombarded it. With the other detainees I was also on the train standing in the open railway tracks. It was horrible! I was terrified. I believe that all that caused I forgot so many things from before the war. Everything I had learned before the war was wiped out from my brain due to those horrors. Everything... Chemistry, mathematics, all the subjects...

The same year, on August 20, my father returned as well. Since he was coming all the way from Germany on foot and travelled very long, stayed in quarantine... he arrived later. He sent a telegram from Subotica informing us he was staying at the same school building I had stayed before him. Rejoining my father was something magnificent, the most wonderful experience one can imagine. After all the hardship I went through, I was unutterably happy.

However, father was ill by then. He had edema, he was swollen, since his heart was ill. He suffered typhus fever at the camp – there was an epidemic. He had to get employed, however, to support his family. My mother was a housewife, I was half way between being a child and an adult, so he had to start working at a workshop, he repaired radio-sets.

I forgot to tell that they took away things from Jews if they liked them. I heard from people who had expensive, nice rucksacks that they had been ordered to throw them onto a sheet. They never ever saw those things again. Nobody took my rucksack, however, it wasn't nice at all. In the ghetto, before they transferred us further to our working site, they said that each of us could keep two pairs of underwear, two dresses, one coat and all the other things we had, including the documents, we were supposed to

hand over. Our clothes were distributed among the citizens, who sustained bombardment. What could we bring along? Very few things, and I kept just the most necessary clothes, since I was very obedient. I was always disciplined and obeyed the law. I could never lie somebody, neither could I fraud or take anything, which fact hindered me through my whole life. I was always respecting moral rules and values and tried to stick to them. I was taught that way by my parents and at school as well.

Father got a job after the war. We continued to live together up until January 31, 1948. What can I say? Our relationship in the family changed. My father was worn out, exhausted and seriously ill. I couldn't cope with the new regime either. I expected from the regime to recognize that huge injustice that had been done to us. For example, when I returned home, I had no clothes at all, I didn't get any shopping tickets, though, since I was neither a tractor driver, nor in a partisan elite workers' group. I was just an ordinary Jewish girl, who didn't attend school, nor did have a job. I was deeply disappointed by that. You asked me how I coped with socialism – I didn't cope at all. The first steps seemed to have disappointed me, since I was not accepted as I had expected.

After I arrived home, I had no shoes. Everyone around me was decently dressed, since they had clothes from before the war. Nothing, however, left to me, besides, I had grown up as a girl. My father wished me to continue education. It was his dream, because in Jewish families children are traditionally educated, children are sacrificed for. He persuaded me to enroll in the fourth grade of Grammar school. Just imagine: I finished four grades of elementary school in Serbian, then a senior grade in Hungarian, now Grammar school again in Hungarian. I found algebra very hard, I didn't have it in elementary school, neither in higher elementary school, I didn't learn it at all and now I was supposed to know it in the fourth grade. It was very hard indeed.

I finished the fourth grade and enrolled in School of Economy in Serbian. I was going to school for several days and then suddenly – without my parents' permission – I went up to the principal saying I didn't want to attend school any longer and asked for my documents back. At those times just everyone could finish school, even the stupid ones. It was the partisan way. Even those who never ever before had studied, could obtain education. It was easy to obtain final certificate. This fact upset me, just as my dad. So, I left school and stayed at home. My parents were not pleased at all, especially my father. But I said – I want to work and earn money to buy clothes and shoes. I was a grown up girl by then. I tried to learn sewing, but I wasn't too good at it.

A post office clerk lived in our neighborhood with his wife, who suggested my mum to tell me to go and ask for being employed at the post office. I accepted his advice and went to the manager. I got the job. I applied, the managing board was in Novi Sad and the answer was that I got the job. Dad died on January 31 and I was supposed to start working on February 1. However, it is the custom that Jews observe a seven day mourning. An older friend of ours went to the manager and explained our situation, so I started working a week later. My first job was in Sombor in the telegraph department and it was there where I stopped working 35 years later. I liked my job. I like working even now. I am always in action, I am the kind of person who cannot sit in one place

for long. I think I could have never been a university student, but I certainly could have graduated at high school if times had been normal.

Let me go back and tell you about Stefi. When my father was shipped to Bergen Belsen, Stefi's father was also with him. Our mothers had stayed back in Sombor, since they both were Hungarians. When her father heard from mine that he had asked for a permission for his daughter to be moved to his place, he felt ashamed, so he also asked the camp authorities his daughter to be moved there. So, Stefi got the permission to join her father. When she arrived there, she learned that her father had been living with a woman. Poor girl! I gave her my diary telling her – Give it to my father, let him at least read my notes if I cannot join him. Stefi went back to Sombor with her father, however, he got divorced from his first wife and moved to Israel with the other one. Stefi illegally went first to Hungary in 1946-47, when Jewish youngsters used to escape to Hungary crossing the green border (it is where the natural, geographical border is). They were situated at a camp, led by the Jewish community. Those youngsters were prepared to work in agriculture, because it was still Palestina and at the time the state of Israel was founded, agricultural laborers were needed. Stefi was one of them and today she lives in Netanya. She got married and has two wonderful daughters. I visited Israel in 1981 to see my old friends. When it was her turn, Hedi, a friend of mine since childhood, with whom I was staying told her on the phone: – Ilonka is here, come to see us! Her daughter drove her by car. It was a very touchy encounter. We both cried. It was a moment when you remember the past. Stefi told me: – Ilonka, if you had come just a year later, my heart would have stopped beating. I couldn't have born this encounter with you!

An interesting event happened to me while staying in Israel. I can speak only Hungarian and Serbian, but in Israel everybody speaks five languages, including English. I can't speak English. My friends thought it would be the best if Stefi put me in a taxi and at a certain point Hedi waited for me at five o'clock. However, the Arab taxi driver didn't drive me to the proper place, instead, he told me something in Arabic and showed that I should leave the taxi. I told him in Hungarian it wasn't the proper place for me to leave. I found myself in a completely unfamiliar place, resident buildings, lights... I approached a girl trying to ask her for the directions in Hungarian. An elderly couple was coming, I hoped they knew Hungarian. They were Russian Jews, though. I was frightened, didn't know what to do. I got the idea to go into the nearest shop, ask for the phone and call up Hedi. Her husband answered, I gave the receiver to the shop keeper asking him to say what that place was. Hedi was waiting for me for hours at the agreed site in vain. Then they came by car to pick me up and we finally got home.

Everything I have been telling belongs to the past. I have thought things over by now. There are things I have forgotten. That way I got rid of bitter traumas. Now I often forget even those things I wouldn't like to. As I told you, I don't like to be alone. I need people's company. I live on my own in Kikinda. If I wanted to move to Novi Sad, to be close to my daughter and son in law, I should find a flat. Flats are usually on floors and that wouldn't suit me. I could neither stand in crowded buses. Children are busy, I can't expect from them to drive me by car wherever I want. Subotica is a milder town. I

must confess that as a child I absorbed Hungarian culture, I am not familiar with Serb culture, so to speak. I married a Hungarian, we spoke Hungarian at home. I prefer Subotica. I could live there. I have friends in Kikinda, thanks God. I can't complain, I am not all alone. Every day someone comes to see me, but it is different. I have been suffering emotionally all these years, back from 1944. I have been carrying traces of the lack of love and attention. I was happy while the whole family was together.

After my father's death in 1949, my mum became bewidowed. I got a job. By that time, Jews were allowed to move to Israel legally. I had a strong wish to go to Israel. When father returned home in 1945, we were talking about it and he promised: – Ilonka, as soon as it is possible to move legally, we will be the first ones to go to Israel! All that suffering, humiliation, everything we had to go through because we were Jews, just enforced us in our wish to go to our homeland where we would be equal citizens. In Yugoslavia I don't feel as an equal citizen even today. I may be wrong, but that's how I feel. However, dad died and when I mentioned this to mother, she answered: – Go if you want, but I am staying. I couldn't go alone. I couldn't decide to leave her behind and dad's grave in Sombor. I have stayed here. I got married here later...

I met my husband back in 1947 in a small village called Majdan, at the meeting point of three borders with Rumania, Yugoslavia and Hungary. By grandmother and aunt lived there. I made a visit to them and met my husband. There were dancing parties every Saturday in the village. Idillic lighting, carbid lamp. A girl wasn't supposed to go there without a shaperon. He was a very handsome young man and I liked him right away, so I fell in love. Mum thought it would be better to marry a Hungarian. We got married on January 23, 1951. It was a modest wedding. I had always wanted my wedding to be very special, I had dreamt about a beautiful wedding. My mother said: – My child, I can't afford a party and an expensive dress. I wished to make up for everything I had missed so far.

When I gor married, I asked to get transferred with my job to Kikinda, because we inherited a house there. The post office Board payed for the transportation costs. They don't do that anymore. So, we moved into our house. We lived together with mum. In 1953 our daughter was born. We began our life together. My husband got a job as a car mechanic, I worked at the post office and our daughter was growing by my mother, who ran the household. We tried to enable her everything she needed including education. She was a quiet, very obedient girl, we never ever had any problems with her. Everybody was fond of her at school. She attended the music school in Kikinda, a blind pianist, Ladislav Schlesinger was her piano teacher. Somewhat later he graduated from the Music Academy in Belgrade. We were friends, especially when he learned my daughter was of Jewish origin. He had no family, his father fell victim in the Novi Sad raid, mother and sister in Auschwitz, he escaped thanks to the fact he was hiding in Budapest. He got married in Budapest and came with his wife first to Novi Sad and later to Kikinda. He worked as a piano teacher up until his retirement. He died in early 90's, he was 72. We were good friends.

As I told you, my mother lived with us having a remarkable impact on our life.

Our daughter grew by her, we worked and grandmother ran the household. Our daughter first began studying in Hungarian, but in the fourth grade of elementary school she continued studying in Serbian in order to learn Serbian properly before her senior grades. Grandmother insisted on this, she herself knew just a few words in Serbian. I myself began studying at a Serbian school. Mother enrolled me in a Serbian school, although she hardly spoke any Serbian. Such was the choice of the family.

I have had some identity problems concerning my first name. At elementary school I was officially registered one way, but when I applied for my documents before I got employed, I learned that my name was originally translated into Serbian. After WW2 I accepted the idea of internationalism and dreamt about the united Europe. But these days, when nationalism flourishes, all these horrible wars... Why on earth am I registered with a Serbian first name, when my mother knew no Serbian? Father registered me. Did they persuade him to translate my name, or did he want it to be like that? Or because we were Jews they demanded we were loyal? I am sorry I can't find it out. In my ID my first name is written in Serbian. While I worked, everybody called me that way. Jews usually have double first names. It confuses me a bit, though.

When our daughter started elementary school, my husband wished she studied in Hungarian. He stuck to his identity.

As far as tradition is concerned... My mother converted to Jewish religion before she got married. After father's death she didn't observe tradition any more. We would observe high holidays. I always went to the synagogue with my father, but mother didn't want to. You know how it is. Jews just don't accept people of other faith. We should confess it. They were closed up in ghettos for decades, without being accepted by others, so they are also reluctant to accept others... Mother felt that. I studied religion at school, but we were not religious. I cannot tell you anything interesting about Jewish customs.

At my job, women and men were treated equally, as far as salaries and holidays are concerned. Relations were collegial at the post office. A colleague of mine was once angry with me and said something like: – Why would that Jewish woman... But it was just once. There may have been remarks behind my back, but I don't know anything about that. When I hear the word „Civutkinja” I get mad. I heard that word was of Turkish origin. People had no reason to behave badly with me. I was never competitive nor did I ask for privileges. During Tito's regime Hungarians or Jews were not mistreated, but there were inequalities, I can tell you. Privileges enjoyed the ones who held functions and those who were eloquent. Such people benefited from socialism. We didn't. I had to obtain everything myself, I was never supposed to be late from work. The manager's wife worked with me. He just phoned that they had a guest for lunch, so she went home to prepare the meal. She went home early and we had to work instead of her. Such inequality existed, but not due to the fact one was a woman, Jewish or less educated, but because some people shamelessly grabbed the common, while others didn't dare. And, you see, time has arrived when one is not certain one can keep everything one had obtained. Now I feel bitter about what I'd gone through. It shouldn't have happened if only I had lived in a country where one is guaranteed human rights. I feel as

if I was cut off my arms and legs and I just live. Things are not the way they should be. Thieves broke into that small building in my yard looking for food, meat, ham. People are hungry. Luckily, they stayed away from my apartment. I was sleeping inside. People are hungry. There is huge poverty. It was in 2000.

My generation got employed either with a junior General Certificate of Education or with four grades of grammar school or with higher elementary school certificate. Later on, in the '70s we were asked to obtain further education in order to get better jobs. However, I didn't want to study. I have always had stage fright on one hand I was never ambitious, on the other. I was a good teleprinter typist. I never managed to get an easier job. People managed to obtain easier jobs, better salaries. I had to work hard, but they say the busy ones get employed all the time, don't they. You asked me what I got from socialism. Nothing at all. Not even a flat on credit. Many got wonderful flats. I told my daughter to try to benefit from socialism, the system that appeared to be very generous to some. Some got nothing. My working years passed by, everything passed by.

As long as one is young, 30, 40, one things old age will never come, but one day you see you grew old. I could see that. My grand daughter Ana was sweet. A few years ago, while we were sitting together, she looked at me saying: – Grany, you have grown old. I got my first compliment about my old age from grand daughter. She was born in 1981. I have got just one grand daughter and I also have got just one daughter. I have been thinking why I didn't give birth to more children. You see how unwanted we are in society. Why should a child suffer? My daughter married a Serb, they live in Novi Sad. Grand daughter is a university student. They are the only ones I have now. I often see my colleagues, though, I must tell you. We phone each other. I have a friend who comes every day to see me and we walk a lot. But I am not the one who likes to visit someone every day. Intimacy is acceptable for me just in the family. When I was at school, of course, we pupils met at school every day and also visited each other. At school my friends were mostly Jews, coming from rich and educated families. I never felt I was poorer than they were. I have always had very good friends indeed. You can learn everything, not just from books – from one's behaviour, manners, way of living. I change letters with some old friends of mine. In Israel I have a friend who sent small parcels during the war, such as coffee, tea... On the other hand, as I already told you – my mother's relatives didn't give me a bite of food when I was heading for the camp.

It was very hard in the '90s, during the inflation. I also change letters with a lady who used to live in Sombor and now lives in Brasil. I often call up my friend Zuza in Sombor. We were together while serving forced labor. I always say: – I love you as though you were my elder sister.

She is one year elder than I am. There are four of us alive, who were at the camp together: one lives in Subotica, one in Novi Sad... and myself. I thought I would not live to be 70. Time passed by quickly, it flies quickly, especially now.

You asked me about Informburo. I was already employed, when Informburo was on the agenda in 1948. Many officers were dismissed from the post office management. As

far as I knew, they were those ones fond of Soviets, who wanted to impose Russian politics on us. Some people disappeared then. I heard afterwards that they were taken to the island of Goli otok. Everything was wrapped in secrecy. I heard about Goli otok later on. My father always told: – Jews should never mingle in politics, they will always be blamed. He would always tell us a story from Russia. The emperor went hunting into the woods, there was a small pub run by a Jew. He always had fresh cakes, but the emperors' men lashed him saying the emperor didn't like fresh cakes. On another occasion he was lashed because the cakes were not fresh. The next time he didn't bake any cakes at all and that's why he was lashed this time. I remember this story. Father killed my self confidence this way instead of encouraging me. It was how my family was thinking.

Don't forget that when I had to wear the yellow star I was just 14. Imagine what a shock it was for a child. I wasn't allowed to take part at school parties nor on Scout picnicks. It was regarded as normal. Hungarians came in 1941 and Scouts were operating up until 1944, when I was deported. You feel terribly stigmatized when you are not equal with others at school.

Should I have left for Israel? I can't tell you. I have been deliberating it ever since.

After a while life went on. My husband didn't like travelling. But we did spend a few holidays at the seaside. We were in Slovenia once. We were going to Hungary quite often. In 1985 I visited Poland for March 8th, through a tourist agency. I also travelled to Russia. I was also going with friends, my husband was afraid of the plane. So, I visited Poland, Russia and Israel.

On March 8th we travelled somewhere with colleagues. We were fond of that holiday, we felt appreciated. we enjoyed the company, we danced... Right following WW2 one was supposed to take part in those parties, you were regarded strange if you didn't. We got presents for March 8th, I always got flowers from my husband. He was very courteous. When he died, I realised that there was no one to bring me flowers even for my birthday. I miss those small presents.

My journey to Israel was the dearest to me. Israel is a special country. The whole atmosphere is different. The vegetation, climate, buildings, everything. But after a few days I could see how seriously they took security. I was afraid. I also saw people of my generation were well to do. I realized I couldn't fit in that society and that my home was in Kikinda. My poor husband was afraid I wouldn't return home. He was waiting for me at the Surcin airport. We were both happy. We went to Novi Sad then, our daughter was about to have a baby. It was in May. I felt happy indeed. I was 50 then. On the other hand, I enjoyed my visit to Israel. Everyone was so attentive and kind with me. That visit to Israel was a very important event in my life...

If you ask me where I feel at home, I will have to think. I was born in Sombor and lived there for 22 years, but now I feel at home in Kikinda. I am used to my neighbours. My home is very precious to me. The biggest problem is that people have no money. We cannot move from one place to another easily. After decades of working you earn just enough for living. Everything is about money. I don't take part in anything related to my town's social life. I used to go to the movies, but I hardly go anymore, neither

am I member of the library. When one is old, one have different relation to the town of residence. Kikinda is my town now. I realized I can't laugh from my soul any more. Muscles on my face are stiff.

Recorded, transcribed, edited by Svenka Savić, 2000, translated by Edita Jankov.



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