

Transcript of the *Shoah* Interview with Hanna Marton  
Translation by Deborah S. Droller - Volunteer – Visitor Services - April thru May 2008

**MARTON 1 (page 1)**

**Q:** Good, I would like for Madame Marton to speak to us about CLUJ in Hungary, which was also called KOLOZSVAR and KLAUSENBERG. Good, I would like to know, first, why this town had three names.

**A:** In fact, the town which is called today, Cluj, is the capital of Romania and was, at one time, the capital of Transylvania.

**Mme Marton:** Not of Romania; rather it was the capital of Transylvania.

**A:** Cluj, which today is in Romania and is called, Cluj, was the capital of Transylvania, and was known during that period of time as Kolozsvar; furthermore, during the time period when I was born, the town was named Kolozsvar. It's a town which existed, without interruption, first under the power of the Hungarians, then under the Romanians, then the Germans, and when I was born in 1940, it was under ...

**Q:** Madame Marton is very young ... but I don't think she was born in 1940 (laughs)

**A:** No.

**MARTON 2 (pages 1 thru 3)**

**A:** The town today is called Cluj seeing as it is in Romania, but it has also been the capital of Transylvania and its name during that time period when it was the capital of Transylvania was Kolozsvar, which is a Hungarian name; when I was born it was a Hungarian town and when I was expelled, it was from Kolozsvar. In fact, during that period, the Germans also lived in Transylvania, and they called it, "Klausenburg" and that's the reason why this town has three names.

**Q:** Was Madame Marton born in Cluj or Kolozsvar?

**A:** No. I was born in \_\_\_\_\_, also a town in Transylvania.

**Q:** And that's not very far from Kolozsvar?

**A:** 150 kilometers.

**Q:** And so when did you live in Kolozsvar?

**A:** In fact when I began to study at the University is when I came to Kolozsvar, which, at that time, was called Cluj, and it is there that I married and lived until the expulsion.

**Q:** There's a University there?

**A:** There's a University there which dates from the Fifteenth – Sixteenth Century.

**Q:** And now, can Madame Marton describe briefly for us Kolozsvar? What type of a town was it? Was it a beautiful town?

**A:** Kolozsvar is a very pretty town; there is, moreover, a street, la rue \_\_\_\_\_, which is, in my opinion, the most beautiful street in Europe.

**Q:** Why?

**A:** You know, it's a Baroque street, very serene. There is a church which dates likewise from the Sixteenth Century. On that street, one can experience humanity, which was so essential for us, and which, I believe, was truly felt there by all.

**Q:** Kolozsvar was a town of how many inhabitants during the war?

**A:** I think that there were between 100,000 and 120,000 inhabitants.

**Q:** And there were how many Jews?

**A:** 15,000.

**Q:** 15,000 Jews during the war?

### **MARTON 3 (pages 3 thru 5)**

**Q:** Had the Jewish community of Cluj been in existence for a long time?

**A:** I think there were Jews in Cluj since the Seventeenth-Eighteenth Century. I must say that I was somewhat reticent when you asked me to respond to these questions because, in fact, it is my husband who was in a better position as between the two of us to answer such questions. My husband wrote entries in the Jewish encyclopedias: the Hebrew encyclopedia, "Judaica," and "l'Encyclopedie Hebraique", and he devoted significant time to better understand Hungarian Judaism. But I think that there were Jews in Cluj since the Seventeenth-Eighteenth Century.

**Q:** Dr. Marton died a year and a half ago?

**A:** Yes, a year and a half ago.

**Q:** How would you characterize the Jews of Cluj? Can they be counted among those that one called, during this time period in Hungary, the neologists, which is to say, the nearly assimilated Jews, or were they the Orthodox religious Jews, or were they Zionists?

**A:** I can say with certainty that the Orthodox community was the most important in Cluj, but I only learned that information later on. Personally, I had contact only with the neologists and especially with the Zionists, for whom Kolozsvár was, at that time, a center for the Zionist movement. Transylvania was, incidentally, a Zionist center, and in Kolozsvár, the students, in particular, lived in a Zionist milieu and I took part in that life, in these groups. My husband, himself, was a Zionist leader.

**Q:** Good. Mr. and Madame Marton were both Zionists. And can it be said that in Transylvania, the religious Jews were very very numerous, very religious, very orthodox?

**A:** It's curious, up through the period that I lived in Cluj, I really wasn't aware of the Orthodox Jews despite their being so numerous, because, very simply, I had no contact with them and that will seem, perhaps, paradoxical, but I had never explored the streets where the Orthodox Jews lived; I truly had no contact.

**Q:** Was there a quarter where the Orthodox Jews lived in Cluj?

**A:** Yes, there were certain streets where the religious Jews lived.

**Q:** And you never went there?

**A:** Never; I have never been there.

**Q:** Astonishing. And did you like them? What was your feeling about them? What did you think of them?

**A:** I have always felt an affinity for all Jews, but it's a fact that I have never had contact with them. In the town where I was born, there were no Orthodox Jews. There were only the neologist Jews.

**Q:** And who were the natural leaders of the Jewish community in Cluj? Was it the Orthodox? Was it the Zionists? Was it the neologists?

**A:** I would like to simply repeat that, in my eyes, Judaism summed itself up in a Zionist circle and I also had ties with the neologists. You ask me who was the most essential element and, in my eyes, it was the Zionists, but again, in my eyes.

**Q:** Can Madame Marton try to tell, to describe, what happened during the war to the Jews, if not of Hungary, then at least to those of Cluj, of Kolozsvár? How it is that you lived through the war there?

#### **MARTON 4 (pages 5 thru 6)**

**Q:** I would like to ask you, what happened during the war. Can you describe for us a little what was the situation, the conditions of existence of the Jews, especially those of Hungary, and in any case, of Cluj?

**A:** In 1940, when the Hungarian Government set itself up in North Transylvania ...

**[Note: at this point in the Transcript there is an interruption due to a technical problem; there is also some handwriting which is illegible]**

My husband and I were attorneys, but we no longer had the right to engage in our profession. By that time, my husband had already published a number of research papers in the field of history in which he had become greatly interested. He was enrolled in the University and, I must tell you, at that time period, he was the only Jew to have received admission to the University, since he already had a "numerus nullus". That is to say, the Jews could no longer enroll in the University and yet he was able to. That is because at that time period, when he was younger, he had had ties with certain academicians who had become professors during the Hungarian period and he had therefore been able to study and to become a professor in a gymnasium; similarly in the gymnasia the same problem arose for the Jewish students who could no longer study in the non-Jewish secondary schools.

#### **MARTON 5 (pages 6 thru 9)**

**A (continued):** My husband worked at the school in Kolozsvár up through the Summer of 1942, in June 1942. At that point in time, he was sent to the Russian Front with 60,000 Jews. All of the Jews between the ages of 18 and 42 had been taken to serve on the Russian Front. At that point, I left Kolozsvár and returned to my parents' home in VOTCHOLUNTO and I stayed there until the end of 1943, at the point when my husband returned from the Russian Front; he was one of the rare survivors. We returned together to Kolozsvár and we stayed there until May 1944, the time of the tragic events.

**Q:** It's necessary to state, in order to comprehend what is being said here, that Hungary was allied with Germany and the Hungarian Army participated in the war against the Soviet Union. Further, Jewish men were recruited as auxiliary forces into the Hungarian Army, correct?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Can you speak to us about that, about this period of time? Did your husband tell you a little about how things were? Because in a certain way, and this is the paradox, the Jews fought, then ultimately did not fight, but the Jews advanced or retreated at the same time as the Hungarian Army which, itself, acted in concert with the German Army.

**A:** My husband found himself with the Second Hungarian Army, which in turn found itself with the German Army and the Italian Army. And they advanced up until the

region of Voronej. I must tell you that the conditions were terrible; it was the Russian Winter; it was particularly difficult for those people who were not properly equipped to resist that type of a winter. For example, all of a sudden at the beginning of the Winter, when there were still horses to transport the military hardware for the Army, the horses would become very quickly exhausted and, at that point, it would be the young Jewish men who would replace the horses in order to transport the hardware.

They arrived at Voronej on January 15, 1943 and it's at that moment that the Second Hungarian Army began to suffer defeat after defeat; the Russians advanced and the Hungarian Army began its retreat. It was under these particularly difficult conditions that the Hungarian Army spent its second winter of the war; many of the young people had retreated and thousands of young Jews died at that point. Certain of them, moreover, received the "\_\_\_\_\_"; that was a very rare distinction given to those who had survived these very difficult conditions. So, the downfall began and the Army had made a retreat.

**Q:** But I don't understand. Who received this distinction, "\_\_\_\_\_"? The Jews?

**A:** All. All. All those who had spent two winters at the Front received this distinction, simply for having been there at that point in time.

**Q:** But what was the relation between these Jews who were, for the most part, forced laborers, and the Hungarian Army? Were these Jews armed? Did they have arms?

**A:** No. They did not have rifles. They were charged with performing very particular tasks. Here is something that is really incredible; it's that the Jews were sent into the mine fields like living instruments of detection. They would be sent on ahead where there were mines so as to be able to detect the dangerous spots. That is thus how my brother died.

**Q:** He stepped on a mine?

**A:** Yes, he went on ahead of the Hungarian Army with the other Jews. That was the method that the Hungarians used to assure themselves that the road was safe for them. If the Jews died, it was of no importance since, in the eyes of the Hungarians, the Jews did not count.

**Q:** And they were living in very very difficult conditions, I believe; they had little to eat?

**A:** Already at the moment when the Army advanced ...

## **MARTON 6 (pages 9 thru 12)**

**A:** Already during the advance of the Second Hungarian Army, the situation of the Jews was very difficult. At the moment of the downfall, one can say that the lives of the young Jews who had enlisted had become intolerable.

**Q:** Did they wear uniforms?

**A:** When they left their homes, they didn't have uniforms, but I believe that on the Russian Front, they had been given something. When they returned, they had a yellow band on the handle (of their rifles). Subsequently, moreover, they lifted this yellow band as the symbol to show that they were Jewish.

**Q:** Did Madame Marton have the opportunity to receive letters from her husband during this time period?

**A:** At first we received some letters but then came a period where we no longer received any news; during 8 months I knew nothing at all, whether he (my husband) was dead or alive. Moreover, it turns out that my husband was ill; he was attacked by "typhus exantematicus" and at that point, someone had stolen his clothes, who had then subsequently died. When they found my husband's papers, including my photograph, among this dead man's clothes, they sent my husband's papers to the Hebrew high school in Kolozsvár and someone was supposed to inform me that my husband was dead.

(Intervention of Madame Marton in Hebrew to correct the translation).

No. In fact, the Jewish high school was notified that my husband had died, but the news was not sent to me personally. Subsequently, moreover, the news was not confirmed and it was learned that, on the contrary, he was alive. Me, I personally never received any news of his status.

**Q:** Is it true, during the retreat of the Hungarian Army, which in turn was retreating with the German Army, that the Jews and the Germans found themselves in the same cantonments during the retreat?

**A:** You know, at that time, there was such chaos that the Italians, the Germans, the Jews, all were mixed together and it mattered little ... in the end that was no longer important to anyone; the chaos was too great; I remember having read, since my husband assembled together all of the documents concerning this period, the order of the day of the Hungarian Chief of State Major which said: "I blush with shame at the sight of a retreat as shameful as that of the Hungarian Army, a retreat which has no precedent in history."

**Q:** No, but it appears that, to an extent, the Germans could not believe, ultimately, that they would find themselves alongside Jews as auxiliary forces of the Hungarian Army.

**A:** Yes, for example, my husband told me that at that point in time where the Army found itself practically in Voronej, our men arrived at a home of Russian peasants. It is necessary to say, moreover, that the local population had become very friendly with the young Jewish people and that they had an extraordinary attitude. They saved the lives of numerous Jews and one evening, when the young Jews found themselves in this home of Russian peasants, some men from the Wehrmacht arrived and, if one can call it a “bed”, the Jews and the men of the Wehrmacht slept in the same bed that night.

**Q:** Incredible!

**A:** It’s true but that’s how it was.

**Q:** And how many died? What is the percentage of those who died?

**A:** Of 60,000 Jews then, at that time 5000 returned.

**Q:** Only 5000 returned, of which your husband was one? Good. Now we come to 1944, to what you call the tragic events. Can you speak about that and tell us about that?

**A:** We returned at that point in time to Kolozsvár and we lived there until March 19<sup>th</sup>, that is to say until the moment when Hungary was invaded by the Germans and I remember . . .

**Q:** March 1944?

**A:** 1944. I remember today still, as if the event were yesterday, the reaction of my husband. He said: “Our destiny is sealed because I had the opportunity to travel to the towns where hundreds of thousands of Jews lived and after the German invasion, I no longer encountered any of them. Our destiny will be identical to theirs.”

**Q:** When he was in Russia, then, Doctor Marton saw that all of the Jews in the territories occupied by the Germans had been executed en masse by the “Einsatzgruppen”?

**A:** He did not know that the Jews had been executed; he knew simply that he did not encounter a single one of them. He didn’t know the manner in which the Jews had been executed but, not having encountered any, that’s what he deduced.

### **MARTON 7 (pages 12 thru 15)**

**Q:** Yes, that which is very very remarkable is, if one excludes the fate of these 60,000 Jews who died in the service of the auxiliary forces of the Hungarian Army, until 1944, Hungarian Judaism was the only European Judaism which, despite the persecutions, hadn’t been touched by the extermination and what I would like to ask Madame Marton is this: did they know in Kolozsvár, for example, what had happened in Poland

throughout 1942-1943? Were they familiar with the extermination of the Jews of Poland and not only of Poland, but finally of the greater part of European Jewry?

**A:** At that time period, we were in Hungary and I must say that in 1942, insofar as me personally, I do not think I knew of the fate of the Polish Jews. This is the period where my husband had been sent out of Hungary. I found myself in a relatively small town living with my parents and we listened to the radio of London. But it's difficult today to try to remember what I knew at that time in 1942, but I believe truly that in 1942 I knew nothing.

**Q:** And in 1944?

**A:** In 1944, there were already refugees; there were refugees from Slovakia; refugees from Poland; therefore we knew already a little more. I told you, a moment ago, that on March 19, 1944, my husband told me that any place where the Germans entered, there was no longer hope for the Jews; therefore from that, I can deduce that at that point in time I already knew what was our fate, that it was a terrible fate; but even if one knew it, it was very difficult to grasp that such a thing could happen and there, I would like to tell you how, toward May 8<sup>th</sup>, when we had been put in the ghetto, I ran into one of my friends, a girl who was a math professor.

**Q:** Yes, but I would like us to revisit this absence of hope for the Jews as expressed by Dr. Marton? Did that mean to him death?

**A:** I think so.

**Q:** So he knew that the fate of the Jews was extermination?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Good, so, what happened? Can you tell us? Because, in effect, there were refugees, some Poles who had escaped extermination in Poland who had succeeded in getting to Hungary and who had told about it. Furthermore, there was the Rescue Committee "\_\_\_\_\_ " of Budapest which was a Zionist committee which took care of them; so, in effect, one had to know.

**A:** I think that many people knew but they didn't want to hear and they didn't want to believe. That was what I was telling you about a little while ago when I spoke about my friend. It's that when the ghetto was formed, she asked me: "it is something horrible to enclose people in a ghetto; do you believe that one has to go?" And I remember having replied to her, "To the extent that I know the Jews of Hungary, if someone told them, surrender yourselves tomorrow, at a particular time, to be exterminated, - oh well, the next day, at the appointed hour, they would be there to be killed."

**Q:** You really think that, Madame Marton?



**A:** You know, it's respect for the law. You understand, if it's the law, one must conduct oneself in accordance with it.

**Q:** Why were they like that?

**A:** Foremost, there's this history with the law. I cannot explain to you why the Hungarian Jews act in that manner toward the law, toward everything that was legal. It's a fact. But there was yet another element, the fact that the Russians were already in the Karpathes and that we thought that it was inevitable that they would end up arriving in Hungary and that, in that way, we would be saved.

**Q:** Yes. Can Madame Marton tell us more precisely about the ghettoization of Kolozsvár? Because there is, at the same time, a very significant difference – ultimately it is the same word – but I think at the same time that there was a very significant difference with the ghettoization in Poland, with the ghettos of Poland constructed uniformly by the Germans, because the ghettos in Poland were intended to last a very long time; that was the manner of concentrating the people for easier extermination, but the ghettos lasted for several years, while the period of ghettoization in Hungary was extraordinarily rapid and lasted a very short while; it was simply a step toward extermination.

### **MARTON 8 (pages 15 thru 18)**

**A:** Yes, that's true, it was only a matter of a few months in which the fate of the Hungarian Jews was sealed and when one speaks of ghetto...

**Q:** Not a few months, rather a few weeks?

**A:** From March to May. When one speaks of ghettos, one should not think of buildings. In fact, the Jews were all ushered into a brickyard. All of the Jews of Kolozsvár and of the regions were led into this brickyard.

**Q:** Good, but can Madame Marton describe exactly how that happened? Finally, with details? When was the order given? Was there a "Judenrat" in Kolozsvár, a Jewish Council, etc ... who gave the orders? And what were the conditions?

**A:** We didn't receive any orders, as far as I can remember, from a Judenrat. Moreover the difference between the Polish ghettos and the Hungarian ghettos was very significant, you have said it yourself; but in the same manner we did not have the possibility in Hungary of having a "Judenrat". I believe that I remember that the announcement of the ghettoization was spread by putting up police posters; in any case, we didn't receive orders from any Judenrat and it was the morning of May 8<sup>th</sup> that they came looking for us to take us away.

**Q:** That was the Hungarian police?

**A:** Yes, that was the Hungarian police.

**Q:** Were there Germans in Kolozsvár?

**A:** No. Certainly, there were already Germans in Kolozsvár, but the entire ghettoization process was led, as far as I can remember, by the Hungarians.

**Q:** Good, so, how did it happen?

**A:** Good, I remember that it was 6 or 7 in the morning; they came, thus, to take us away; they knocked on the door, my husband opened the door; they called the roll, but we were the only two in that apartment; our bags were packed, they were a type of backpack, and before leaving, I remember still that my husband had the good sense to take from the bookcase his diploma which was out in the open; ultimately, no one took my diplomas. They closed the door and outside we saw a truck, a garbage truck, and it's into that truck that we had to climb into.

**Q:** They: these are the Hungarian police?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** You didn't live on a Jewish street?

**A:** We lived just on the side of the city hall, on the main street of the town.

**Q:** And then?

**A:** We were led into the ghetto, and I use the word, "ghetto" because that's the word that we used during that time period. The sight that I was met with was shocking, and I said to myself that if we were going to be treated in this aggressive manner, I would react in the same manner, with aggressiveness. In fact, it was all very simple. Simply, they had also taken my wedding ring. I must explain that previously, we had had to give, to remit all that we possessed in gold or silver, but I had still not given up my wedding ring and there, they took my wedding ring and made us enter the ghetto.

**Q:** But I don't understand. Why did Madame Marton say that this had been a shock?

**A:** To see plainly the people over there walking up and down, I knew that these were the people who had been pulled out of their apartments; for me this represented, simply, hell.

**Q:** But were all of the Jews of Kolozsvár concentrated in this brickyard called, "ghetto"? All of the Jews of Kolozsvár were there?

**A:** Not yet by May 8<sup>th</sup>; all of the population was not there yet but I know that the **processus [processing?]** had begun a bit before and up until the **processing** was

terminated, there were almost 15,000 Jews in Kolozsvar and, as I said earlier, from the surrounding areas as well.

**Q:** So, I repeat my question: all of the Jews lived together concentrated in this brickyard?

**A:** Yes, all, all.

**Q:** The orthodox, the neologists, the Zionists?

**A:** Yes, all, all, all. Yes, they were all together but they tried to construct some type of partitions.

### **MARTON 9 (pages 19 thru 22)**

**A:** Yes, I said just before, we were in the interior of a brickyard and in the brickyard, there were types of pathways and in the interior of these pathways, in order to try to give ourselves the illusion of some sort of private life, we had divided these pathways with the help of partitions made out of sheets and out of other objects and in the interior of these partitioned areas lived families or groups of friends.

**Q:** But all of this was outdoors?

**A:** Outdoors. In fact, we slept the same time as the sun did.

**Q:** And you expected what?

**A:** Good, from the beginning, it was clear that we were there temporarily. Many rumors were spreading already. At this time period, certain people were saying that we would be sent away to work in the camps, even in the camps in Germany. That's how the rumors spread. In any case, it appeared evident to us that we were not going to stay there for the eternity, that we found ourselves in this place waiting to be led elsewhere and effectively after several days the first transport left the brickyard and continued as such.

**Q:** But, were there names that were announced, did one announce to them where they were going?

**A:** I remember, when the first transport was organized, which consisted of 3500 persons, all of the artisans [**maybe mechanics or workmen**] and the professionals had been asked to identify themselves and I remember very well the foolish efforts that each one made to be accepted into this transport; each one came to declare what was his/her profession because it had been said that those people would be sent to a work camp in order to work.

**Q:** People wanted to leave?

**A:** Yes, certainly, people wanted to leave; I remember that I had alongside me a good friend who was a doctor, her husband was an engineer. They immediately presented themselves for the transport and they left.

**Q:** When I asked the question about the names a while ago, I believe that they were told that they were going to go to a place called \_\_\_\_\_ and another \_\_\_\_\_

**A:** I remember in reality about \_\_\_\_\_ but not about \_\_\_\_\_

**Q:** \_\_\_\_\_ what was that for Madame Marton?

**A:** Yes, I heard that name mentioned for the first time there and we were told that that was a work camp.

**Q:** And so, there were already 15,000 people? The 15,000 Jews of Kolozsvar and the surrounding areas were concentrated there? The Orthodox, everyone was there?

**A:** Yes, everyone was there. All were already there except for the members of the “Judenrat”. I remember that it was May 15<sup>th</sup> when the members of the “Judenrat” were led into the ghetto and at first, apart from them, all of the Jewish population of the region was concentrated in this place.

**Q:** The name, “Auschwitz” had absolutely not been mentioned?

**A:** At that time period, no.

**Q:** And now, the members of the “Judenrat”, who were they?

**A:** Now it is very difficult to tell you the names of all those who made up the “Judenrat”; I remember about Doctor Fischer, Joseph Fischer, and also about Danzig, the Danzig Family. But the other names, I can’t tell you very well, but I still have before my eyes the image of the members of the Judenrat coming down from the truck and arriving at the ghetto and I remember particularly seeing Doctor Fischer and the Danzig Family because I knew them.

**Q:** And they were Zionists? And your husband, Dr. Marton, wasn’t a member of the “Judenrat”?

**A:** No. No.

**Q:** And you had social relations with them? Amicable relations?

**A:** Oh, certainly, my husband had an excellent relationship with Doctor Fischer and, as for me, my best friend was Lycheva Danzig. Thus, the Danzig Family was very close to me.

**Q:** Lycheva Danzig, that's the wife of Hillel Danzig, correct?

**A:** Yes, yes.

**Q:** And Doctor Fischer was the father-in-law of Doctor Kastner? Did you see Kastner at this time period? Did he come to Kolozsvar?

**A:** Personally, I did not encounter Dr. Kastner. Doctor Kastner left Kolozsvar and went to Budapest where he worked and I, having family in Budapest, thus, I had the opportunity to go to Budapest, but I do not remember having run into him there.

**Q:** But didn't he come to Kolozsvar during the period of ghettoization?

**A:** Yes, even so, that I do not know.

**Q:** He says it himself in his famous account.

### **MARTON 10 (pages 22 thru 26)**

**Q:** The concentration of the Jews in the ghetto of Kolozsvar ended at what date?

**A:** It's my husband's diary; it's a notebook of 1944 and he wrote there all of the facts, all of the events that happened, even before the ghetto époque and it's there that I found the date by which the ghettoization process had come to an end. Yes I see noted here that on May 15<sup>th</sup>, the members of the "Judenrat" arrived, yes, and it's because the ghettoization process had been completed.

**Q:** Yes, and the first transport left Kolozsvar when?

**A:** That was May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Q:** May 23<sup>rd</sup>; you remember the departure of the first transport?

**A:** Yes, certainly I remember very well; I told you, my friend was part of this transport and many other friends as well.

**Q:** And these were the people who had, as she says, volunteered to leave?

**A:** Yes, yes.

**Q:** Good, so, now can you tell what happened next? In your own way? As you feel like telling it? To start out, from what moment did the rumor start to spread that there was a transport of privileged people who would not go to the same place as the other transports? Can you tell us; try to describe a little the atmosphere of the ghetto, with the rumors spreading?

**A:** If I can tell you anything with certainty, it's that we had not heard any talk about a transport of privileged people before the first transport because otherwise the people who volunteered for the first transport would not have done so. They would have tried to escape from there. So, I remember very precisely that we had not yet heard any rumors at that point in time. Is it after the first or second transport that the first reports spread, I cannot tell you exactly. In any case, I remember that my husband arrived one day, telling me that a list had been sent from Budapest, that our name was on that list and that it was a list of people who were not destined to leave for the same place as the others. I replied that I did not want to be part of this privileged transport. I wanted to leave at the time when our turn came, where all of the Jews who surrounded us, would leave. I didn't want to have an exceptional fate and there you have how I answered him.

**Q:** Why did Madame Marton respond like that?

**A:** Because that was how I felt. I didn't want to be ...

(Turn over the cassette)

My husband answered that he was a fatalist, that it was because of that that he had remained alive and that he thought that if our name was on that list, it was thus our destiny, that it was necessary to follow our destiny and it was in this manner that he tried to convince me. I didn't want to argue with him and, above all, I wanted to do what he thought.

**Q:** What was being said at this period of time? This transport was destined to go where?

**A:** We immediately understood that if one set aside a little group of people from the rest of the masses of the Jews, it was for a positive reason, that our fate would certainly be better than that of the undifferentiated group of Jews.

**Q:** When your husband spoke to you for the first time about the existence of such a transport, did he give you the names of the other people who figured in this transport?

**A:** Yes, yes, he had read the list.

**Q:** He had read the list himself; and from having seen the list, and from the names that appeared there, how is it that he, and Madame Marton today, how can you characterize the selection criteria?

**A:** We thought at that time that it was thanks to ... ,that is to say we thought that our people, the Zionists ... Good, as for me, I had absolutely no knowledge of a rescue committee in Budapest, but we knew or we were thinking that the Zionists, our people, did something to save us.

**Q:** To clarify, it was Doctor Kastner, who was for all practical purposes the head of this rescue committee in Budapest, who negotiated at that time period with Eichmann personally, precisely for the purpose of having a transport that could save some people.

**A:** Yes, I too know that now, but at that time period I didn't know that; I cannot respond in retrospect since I did not know it then.

**Q:** So, as you wanted to say a while ago, it's that after the names that figured on the list, you had the idea that the majority of the people of Cluj, of Kolozsvar, who figured in this transport, were Zionists or were tied to the Zionists.

**[There is some handwriting at the bottom of page 25 and top of page 26 that I cannot read.]**

### **MARTON 11 (pages 26 thru 29)**

**A:** The number and the list of those who actually left the ghetto did not conform exactly to the original list. To begin with, a portion of the people who were on the original list had already been deported from the time of the first or maybe from the second transport; that I do not know exactly. In any case, they were no longer in the ghetto and during this period many people had made efforts to become inscribed on this list and I know that my husband and Hillel Danzig tried to put onto the list those who had survived the Russian Front and the widows of those who had been to the Front. I myself remember the names of people who were added to the list and I myself know that certain people were added at the express request of the Germans. For example, I think in particular about a Jewish doctor, not from Kolozsvar but from the region, and he and his family had been inserted among the names on the list at the demand of the Germans.

**Q:** I would like for you to try to represent for me the atmosphere, and it's not easy! Good, so, they are all concentrated in the ghetto. A first transport leaves May 23<sup>rd</sup>, correct? And then the transports leave at what rhythm after that, in all told how many?

**A:** Good, from the notebook, I can reconstruct the dates of the transports: The first, as I said, was March 23<sup>rd</sup>; the second, the 26<sup>th</sup>;

**Q:** May, May, May, Mademoiselle.

**A:** The third (I spoke incorrectly that it was March; it was May) was May 30<sup>th</sup>; and the fourth was May 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Q:** Good, the people who leave with these transports, Madame Marton said a while ago that the rumors had started that ultimately there would be a privileged transport to a destination different from the destination of the regular transports; what were the feelings of the people who were leaving on the regular transports? I mean, what happened when they saw that others were remaining? Finally, were people fighting each other to leave on this privileged transport? Did one struggle/fight for that?

**A:** Everyone made efforts to try to be part of this transport because everyone understood that this was a good transport and the state of mind of those who were leaving on the regular transports was truly dreadful. One knew already that their fate was dreadful.

**Q:** Then I do not understand because Madame Marton says that now but she explained earlier that the people who left on the first transports were volunteers. So, was there a deterioration of the situation between the first transport and those that followed?

**A:** Yes, it's only the first transport where there were volunteers. After seeing people in wheel chairs or on crutches being sent away and how they were thrown outside of the wagons or after being told by certain people who returned to the ghetto about how these people were ushered into the wagons, in what condition, immediately everyone knew.

**Q:** Were they thrown out of the wagons, or into the wagons?

**A:** It was the canes and the wheel chairs that were thrown out of the wagons. The people were not allowed to go into the wagons with their canes or their wheel chairs.

**Q:** Did Madame Marton see the loading of the people with her own eyes?

**A:** No. But there were people who were there and they returned to the ghetto to speak about it.

**Q:** And the living conditions during this very very rapid period in the brickyard? How was that, was that very very hard?

**A:** We were very young, so in such a manner, we were able to surmount these physical difficulties, but there were old people and infirm people,- I remember a case of typhus, there had been set up some types of hospitals and some young volunteers were busy attending to those who had been struck with typhus. Evidently for those who were ill and the elderly, it was very hard but we, we were young, thus, the physical suffering was not important, we could overcome it.

**Q:** Well, Madame Marton knows evidently all that Kastner has ultimately been blamed for; one has blamed him for two things: on the one hand, for having selected a certain number of privileged people, of people from his native village, Cluj, members of his family, of which his father-in-law, Doctor Fischer who was the head of the community, head of the so-called "Judenrat", selected Zionists too; that's the first reproach. And the goal of his negotiations with Eichmann, it was that. And on the other hand, he has been



blamed for not having warned the people of Cluj and the people of the other ghettos that the destination of the transports was Auschwitz and extermination, which Kastner undoubtedly knew, since he spoke about it very openly in his negotiations with Eichmann and Eichmann spoke very openly to him about it as well. One blames him thus for not having warned the people and those who reproach him for that say that if the people had been informed/warned, they would have been able to flee/escape; the Romanian border was quite near, at 3 kilometers etc ... To which Kastner and his partisans responded and respond that, all the same, if the people had been warned, they would never have wanted to believe it and that in truth there were attempts to warn them, at least the young Jews, the young Halutzim came into the ghettos, tried to warn the people and the people didn't want to believe them. What does Madame Marton think of that?

### **MARTON 12 (pages 30 thru 33)**

**A:** I think that in looking back at the past, there are no "what ifs". One cannot say: what would have happened if ..., because in fact, things happened in a certain way. So, it serves nothing to try to wonder what would have happened if one had told the people that they would be going to Auschwitz and if they had known what "Auschwitz" signified. I see here in my husband's notebook that he writes that we left Budapest for a place called, MOCHON MORODJOVAR and on his notebook he adds "panic". Thus, if he wrote, "panic," it's probably because people knew the significance of Auschwitz. It was at the point where we were told that we would be going to Auschwitz that the panic took place.

**Q:** No, but wait; we need to get this clear, because all of that happened much later. We are not there yet.

**A:** Good, I am going to continue, agreed, I am going to continue to respond. Yes, I have told you this simply because you had asked me, you had posed the question: what would one have done if ...one had known what was Auschwitz - it was because of that. Well, but I will now return to the earlier events. We knew or rather my husband knew that we would not get out alive from these episodes and certain people say that at the moment when we were brought together in order to go into the ghettos, we perhaps could have escaped; but the fact is that we accepted going into the ghetto and we knew already where we would go. And where could we escape? Certain people say toward Romania. But in Romania, there were the same Germans that we encountered in Hungary and surrounding us was a hostile population; there were no partisans; I myself never heard any talk about partisans in the region, about people who would have been able to save us. And before the ghetto, before the war, I had some Christian friends who came every day to my home; none of these Christian friends ever came to me to propose to help us or to save us.

**Q:** No, but I understand very well what Madame Marton is saying, and I would like, likewise, that she be assured that I am not in any way being polemical with her, but it's very difficult to tell this Hungarian history, in short, which is truly very very complex and I am simply the mouthpiece of those who testify and of those people of Kolozsvár who

were deported to Auschwitz, who survived; they are very few in number; besides, that's what the survivors say today ... Good, one can admit that there was a reconstruction. But my question is this: it's a question that I pose to Madame Marton directly. Imagine that she is in the ghetto and further imagine that there are no privileged transports. If an authorized leader of the community, for example, Kastner himself or Dr. Fisher, had come before the Jews and had said: "these transports toward the unknown that you will be taking in truth will take you to your death, that's a certitude, try to flee or revolt" etc. ... what would have happened? I know that this is hypothetical, but after all, one can also, after all, try to reflect on that.

**A:** Today, I think that, in reality, probably certain people would have tried to escape, but not the majority.

**Q:** Because what is very very difficult in all of this story, it's that ultimately the people of the ghetto of Kolozsvar are deported, that one is about to construct a list of persons who are going to escape the general fate. One constructs this list in secret, in a certain manner. Well, the people know it because of the rumors spreading and it is this which is the most difficult to comprehend, it's that the leaders of the community knew about all of these matters, and you said it yourself, ultimately, that the fate of the Jews who left in these transports was going to be catastrophic and at the same time no one did anything to oppose it.

**A:** I do not see in what way one would have been able to oppose a hostile Hungarian Government. One could not, quite simply, leave the ghetto; we would have been caught outside; one didn't know where to hide, there was nowhere to hide.

**Q:** So, Madame Marton thinks that there was nothing to do. So, what does she think of those who left with the transports to suffer the ordinary fate, which was extermination in Auschwitz, and who survived, I mean, several did, and who today, ultimately, it is their accusations, saying: if one had told us "you are going to your death", we would have fled.

**A:** These are the events that unfolded across all of Europe; this isn't something peculiar to the Hungarian Jews. The only difference is that here, it took a few weeks and at the end of a few weeks all of these Jews were annihilated. But otherwise, these events unfolded across all of Europe.

**Q:** So, then, moving on, the ghetto of Kolozsvar emptied itself very very rapidly?

**A:** Yes, when we left Kolozsvar, it was June 9<sup>th</sup>; there were no longer any Jews in Kolozsvar.

**Q:** But the last ordinary transport that left Kolozsvar, which today we know was bound for Auschwitz, left when?

**A:** It was June 7<sup>th</sup>; two days before our transport.

**Q:** So, on June 7<sup>th</sup>, there remained in the ghetto of Kolozsvar only those who were on the special list? How many people?

**A:** 388.

**Q:** So, what happened during those two days? What was the sentiment among these 388? How could they look at each other?

**MARTON 13 (pages 34 thru 37)**

**Q:** So, it's June 7<sup>th</sup>, the last transport leaves Klausenberg; all of the Jews of Klausenberg have left. One thinks that they have left toward an inhuman fate and there are 388 Jews who remain in Klausenberg and who knows that they are in a special situation, that their fate will not be that of the others. So, what I want to know first: are they sure of that? And then: how do they live with that? How do they look each other in the eye?

**A:** First, during this whole period, we lived in a state of shock, because the things that were happening to us were already beyond all comprehension. We were no longer human beings; we no longer knew what we were, how we defined ourselves and during these two days we barely spoke. We waited. We waited only for our turn to come, that someone would come to look for us. We didn't know yet very well where we would be going; all was still very confused.

**Q:** In short, were they capable, I understand clearly what she says, to draw a line of demarcation, a borderline between the fate that awaited those who had left and the fate that was going to be theirs; did they have an awareness that for every one of those who had left, it was death, and for the others remaining behind life? Did they express that at that moment in time?

**A:** We didn't know explicitly that the ones who remained were destined for life and the ones who had left were destined for death. It was perhaps a defense mechanism to not want to acknowledge it but in any case, it was not yet very clear. Toward the end, we knew that probably we would end up in Budapest and that from there, we would be taken away either to Palestine or to Spain. I remember that one spoke about Spain, that there was hope that Franco would accept us then.

**Q:** Yes, in fact, from the negotiations between Kastner and Eichmann for this group of people,- it is believed that they had agreed on,- that the final destination was Palestine. Then can you tell us, since your husband, Dr. Marton, kept his journal at that time period, what was the composition of the group of 388?

**A:** Yes, I see here that he wrote:

Transylvania: 199 Zionists

**Q:** 199 Zionists?

**A:** Yes, Zionists. “Halutzim”, that is to say, “pioneers”.

**Q:** Pioneers Zionists?

**A:** 9.

**Q:** Halutzim, it’s also pioneers, Zionists, yes?

**A:** Employee Zionists: 4

Family: 19

I see that he also added Veterans: 166

But there, it seems to me

**Q:** Veterans, that certainly has another meaning; Veterans, that can mean prominent people.

**A:** Yes, yes.

**Q:** Probably.

**A:** Yes, but I do not think this list, which seems to exceed 388, was the list pertaining to Kolozsvár; it’s probably the list of the group ....

**Q:** Yes, yes, yes, we will talk about that, about the group that was from Budapest. Good, we will talk about that later.

**A:** But from Kolozsvár, from Transylvania, it is as I just said.

**Q:** That is to say, then, the Zionists are the majority. Good, there are certain exceptional people, some doctors, some lawyers, some artists; are there no poor people?

**A:** I think there were. Certainly there were some.

**Q:** There were no working people; the Jewish proletariat had already left?

**A:** But yes, yes, there were poor people. I know that, for example, among the people who I knew, there was an upholsterer who also lived in Israel afterwards and who made the armchairs on which I am presently seated. Yes, there were poor people. Certainly, yes, there were working people. Zionist working people, certainly.

**Q:** Good, then, you leave Kolozsvár June 9<sup>th</sup> and you arrive in Budapest and there, you are put into “Columbus KASSE”, a camp specially prepared precisely for the members of this rescue committee “\_\_\_\_\_” and ...

**A:** Yes, we arrived there on June 10<sup>th</sup>. There was also an episode that involved me personally. When we were on the train, at a certain point, we came to Nodjverod and there, there were two people who got off the train to look for water and they didn't have enough time to return to the train; the train left ...

**MARTON 14 (pages 37 thru 41)**

**A:** Yes, there I would like to tell about an episode that involves me personally. In the train that took us to Budapest, we passed by Nodjverod and there, two people got off the train to look for some water but they did not have enough time to return; the train had already left when they got there and these two people were arrested and imprisoned in the ghetto of Nodjverod where my parents were. When my father saw two strangers arrive in the ghetto, he approached them and asked where they were from; the two responded, “from Kolozsvár” and my father asked them: “by any chance, do you know such and such person, and ultimately he asked about me” and they responded, “Yes, yes, it happens that we know her and we can tell you that she is in a train headed for Budapest and from there, she will go to Palestine”. Then my father said: “Now I no longer care about my own fate, I accept it, the important thing is that she is alive.”

**Q:** What was your father's fate?

**A:** I am the sole surviving member of my family.

**Q:** [Pause]

Good, you went to Budapest and you were put there into “Colombus KASSE”. What was “Colombus KASSE”?

**A:** There was an institution for the deaf at Columbus, and it was this institution that had been prepared to accept us.

**Q:** And you stayed there, at “Colombus KASSE”, from June 10<sup>th</sup> thru June 30<sup>th</sup>, correct?

**A:** We stayed at that institution up until the date we left Budapest and I remember that it was “Saint PETERRA”; that was June 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Q:** Good, the people who came from Cluj, in principal, they were the holders of the certificates for Palestine? It was those who had been selected between Kastner and Eichmann? But the transport which left Budapest with you on board, at first that was not 388 persons; wasn't it much larger than that?

**A:** Yes, in the end, we were 1656. It seemed like that to me, at least.

**Q:** Yes, in any case, more than 1600?

**A:** I can tell you directly the exact number. Good, I am going to find it.

**Q:** Good, fine. Among the people who left on this transport which left Budapest, there were 388 Jews from Koloasvar, and about 1300 others. Madame Marton, it is of little import the exact number. Kastner writes in his account that the composition of this transport ....

**A:** I found the exact figure: we were 1684, of whom 32 were doctors.

**Q:** Yes, Kastner writes that the composition of this transport was an absolutely dreadful headache and that things were truly very very difficult because he compares it to Noah's Ark filled with Jews who would survive the general extermination of the Hungarian Jews and that he had to select the representatives of the Jewish people and of the elite, if one can say. And then, do you know how the composition was made? What were the selection methods?

**A:** I do not have the slightest idea of the method by which this selection and this list was composed. I can only tell you that certain of the people refused to take part, for example, the great Hungarian writer, \_\_\_\_\_ who was Herzl's cousin, formally refused.

**Q:** Why?

**A:** He considered himself to be first and foremost Hungarian and it's perhaps very paradoxical that Herzl's own cousin would not have wanted to be included on a list of Zionist Jews but it's a fact, he hadn't wanted to leave with us and succeeded in staying alive; he was hidden in Hungary.

**Q:** Yes, but he, it was because he considered himself not as a Jew but as a Hungarian; he did not want to be arrested as a Jew. But Kastner explains very clearly how the list was composed. He says that there were some Orthodox Jew and it was those representatives from the Orthodox Jews who in turn chose those who would survive.

**A:** There were 126 Orthodox.

**Q:** Yes?

**A:** So much the better, without a doubt not Zionists.

**Q:** Some refugees from Poland? And from Slovakia?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** And from Yugoslavia?

**A:** Yes, 27 Jews from Yugoslavia, 7 from Slovakia, 3 Poles, 6 Romanians, and 5 stateless Jews.

**Q:** And then, there were the Zionists, the Zionists of Kolozsvar, the young pioneers, the revisionists? ; isn't it a fact that all of the Jewish political parties had tried to place their people and that there were also those who paid for others?

**A:** I think that's right.

**Q:** Was it necessary to pay for this transport?

**A:** I see here a number "21" along side of which is written, "Becher". These are certainly some people who had done business with Becher.

**Q:** Yes, are these the rich Jews who gave the money to defray the expenses of this transport?

**A:** I see also that there are 10 people of the "Stern" group.

**Q:** Yes, but not of the group, "Stern," but rather of the "Samuel Stern" group.

### **MARTON 15 (pages 41 thru 44)**

**A:** I see once again here 10 persons from the Samuel Stern group ....

**Q:** ....who had been chosen by council member Samuel Stern and were there likewise Jewish figures who had distinguished themselves in the realms of the mind, the sciences and the arts?

**A:** Yes, I remember, for example, \_\_\_\_\_ who was a very well known journalist at that time and next Professor Leopold Saundi ....

**Q:** Leopold Saundi who was a famous psychologist known throughout the entire world?

**A:** ....yes, who was a psychoanalyst.

**Q:** Doctor Franz Polgar who was a famous [some particular kind of doctor], Dr. Braun, a general practitioner, Dr. Hamburg ....?

**A:** Hamburg was a Zionist; he had always been a Zionist.

**Q:** He was a Zionist but wasn't he, at the same time, a distinguished oculist?

**A:** Yes, yes, a distinguished oculist.

**Q:** There was the architect Thomas Blum, the pianist Desire Hernster ....

**A:** No, no pianists.

**Q:** Ah yes, I am confused, opera singer, isn't that so? There were also orphans?

**A:** Yes, yes, yes.

**Q:** In essence, it was a slice of the Jewish population of Hungary?

**A:** I think that's so.

**Q:** As such Kastner called it a Noah's Ark. Do you find this to be a fair comparison?

**A:** Yes, there were truly people from all classes of the population; from all classes.

**Q:** When this transport of 1684 privileged people, and it's necessary to use that word, privileged Jews, left Budapest for Germany, did you know at that time that the others, those who left before, did you know that already 350,000 Jews from the Hungarian province, had been sent to Auschwitz and that they had already practically all been gassed?

**A:** We knew.

**Q:** You said a while ago in reading an excerpt from your husband's journal, Dr. Marton, that when you were already en route, you were told that your destination is Auschwitz and that panic breaks out.

**A:** I myself did not know that, and yet, yes, when there was the panic, it seems to indicate that certain among us were already informed because there were refugees who had told us during the train journey, I remember one moment when we got off the train at a station in Austria, at Linz, and we were taken towards a building; we were told that we would have to undergo a disinfection process and that we would also have to take a bath and then, at that moment, the people who were escapees from the Polish ghettos, began to shriek that this was our end and that these baths were in fact gassing facilities; that was the first time that I had heard anyone speak about the gas.

**Q:** Madame Marton saw this panic with her own eyes?

**A:** But I was part of this group, I was there, I was there; we had been separated into two groups: on one side the men and on the other side the women and we were ordered to undress; that's the first time that we were required to be nude all together. It was a sight from hell. It was absolutely diabolical. At that moment, the girls who knew already what



the significance of the baths was, began to shriek and they were struck, blows that could kill you, given by ....the Ukrainians who were there to guard us.

**Q:** The panic was fueled by the escapees from the ghettos of Poland and who had succeeded in fleeing to Hungary, right? I believe that the panic that broke out on this occasion was the second time rather than the first occasion?

**A:** Yes, the first time was when we left Budapest; then, the next morning, we arrived at “\_\_\_\_\_” and we were told that a telephone conversation had been intercepted and we were being sent to Auschwitz.

**Q:** yes, but in truth, it wasn't to Auschwitz. The train had to pass through a place called, “Auchbitz”, right? And the panic broke out because they had confused “Auschwitz” and “Auchbitz”, which comes back to the notion that they already knew what Auschwitz was.

**A:** Yes, in fact, we stayed practically 4 days there and the explanation is simple: for the Hungarians, it seemed very odd that Jews would not have been sent to Auschwitz and it seems that they had truly wanted to send us to Auschwitz and an engineer DEVETCHERY returned to Budapest in order to warn Kastner and to inform him about what had happened and it's for that reason that we stayed 4 days in MOCHON MORODJOVAR before being transported toward the Slovakian border.

**Q:** Your husband speaks of Auschwitz?

**A:** In fact, my husband writes at that very point in time that we were informed by telephone that we would be passing by KOMAROM en route to Auschwitz; He adds: “panic” and then without any explanation he writes: “Auschwitz – Auchbitz”.

### **MARTON 16 (pages 45 thru 49)**

**Q:** Madame Marton, you have spoken about the panic which broke out in Linz, I believe, aboard this transport of 1684 persons which had left Hungary several days earlier; - this Noah's Ark of Hungarian Judaism – a panic provoked by the fact that you had been led to what the Germans called, “an operation of disinfection” and the Polish Jewish refugees in Hungary who were part of your convoy thought that they were going to be gassed. And you said afterwards, indeed, as you have admirably described it, that there had been before the panic at Linz an earlier panic, at the point of time where the train arrived at MOCHON MORODJOVAR, because some important members of the convoy had learned that the destination of the train was “Auchbitz” in Czechoslovakia and that they thought that “Auchbitz” was “Auschwitz”, and one has here in the report written by Kastner, in truth, the explanation of what happened and he says here: “the train stopped at MOCHON MORODJOVAR at the German border for three days and during that time it was discovered that there was not enough room at STRACHORF in Austria – because primitively, Eichmann had decided to send this transport to STRACHORF in Austria for a while and at the last minute he then decided that the train would go to Auchbitz in

Czechoslovakia where there was likewise a camp.” Good, and the men of the convoy succeeded in warning the rescue committee, in warning Kastner in Budapest; he immediately found Eichmann. Eichmann tells him: “you start in again with your stories of atrocity; it’s Auchbitz and not Auschwitz” and he said that because there was no longer any room at Auchbitz, the train, ultimately, would go to Bergen-Belsen via Bratislava and Vienna. And then, you have therefore said that there was a panic. Can you describe this panic? This first panic? Do you remember?

**A:** We were completely disoriented; no one knew at all where we were going and it seems to me that, when the people heard “Auchbitz”, they weren’t able to differentiate between that and “Auschwitz”. I believe that that was the source of the panic.

**Q:** Can Madame Marton describe this panic? What happened? Because she has described very well the panic that broke out when the people were sent to Linz later on, to the disinfection, the second panic. But can she describe the first panic?

**A:** In our car, there was no panic so I cannot tell you personally about it; it’s my husband who, because of his very nature, had the habit of moving about a lot, of questioning the people, and who shifted from car to car, who wrote in his notebook that there was a panic. Me, personally, I was not present for that.

**Q:** Who was in the car with Madame Marton?

**A:** Some people from Cluj.

**Q:** Good, can Madame Marton tell us what happened because ultimately, in principal, this transport was destined for Palestine. That was the agreement that had been reached between Kastner and Eichmann. But this transport, it was a sort of “aliyah”, as one might say, in the form of a deportation; it was necessary to carry it out in this fashion in order to reassure the Hungarians, at least that’s what Eichmann maintained. Then, consequently, this transport winds its way across Czechoslovakia and Austria and Germany; that was a long voyage, wasn’t it?

**A:** I must tell you, all the same, that during the voyage, we did not know that our destination was Bergen-Belsen. I remember that there were rumors; some spoke about Hanover and at the moment when we arrived at Celle, no one knew that this was. We went on foot to Bergen-Belsen since it was only about 6 to 10 kilometers between Celle and Bergen-Belsen. We went there on foot and the elderly and those who were ill, I believe, went in a truck.

**Q:** Can Madame Marton tell us the composition of this transport by age group?

**A:** Yes, I can tell you that since I have the list:

Through age 14: 287 people

Through age 25: 390 people

Through age 40: 466 people  
Through age 60: 407 people  
Through age 70: 76 and  
Through age 82: 30 people

**Q:** There were people who were 82 years old?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** And older?

**A:** There were some between the ages of 70 and 82, there were 30 of them. I remember, for example, in my car, there was a very old woman, Madame \_\_\_\_\_; her children were also in the car and so was the mother-in-law of Kastner-Hernu, the brother of Doctor Kastner.

**Q:** So, all of these people who were between 70 and 82 years of age were the parents of the other people who were traveling?; ultimately, no one wanted to dismantle families?

**A:** Yes, yes.

**Q:** And Celle that's the station for Bergen-Belsen?

**A:** Yes, but we didn't know that when we arrived at Bergen-Belsen. The first time that I heard the name Bergen-Belsen was the moment when we arrived there.

**Q:** Then, you walked on foot from Celle to Bergen-Belsen? It's in the north of Germany, Bergen-Belsen?

**A:** Yes, yes.

**Q:** And then, what happened there? How did it go – the arrival in Bergen-Belsen?

**A:** In the camp, we were separated – men on one side and women on the other side; but we could still stay in contact with each other. In each camp, we tried to stay together, to stay ....

### **MARTON 17 (pages 49 thru 53)**

(Following) In each camp, we were close to 200 per barrack; we tried to stay together, that is to say the families, the friends tried to be together. There was a row of male barracks and a row of female barracks. Inside each barrack, there were wooden bunks containing three levels. We had kept our clothing, our dresses, and we didn't work, that is to say, outside of the ordinary workings of the camp, such as the cleaning, the laundry; we were not taken outside of the camp to work.

**Q:** There were other detainees at Bergen-Belsen?

**A:** Yes, there were an enormous number of other detainees, but one didn't see all of them; we were only in contact with our immediate neighbors who were a group of Dutch and who, it seems, were also a special group like ours.

**Q:** This was also a privileged group?

**A:** I think so.

**Q:** Were these the members of the "Judenrat" of Holland who had arrived at Bergen-Belsen?

**A:** I know that they were Dutch.

**Q:** How were the conditions with respect to nourishment?

**A:** One received the equivalent of 1200 to 1400 calories. Morning and evening, we received coffee, which, in short, was a sort of black water; at noon, a type of soup; but we had also some bread, a little margarine and marmalade, some jam.

**Q:** And how did the Germans treat you?

**A:** Each day there was a roll call; that was in the morning; we had to arrange ourselves in rows of 5 and we stayed like that for hours, no matter the weather, the rain, the wind, the sun, the conditions didn't matter; each morning it was roll call. The Germans knew exactly how many people we needed to be. Since we didn't have to work, during the first days, we were outside a lot and we walked, we strolled about from place to place and the Dutch warned us to be careful not to waste our energy.

Yes, we constituted a sort of little republic and at its head was Doctor Fischer.

**Q:** The father-in-law of Kastner?

**A:** Yes. We had activities such as meetings, lectures, "Onek Shabbat" – we honored the Sabbath on Saturday afternoons – we had events such as a Herzl Day; I remember that we had celebrated ....

**Q:** ....celebrated Herzl Day in the Nelson period? The CHABOTINSKI Day also?

**A:** Yes. The holidays as well, we celebrated them, seeing that we were there for the month of September. "Rosh Hashana" arrived, we marked it; at "Yom Kippur", we fasted; "Rosh Hashana" is the New Year; "Yom Kippur" is the day of judgment, the day of atonement, the great pardon; we fasted at that time. We also had some other gatherings: the professors who found themselves among us gave us lectures. I remember a lecture given by Professor Saundi, for example.

**Q:** What about the religious Jews, the religious groups? What were they doing? What were the Orthodox doing?

**A:** I remember in particular the holiday of “Simchat Torah”, which is the holiday of the Torah, the last days of “Sukkot” where one begins and one ends the reading of the Torah Scrolls and one dances with the Torah and in the barrack where Rabbi Yoel Totelbaum found himself, the holiday of Simchat Torah was celebrated in such a way as I have never seen it, neither before or since, celebrated with so much joy.

**Q:** So, all of the Orthodox Jews were there with their beards, with their “\_\_\_\_\_”. They were dancing at Bergen-Belsen with the Torah hugged against their hearts?

**A:** They were truly in a state of ecstasy.

**Q:** Were the Germans watching?

**A:** No, this went on inside the barrack.

**Q:** So, did they enjoy a certain freedom in the conditions of their imprisonment; a freedom that has never existed elsewhere in any other camp.

**A:** Yes, inside the barrack, we were rather free. I do not remember that the Germans entered into our barracks and thus, inside the barrack, yes, we did what we wanted, we were alone.

**Q:** Did they have any idea about what was going to happen to them? Did Doctor Fischer, who was the accountable Jew of this group, know something? Did anyone inform them? Or did they know nothing?

**A:** Yes, it is Doctor Fischer who had the contacts with the Germans, who led the negotiations with them from the point of our arrival at Bergen-Belsen, I believe from the second day, rumors had already begun to spread about the point when we would leave the camp – because we thought that we would not be there for several days, that we were simply in transit to Palestine.

**Q:** They arrived July 9, 1944 at Bergen-Belsen?

**A:** Yes, it was a Sunday.

**Q:** They stayed till when?

**A:** Until December 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Q:** 1944?

**A:** Yes. But there was a group of more than 300 people who had left the camp after 6 weeks – on August 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Q:** Did they know the destination of this group?

**A:** I am not certain that, at that time, we knew that they were supposed to arrive in Switzerland; but at the end of a few days, we received, I remember, a letter from Danzig.

**Q:** Hillel Danzig, the member of the “Judenrat” of Cluj? He was part of this first transport?

**A:** Yes. I remember that we received a letter from him, which came from Switzerland.

**Q:** Had they been informed while they were at Bergen-Belsen, that is to say, from July to December, of the fate of the other Jews of Cluj, who had left Cluj on the ordinary transports?

### **MARTON 18 (pages 54 thru 57)**

**Q:** Had they been informed while they were at Bergen-Belsen, that is to say, from July to December 1944, of the fate of the other Jews of Cluj, who had left Cluj on the ordinary transports?

**A:** I don't know what information we received, nor in what manner, but I remember the atmosphere in which we lived then, which was a very sad atmosphere and we had lost all hope of ever again seeing those who had left Cluj.

**Q:** Yes, why had they lost hope if they didn't know in fact?

**A:** It's possible that we had known at that point in time, only, me personally, now, in this moment in time, I no longer remember.

**Q:** I mean, how could they live with that, the fact of having been privileged in that manner, even though the conditions were very very hard at Bergen-Belsen? How did they live with this privilege of being precisely this Noah's Ark, as Kastner said?

**A:** At that point in time, we didn't consider ourselves to be the inhabitants of a Noah's Ark. But we thought constantly about the question: why precisely us?

**Q:** And was there an answer to that question?

**A:** You know, if there is a possibility to save a fixed number of people, by necessity, that means that those who aren't saved will have a worse fate, but we could not give a

response because it was not up to us to determine who should be saved. We asked ourselves only the question, in what way are we better than the others?

**Q:** That is in effect a question .... but....

**A:** What bothers me in this story, it's that one always forgets the origin of this horror, that is to say the Nazi horror; it's the Nazi system which forced people to choose, rather than those who were put in the position of being forced to choose who should live and who should die. That is the culprit here. And one has a tendency to always accuse the unfortunate people who were forced to choose but who were, ultimately, simply the executors of the Nazi system – the guilty party is the Nazi system.

**Q:** Absolutely, but that's a debate ad infinitum, in all respects. How did you come to arrive in Switzerland?

**A:** From the beginning of November, I remember that the rumors became more specific, saying that the time of departure was near and at the end of November, I believe that it was Krumej who came ....

**Q:** ....who was the Number 2 under Eichmann?

**A:** Yes. And Krumej announced to us that the time had come for our departure but we would not all go together. In fact, only the Hungarian citizens were going to leave and I remember a family named \_\_\_\_\_ of Romanian origin who had taken refuge in Hungary, but, not being Hungarian citizens, they didn't leave with us. I remember also two families, the family of Doctor Weiss and that of Doctor \_\_\_\_\_; they were two lawyers from Cluj. They both had daughters who had been deported to Auschwitz and who had arrived from a transport originating from Auschwitz. Their two daughters had succeeded, and as to how I have absolutely no idea, in being brought in contact with their families and the matter came to the attention of the Germans. From that moment on, the two families were separated; they were led away; we never saw them again; they remained at Bergen-Belsen and they disappeared in the Holocaust.

**Q:** Yes, evidently the Germans didn't want the members of the transport arriving in Switzerland and talking about what had happened at Auschwitz. The problem, however, is that people knew about it already.

**A:** I remember also that Kastner's wife truly fought courageously with Krumej to try to save these two families but she did not succeed.

**Q:** So, the arrival in Switzerland?

**A:** We then left Bergen-Belsen in the direction of the Swiss border and we arrive there in the evening and I remember very well my impression then; on the German side, all was

dark and gloomy and on the Swiss side, it was paradise, lights; it was, I believe, le “St. Margrethen”.

**Q:** It was the military post border?

**MARTON 19 (pages 57 thru 60)**

**A:** We left Bergen-Belsen in the direction of the Swiss border and we arrived at the border in the evening. I remember very well my impression then because Germany was in darkness and on the Swiss side, it was paradise; all was gleaming/glittering, there were only lights. We were at the military post of St. Margrethen and we stayed there a few hours, we were stopped, because, it seems that there were still discussions on the German side. It seems that the Germans were still demanding money.

**Q:** Ah yes, they negotiated up to the last minute. Then?

**A:** The first night, we had proceeded to St. Gallen. We slept in a school and we were given some cocoa and bread and some of the people truly threw themselves at the food and certain of them immediately had problems, became bloated, and my husband told me immediately not to eat because that had previously happened to him, and so we didn't have any trouble. The next day, we got back on the road, we went to Cousse-sur-Montreux and there we were quarantined; we were installed in a military camp which was, in fact, a former hotel no longer in use which had been put at the disposal of the refugees.

**Q:** Was Madame Marton happy to be in Switzerland?

**A:** From when we arrived there, we felt secure because it was clear that we would remain alive. We were alive, but to tell you that I felt happy, no, I can't say that; I did not feel happy. On this subject, since you ask me if I was happy, I remember Victory Day. At that point in time, we were already at Geneva and the Swiss had come down into the street to show their joy. My husband and I stood apart and we were sad and I remember that people approached us and they wanted to all but throw themselves on us because they thought that we were Nazis or something like that. They asked us: “why aren't you happy with us?”

**Q:** Did Madame Marton return to Cluj later?

**A:** At that point in time, no, I didn't return to Cluj and I had promised myself that I would never set foot in Cluj again. However, in 1968, I was in Cluj and I regretted it moreover. But at that point in time, in Switzerland, we knew that we were destined to go directly to Palestine.

**Q:** Why do you say that you regretted returning to Cluj in 1968 when you finally made the visit to Cluj?



**A:** Because at the point in time when I originally left Cluj and looked at it from the door of the train, I had truly cursed it and at that moment I promised myself that I would never set foot in it again.

**Q:** Not in 1968, correct?

**A:** No., at the time period of the War, and when I returned to Cluj in 68, I regretted at first not having kept my promise, the promise that I had made to myself. And to find myself in the streets of Cluj without running into any of my friends that I had had, that gave me the impression of being a phantom in a city/town of phantoms.

**Q:** Did the survivors from Cluj, the 388, like to get together after the War or did they see each other little?

**A:** In Israel, we are in reality a rather large number from Cluj and from this group I keep in touch only with those who were my friends before and not because they were part of this group of 388 but because they were my friends.

**Q:** Forgive me for asking this question. You already answered it. When the people knew, as a matter of historical fact, that the 15,000 Jews from Cluj and the 400,000 Jews from Hungary had been exterminated at Auschwitz between May and June 1944, I mean, did they live with a sense of personal culpability, subjective?

**A:** Of course, even today.

**Q:** You feel it always?

**A:** Yes, because I always ask myself the question: “why just me?”

**Q:** And Dr. Marton, your husband, felt it also?

**A:** I do not think so.

**Q:** Why?

**A:** I have already said that he was a fatalist.

**Q:** meaning: he said, “it’s fate”?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** And you, you are not a fatalist?

**A;** No. No.

**Q:** So, what did you think?

**MARTON 20 (pages 61 thru 64)**

**Q:** Yes, you were not a fatalist? You are not a fatalist?

**A:** No. Not me. But wait, don't think that I have a melancholy disposition. I have lived some happy years in Israel, but if you ask me precisely concerning a certain period or periods, yes, I asked myself some questions, I had some moments where I was less happy and some others where I was capable of being happy.

**Q:** Today and during all of these years, did you pass judgment on the actions of Kastner? What did you think, at the same time, about what he did and about his personality?

**A:** I knew Kastner since the age of 17 [**unclear – is she saying since she was 17 or since Kastner was 17 or since both were 17?**], at the period of time where I found myself in Kolozsvar to do my studies....

**Q:** You knew him, until he died?

**A:** I knew him, then, from the age of 17. We were, at that time period, in the same circles since we associated with the editorial staff of the newspaper, “\_\_\_\_\_” which was, I believe, the only daily Zionist newspaper in Europe and all of our friends worked there and found themselves there and we were thus together. I knew him personally. He's an intelligent man. He had many friends and many enemies; he was a very controversial man. The thing that I think truly aged him was precisely this rescuing and that it's because of the rescuing that he was attacked and I believe that these attacks provoked his tragic death.

**Q:** What do you think about the trial afterwards?

**A:** I believe that the trial is one of the most terrible things I have ever known or seen since I came to Israel. It was truly a nightmare. First, I do not believe that the people had truly understood what happened during the Holocaust and then the witnesses lied. I do not know if that was deliberate; perhaps, for some, it was unintentional. And then the lawyer, the young, brilliant lawyer, TAMIR made it into a big story. He singlehandedly transformed the thing into a political affair to the point that the government fell. The judge, Doctor Halevi, who, in his verdict, decreed that “Satan” exists in the Twentieth Century, this institution that personally I thought no longer existed, and all of this atmosphere which was created ....

**Q:** This is the Doctor Halevy who said that Kastner had sold his soul to the Devil? Yes?

**A:** All of this atmosphere which was created around this matter most certainly provoked the tragic end of Kastner seeing that he was assassinated.

**Q:** But doesn't Madame Marton think, just for a moment, that Kastner went too far, that he crossed a line that, perhaps, he shouldn't have crossed?

**A:** I do not think so; I do not think so.

**Q:** So, what does Madame Marton think of those who said, not too many years later, but from people who had never been in danger themselves, because ultimately the dilemma of Kastner, the tragedy of Kastner, the tragedy of choice, the possible, it was not the case only with Kastner, I mean, this happened generally throughout the Holocaust and there have been debates everywhere, that this was at \_\_\_\_\_, that this was at Lodz, it was the same debates and certain people said: "if one asks me for 1000 Jews in order to save 10,000, I will give them" and others responded – it was those who were themselves completely seized by and taken up with the catastrophe – said: "one does not have the right to choose who shall live and who shall die" and that was a debate of \_\_\_\_\_ and "it is better that everyone die"; in short, it's at least ...; they profess ...these are the people who ...; certain people have adhered to this decision, to this very time.

**A:** I do not know if everywhere the situation was identical. What I do know is that Kastner wanted to rescue some Jews and to save some Jews, that is not something that one can easily teach oneself; there is no course on rescuing Jews but he, at any rate, he tried and he saved some Jews. I am living proof of it here.

**Q:** That's the truth; this was a unique matter in the history of the Holocaust, that the Germans let leave from Germany, in order to go to Switzerland, a convoy of 1600 Jews.

**A:** I think, moreover, that many more people could have been saved if only there had been a response from the other side. I think today with certitude, in short I know it; I no longer think it, that it was possible.

### **MARTON 21 (pages 64 thru 65)**

**Q:** Do you wish for something else?

**A:** Pardon?

**Q:** Do you wish to say something still?

**A:** I believe that the thing that I did correctly was to go to Israel. At the moment when I set foot on the soil of Israel in Haifa, I knew that this was the end of the road, that I had arrived, that here no one could ever again hunt me down.

**Q:** Why did you keep this guilt inside you for so long?

**A:** I believe that this is something individual. In short, I always asked myself the question to know why and in what way I was better than the people who perished in the Holocaust. It's normal that I ask myself the question, certainly. But I do not want you to think that I have not lived a normal life here. I have had a normal life, I haven't had psychological problems.

**Q:** Why did Madame Marton have tears in her eyes practically throughout the interview?

**A:** It's actually a problem with my eyes. But, outside of that, sometimes I have real tears.

**Q:** I would think so.

**A:** Since the death of my husband, there are hardly any times when I am capable of speaking without tears in my eyes.

(There is a long pause during which Madame Marton sits without speaking).

There now, these are real tears.

**THE END OF THE INTERVIEW WITH MADAME MARTON**