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Summary

Katalin Emma Káldor Darvas was born in 1932 in Pápa, Hungary. Her maternal ancestors, the Salzers, settled in Pápa in the late 18th century, when the large landholder in the area, the Eszterházy family, allowed Jews to move to their lands. Toward the end of the 19th century, her paternal grandfather, József Kóhn married Terézia Salzer and moved to Pápa. He opened a cement goods factory with 20-30 workers and a store where he sold construction material. The factory also produced advertisement pillars of which three were still standing in Pápa at the time of the interview. Her father, Jenő Kóhn Mihály was born in 1891 and took over the business. The family belonged to the well-to-do Jews in town. She had an older brother, and a beautiful childhood. Her first language was German, since they had an Austrian nanny until the Anschluss [March 1938]. The family was religious. They kept kosher and celebrated the Sabbath. Pápa had a great synagogue, and she went there with her father and grandfather. Most of the Jews were Neologs, but there was also a Hasidic community, with a rabbi Grünwald (whose descendants live in Brooklyn, NY). There were kosher butchers and grocery stores, and Jews owned most of the commercial businesses. There was also a Jewish restaurant, Hirsch. Pápa had a significant Jewish population [over 2,500].

There was a Jewish elementary school, which she attended. In 1942, the middle school initially only accepted her as a private student, but after her father interceded and gave money to the school, she was allowed to attend as a regular student.

In the 1940s, she experienced some derogatory remarks by schoolmates, and some discrimination by teachers.

It was the same in town. Some Christians were anti-Semitic; in particular, she remembered their neighbors, the Mika family, who were ethnic Slovaks.

Her father was a Zionist and a financial supporter of the movement. Her father told her that she had an orange orchard to her name in Palestine. Her father had connection to the Zionist organization in Budapest, in which her aunt was also active, and that saved their lives in 1944. Her father founded the local Zionist organization, but friends in the city administration told him to stop.

She thought that her father's Zionist activities were the reason for his arrest already on April 3, 1944. First, he was sent to Nagykanizsa, then to a collection camp in Sárospatak and was deported to Auschwitz on one of the earliest transports [on April 28, a transport of ca. 800 Jews were deported from Nagykanizsa to Auschwitz] where he died at age 53.

She remembered how humiliating it was to sew on the Yellow Star on April 6, 1944. In May, she moved to the ghetto with her mother, grandfather, and brother. The ghetto was set up around the synagogue. Zoltán Pap, gendarmerie captain supervised the ghettoization (sentenced to eight years imprisonment after the war). They were in the ghetto for a few weeks. Toward the end of June, László Endre [state secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs] visited the ghetto. After his visit, on June 28, they were forced to leave the ghetto and walk to the artificial fertilizer factory. On the way there, the women, among them her mother, were stopped at the Eszterházy pool and underwent body searches. Her mother also had to reveal the place where the family jewelry was hidden, as she feared torture. They stayed for two nights in the artificial

fertilizer factory, which had a direct railway line connection to the railway station. When the train arrived, the Five Member Committee of the Jews, i.e. the leadership of the local Jews, decided who would get into which wagon. They were: Jenő Kaufmann, Gyula Breuer, Simon Rechnitzer, Albert Krausz, and Salamon Widder (sp?). Three high-ranking German SS officers appeared and showed some paper to the Jewish leadership. Subsequently, 51 individuals, her family among them, were taken off the transport. She said that Ottó Komoly, president of the Zionist Association of Hungary had entered their names on a list at [the Jewish Council] Sip St. in Budapest. Her aunt in Budapest knew Ottó Komoly, and Komoly was aware of her father as an active Zionist. The list was created when Rezső Kasztner and Eichmann were negotiating a deal that involved permitting thousands of prominent Jews to leave Hungary in return for cash payment.

[On July 5] the group of 51 Jews walked back to town under SS guards, while the train left with the rest of the Jews, almost 3,600 people but that number included the population of the nearby villages.

Her family spent two nights in Pápa with the other exempted Jews and then, SS guards took them in a first-class railway car to Budapest, to a camp on Columbus St. They did some work in the kitchen, and cleaned the premises. They befriended a prisoner who fled from the Bácska, Mihály Rosenberg, a landowner. They were well treated until the Arrow Cross takeover on October 15, 1944.

Under the Arrow Cross, most of the women were taken to the KISOK Field and marched on foot toward western Hungary.

Earlier, her grandfather, over 90 at that time, was allowed to leave the camp and move into a Yellow Star house with his daughter in Rottenbiller St.

She, her mother and brother were taken to the ghetto, to 45 Akácfa St, to an apartment on the fourth floor, with about 40 people. They had no food. Sometimes, her brother went out to get some bread, but from December on, they spent more and more time in the basement, and lived in there for weeks before liberation.

On January 18, 1945 Soviet troops liberated the ghetto.

After liberation, they moved in with her aunt and her family on Queen Vilmos St. Her grandfather had died.

They had no food when Rosenberg arrived from Bácska with food and took them to his village, Bács-Bokod. They worked for a farmer in the village in exchange for room and board.

In April 1945, after Pápa was liberated, they returned. They moved into their old apartment, but it was completely empty. They found and reclaimed some of their furniture, bedclothes, clothing, etc. in different homes. She still had two dining room cabinets at the time of the interview. The factory suffered lots of damage and functioned only at very limited capacity after the war. Her mother managed to restart the construction business. They lived from that until expropriation in 1950.

In 1950, they moved to Budapest. Her mother, who got back the family's real estate, was able to buy a small apartment on 20 Szt.István Boulevard.

After graduating from the well-known high school of Pápa, she went to study architecture in Budapest, and worked as an architect all her life, well into retirement.

In 1955, she married Tibor Darvas.

When she was 16, she changed her family name from Kóhn to Káldor.

In 1956, her mother and brother left Hungary. Her brother is still alive, in Melbourne, Australia, and she talks with him very frequently.
Her father was declared dead in 1957, and the place of his death was declared in Ebensee, [subcamp of Mauthausen].

She shows photos at the end of the interview.