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**April 7, 8, and 21, 1920**

**Budapest, Hungary**

**Summary**

Bálint Surányi was born on June 26, 1935 [in Budapest]. He did not know his paternal grandparents. His grandfather had changed his name from Singer to Surányi at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and converted to Calvinism in 1919.

Bálint Surányi was born as a Calvinist, which he said determined his attitude toward his Jewishness.

He knew his maternal grandparents well. They lived in Budapest, and he met them every Wednesday and Sunday. His maternal grandfather was co-owner of a French paint factory. His father became a medical doctor, specializing in pediatrics. When he was born, his father was assistant professor at the children's hospital of the medical school – a job without pay – and earned his living with his private pediatric practice. His mother completed high school and spoke English and French. She worked as the secretary of her father. Since both parents worked, Bálint was with nannies most of the time. They lived at 12 Zrinyi St, in a large apartment, which included his father's office and a waiting room for his patients.

His family was not religious and did not go to church.

He began his schooling at the school of the Reformed Church at Deák Square.

In 1941 [after the third anti-Jewish law was passed that defined Jewishness on the basis of race], his parents told him that they and he were considered Jewish.

In 1943 his parents had summer holiday in the company of several left-leaning anti-German intellectuals (the Schöpflin family was mentioned) where he developed a political interest, listening to the adults. He began to read newspapers following the events of the war. When the bombardments began, although he knew that he could become a victim, he rooted for the English and American bombers.

At the end of 1943, after being previously called up a few times for some weeks, his father was called up permanently for forced labor. He worked in the school building of Szemere St, which was converted into a field hospital treating victims of bombings and other war-related injuries. He and his mother visited him a couple of times.

He remembered wearing the Yellow Star after the German occupation. He was surprised that it was so big, but did not remember being embarrassed. Their movement became restricted. In the building where they lived, he became friends with Misi Vajda [Mihály Vajda, the philosopher]. When they had to move to a Yellow Star house, he and his mother moved into his grandfather's apartment on Abonyi St. His grandmother had died in February of 1944. They shared the apartment with another Christian couple. He enjoyed living a communal life in the big apartment building. He followed the bigger boys around. He went with his mother to shop at the Garai Square market in the allotted time.

His mother, grandfather, and his aunt managed to get Swedish *Schutzpasses* through a relative on the maternal side who had immigrated to Sweden before the war. His name was on his mother's *Schutzpass*. His father, as a doctor, received Horthy's protection letter, on which Bálint's name was also entered.

On October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1944, when the Arrow Cross came to power, his father called and told them to

flee from the Yellow Star house. They all went to the storage area of the furniture store of their former nanny, Viktória/Viki Matisa. Their hiding place was, however, discovered and two days later, Arrow Cross men arrested them. They were taken to a police station, which was a holding place for Jews in hiding, Christians who were hiding Jews or Jewish property, criminals, etc. They were interrogated one by one. He was also interrogated. His family members were sent to prison. He remembered that his mother said farewell to him, giving him her gloves containing her wedding ring. He himself was released – as much later turned out, at the intervention of a former classmate of his father – to his father. His father arranged that a Calvinist pastor, János Viktor, from the church at Szabadság Square come for him the next day. His father knew Viktor and treated his grandchildren free of charge. He was later told that his father asked the pastor to place him in one of the boy's homes of the Calvinist Church. The pastor, however, found out about imminent Arrow Cross raids on those homes where Jewish boys were hidden, and decided to take him to his own home. He stayed with the pastor and his family for the rest of the war. After Christmas, they lived in the air-raid shelter.

His mother was released from prison and through his father's acquaintances and due to her foreign-language knowledge, she got a job at the International Red Cross in Buda. In November, the Arrow Cross rounded up the Jewish physicians, including his father and took them to the train station of Józsefváros. Wallenberg appeared there and demanded that doctors who had Swedish *Schutzpässe* be released. Although his father did not have one, he stepped over to that group. The next day, someone took him to his wife at the International Red Cross, where initially she hid him. Within a short time, Gábor Sztéhlo, the rescuer of children, employed him at children's homes.

The family members knew about each other through Viki, the former nanny. He remembered that the Russians appeared at Szabadság Square, but no related events. His grandfather, aunt, and Viki came for him and took him back to Abonyi St. They were starving. His parents were still in Buda and he was reunited with them only in mid-February [after the liberation of Buda].

His father, who was politically on the left all his life, joined the Communist Party. Initially, he worked for the National Help [organization] setting up a milk kitchen and pediatric clinic. In 1946 he became the director of the Institute for the Protection of Mothers and Children. In 1950, for political reasons, a disciplinary procedure was initiated against him and he was suspended from his job.

His grandfather's firm was expropriated, and in 1950, his grandfather and aunt were interned in Monok, in the countryside for three years.

Right after the war, they lived at 31 Ajtósi-Dürer St. Their next-door neighbor was László Rajk [minister for Internal Affairs]. He continued his schooling on Hermina St. He went to Trefort Street high school, later to Madách high school. His schoolmates were György Konrád [writer] and Ferenc Fehér [philosopher].

He studied history at the university and in 1957 began working at the Institute for History at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He said that he always tried to keep his intellectual independence, avoiding party and other political affiliations.