

Karoly Altman



This is a picture of Karoly Altmann, my aunt Giza's third husband. The photo was taken in Budapest but I don't know when. Karoly was auntie Giza's first cousin. My grandfather Ignac Altman had a sister called Fani, and she had a son, Karoly, on the wrong side of the blanket. That's why he was called Altman, as we didn't know anything of his father. Fani was supposedly a dissolute woman, I think she lived in Pest. Karoly was Auntie Giza's first cousin, but while grandmother lived she didn't allow them to marry because the belief was, and still is today, that cousins marrying is unhealthy. When my grandmother died they married immediately, in 1937, I think. There were only civil marriages then, and I was there. It was in Aszod, as Karoly Altman was a car mechanic and had a workshop there with a partner. I have many memories of Karoly. He was a dark-haired, tall, good-

looking man with an old Citroen car. In the 1930s this was a big thing for us, children, as we could go on trips in the car. During the year before the war, so in 1939, he worked in Pest as well. He was immediately called up, as they needed car mechanics who knew how to drive; whether he was a Jew or not wasn't an issue; to the extent that even in 1941 he went to Ukraine as a soldier, not as a forced laborer. When he came back in 1941-42 we heard from him how the Hungarian military had behaved during the invasion. About how holding babies by the legs they had thrashed them against the walls. He wasn't called up for labor service later either, somehow he got excused, I suppose due to his car mechanic expertise. The Terez Boulevard house, where I and my parents lived before the war, did not become a yellow star house in 1944, so we had to move out of our apartment. We were moved into a smaller one. It was a forced exchange. My father, mother, brother, aunt Giza and uncle Karoly lived there, as well as me. On the night of 7th to 8th January 1945, at the 'charitable request' of the concierge, an armed Arrow Cross company appeared. Either he had told them that there were Jews there illegally, or he thought he could get something out of it, whatever. I don't know. The thing is that night a few Arrow Cross turned up. I was eleven. They took everybody who could be moved - anyone who couldn't was shot - to the Arrow Cross building on 14 Varoshaz Street. My father and uncle were taken to the banks of the Danube on the following day and shot into the river. The bodies never appeared.