

Eugen Kohn's Trade Licence



I still have the merchant license of my father, pictured here. It is dated 1939, and the text is as follows: 'Kohn, Eugen, born on 10th August 1896 in Sebis village, is authorized to run a mixed grocery on his own account, under the firm name of 'Kohn Eugen,' having its headquarters in Beliu village.'

My parents had taken over a bankrupt shop from a Jew and made it prosperous. And indeed, the shop went very well. At the beginning Uncle Schwartz vouched for them and enabled them to get a loan. By 1940 they managed to pay back all the debt and buy a house in Arad. At first they had tenants in the house, but later it was nationalized and confiscated by the Antonescu regime.

The shop did so well, in part, because of my father's work ethic. I remember that in those days peasants would go to the fields at four or five in the morning, and they often knocked on our windows early in the morning in case they needed sugar, bread or cigarettes. My father got up and served them – many times even without getting money for it. Merchants were fighting for clients, and my father's generosity proved to be a useful means of attracting business. During the first 14 years of owning the store he and my mother made great progress, even saving enough money to help us live on during the 1940s.

When they came back to Beliu after the war, my parents once again engaged in commerce. They ultimately ran their shop until 1946/7. They lived with some Jews while in Beliu because they didn't have a house there after the war. As I mentioned before, we had originally lived in a rented house

before the war. My father got in touch again with traders from Arad, and he would come to Arad for merchandise. Acquisition was extremely troublesome – he had to come to Arad by train and then carry all the goods to Beliu. As such, he didn't purchase too much merchandise. As it was, he didn't have much money, and besides, the acquisition of goods was also becoming dangerous. I recall that once he had all of his merchandise stolen.

After they got back the house in Arad, my parents also moved there. Later we sold the house. They didn't open a shop in Arad, instead choosing to sell at the local Serbian market. My father had a booth there. He sold textiles again, acquiring the goods from factories or wholesalers. As all this was after 1948, there weren't private shops anymore, and my father instead got regular employment in a textile shop in the town center, opposite to the Red Church. He sold remains – pieces that were left over from exports. He was paid according to how much he sold. Eventually my father moved to another textile shop on Andrei Saguna Street. The shop went so well there that people were queuing up. My father knew exactly what to bring, and many people came from the countryside to purchase goods from him. My father retired after his work at this shop.