

Rozsa H.



My mother in the early 1960s.

The greatest compliment I could say about my parents is that they could stand my horrible teenage period, when I had my own opinion about everything that I could opposed them about. Not only that they could bear it, but well, I became like that in their surroundings. That stayed with me, that one of the most important things in life is my sovereignty, a kind of 'uncompromisingness'. I got smacked one time in my whole childhood. I was going to the Bethlen Square Jewish school, there wasn't school on Saturday, and one Saturday I was playing with my classmates at our house. And all of a sudden my mother came in the room, and slapped me. What happened was that my mother went out shopping and didn't take a key. She thought that I'm at home so she'll ring the bell. We were playing so, that I didn't hear her. She yelled from the street, rang the bell, the neighbors stomped, we didn't hear. My mother's only thought was that we were all dead. She had to call a locksmith. So a huge event like that had to happen for her to smack me. Punctuality, reliability, stamina were so self-evident. I learned from my mother that you have to help the elderly. But I didn't learn it from what she said, but from what she did. It was an environment in which a person couldn't be anything else. If I promised something once, that I would be at home at this time or that, then I was at home. Of course, I did a lot of things on the sly, like reading books that weren't allowed, but looking back on them today, those were such innocent things.

My mother was at home the whole time, she was a housewife. We could live from a window dresser's pay so that we always had a maid. In the Filleres Department Store, my father earned good money, his salary was 560 pengos. Our rent, when we took that out was 100 pengos a month, which the new owner raised to 110 a month. Why did a family like this have a maid? Because at that time, house work was heavy physical work. Nothing was automated. The iron was heavy, it was a coal [heated] iron. Washing was heavy physical work, then there was cleaning, washing up, heating, bringing the kindling up, taking out the ashes. It was quite natural in that society that a family had a maid. This didn't mean that the lady was a useless, red-nailed Madame, but that they

worked together. My mother did the shopping and cooking.

I can thank my mother that I find kitchen work a cheerful thing. It was a pleasure to work with her, she was never a kitchen martyr. Beside her you soaked up that it is a great thing to put good food out for a family.

Something else happened in 1945. We Magyarized our name from Kauders to 'H-'. To this day, it is still difficult for me to say that I'm Jewish. I could never go back to the religion. Not because I was afraid, indeed, I even escorted my mother to temple. In 1949, when I was already working, a colleague of mine good-naturedly told me that I shouldn't go to temple because it's incompatible with party membership. And when I told my mother that, she said, 'look at his stinking Jew, he must have also been there in the synagogue, otherwise where else would he have known that you were there?'

My mother was the only one, who never believed anything. My father and I did. My mother didn't believe the Rajk trial [Rajk Trial] [22], and never got taken in by anything.