

Elizabeth Halász

The Hopes of 1956

I followed the happenings of the 1956 uprising from New Jersey with great expectations and even greater hopes. After immigrating to the United States in 1952, I only found out in the summer of 1953, that my Father was still alive. He had survived five years as a prisoner of war in the Soviet Union, three years in a concentration camp in Hungary, and was living in Balatonfüred.

Because he had been a carrier hussar officer years before, I was convinced that he was fighting alongside the freedom fighters in 1956.

In the United States, we tried to persuade our politicians not to abandon the Hungarians again. After the Russians crushed the Revolution on November 4, I could only hope that my Father was still alive and could somehow escape to Austria.

But, as time went by, I began to lose hope. Then, in late November, our phone rang. It was my Father. He had arrived in Vienna and was staying at my Grandmother's. As he later related to us, he had indeed offered his services to a group of freedom fighters, but was turned down because they did not want to associate with a former officer of the Horthy era.

My husband and I picked him up in the middle of December at Camp Kilmer. He had last seen me as a girl of eleven. I was now a young woman of 22.

It was the happiest and saddest Christmas of my life.

When I later requested and received my Father's indictment and trial documents from the official archives in 2004, I did not know whether to laugh or cry. My Father's only crime: being a military officer and an aristocrat.

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Born in Sopron, Elizabeth Halász ended up in Austria at the end of World War II as a Displaced Person. She immigrated to the United States in 1952. She worked at first in a factory, then completed an accounting course and found employment as a bookkeeper. She raised three children, helped in the St. Stephen Hungarian church of Passaic, New Jersey as well as with the scouts, and was PTA president in her daughter's and sons' school.

Elizabeth Halász is the wife of Sándor Halász.