

Bela Erdos And His Brothers



My father with his brothers in front of their parents' tombstones. They didn't often come together (Bela was in Vienna, for example) and when they did, they took the opportunity to go out to their parents' grave in the cemetery. Jozsef stands on the left, next to him is Sandor, then my father and Janos on the right. In the back is Bela on the left and Gyula on the right.

Sandor remained in west Hungary, where they came from. He had a rolling mill. But they had mills in Kapuvar and Hodmezovasarhely as well. His wife, Ilonka Topf, was a post-office employee when Sandor met her. She was an immensely intelligent woman, and that is why he married her. The family chronicle says that her husband took her advice in everything. He had a family residence in Bosarkany. He was very rich. When I was 10 years old, there was running water even at that time, which was a rare thing in villages. From the mill there was electric lighting, there was the radio, telephone, a green-house with plants, a tennis court and everything.

When I was about 12-13 he already had a car with a driver, and his son had one as well, though he drove it himself. There was a lot of showing-off there, and he rubbed shoulders with the gentry, and mixed with them.

They used to live in Budapest every winter. They rented a four or six-roomed flat in Vigszinhaz Street. In villages there's no life in winter, while here they lived their lives, went to the theatre, moved in society. And they also cultivated the family. We were invited for lunch many times - but very charitably and condescendingly. During the war the family was hiding in Budapest, and Sandor died a few months before the end of the war. He was very sick and old at that time.

Sandor had four children, three girls and a boy. One of his girls died of tuberculosis when she was 32 years old. His son, Istvan was the head of the mill company. He was a very intelligent, educated, witty man of the world, elegant, handsome and evil. He took as his wife, the daughter of the head

of the Jewish community of Eger, who had just come out of the Swiss finishing-school. Those were horribly rich people. He took that girl as his wife, without love, just because she was so wealthy. They had two daughters. Their marriage was terrible. They survived the war because Istvan had a Christian lover, and she saved everybody. After the war he divorced and married this woman. One of Sandor's daughters married a wine wholesaler in Vienna, and had a son. Her husband and son died in forced labor service; she ended her life in the Jewish home for the aged in Vienna. His other daughter, Rozsi, lived in Budapest with her husband. Rozsi was a rich lady and they lived a high life. We went there only when we were invited on birthdays and things like that. She had a terrible death. She and her 16-year-old daughter were killed in the Maros Street hospital while in hiding during the war. And her husband committed suicide in 1944. Her son survived, became an interpreter, and is still alive today.