

Gyula Foldes



This picture of me was taken in Budapest in 1943. My brother Bandi Foldes had his bar mitzvah then and I of course had to be photographed, too. The photo was taken at Varkonyi on Deak Square, which was a famous photo studio at that time. Bandi was prepared by chief rabbi Izsak Schmeltzer, the religious instruction teacher at Barcsay Street high school. We paid him some honorarium for the bar mitzvah. And he also prepared Bandi for it, it was part of his job. And then at the bar mitzvah, I remember that Bandi went up to the Torah and read from it. But I think he didn't have to sing. The bar mitzvah was in the morning and afterwards, in the afternoon, there was a big reception in our apartment. Our nursemaid Ilonka and our cook Mariska prepared for the party and they were duly dressed up for the occasion. They even had some outside domestic help. All the doors were opened in our five-bedroom apartment and there were a lot of people, at least fifty, not only Jews but also Christian colleagues of my father's from the bank, then friends - my parents had quite a large circle of friends - and some of my mother's clients as well, with whom she

had a closer relationship. People brought presents for Bandi: pens, books. Somebody brought Jokai's book *The Earth Really Does Spin* as a present for Bandi. I remember one thing in particular. One of the Christian guests got so drunk that he went into the bathroom, found a bottle of eau de cologne and started drinking it. And I remember that there was great commotion and my parents told me how awkwardly the whole reception ended because of this. I also had a bar mitzvah in 1946 but only because I insisted on it. A 13-year-old child believes that externals strengthen them in their identity. I was also prepared by rabbi Schmeltzer.