

Ilona Seifert And Her Family On The Balcony Of Their House



This is a photo of our house, taken in Budapest in the 1920s. The family is standing on the balcony and you can see some of our employees below us on the street. My parents married in 1917, and bought this single story house, which they extended by building additional stories on top. We lived there, and it also housed daddy's mechanized bakery and soda water workshop. My father's bakery was the first one in the city to use a steam oven for baking bread. There were two additional floors above the bakery. On the first floor potatoes were kept. People liked potato bread a lot at that time, and every day many hundredweight of potatoes arrived. There were about forty women who peeled the potatoes. Then they were boiled, put into the potato masher, and sent straight down to the ground floor where there was a trough in which leaven was mixed with a mixing machine. On the second floor there were at least eight apartments for the permanent staff members. These apartments had all the modern conveniences, including kitchens. There was a terrace rather than a roof, on top of the house, and my parents had a garden constructed for us up there, with a child's sandbox, a flower garden, and a set of beautiful garden furniture. There were eight rooms in our apartment: a master bedroom, a children's room, a parlor, a dining room, a drawing room, and a living room. The parlor was beautiful. It had gilded furniture, including two large standing mirrors with golden frames. Then there was a drawing room for daddy with a suite of furniture, bookshelf, and a filing cabinet. The living room was a great big room and we actually spent the whole day there. We even dined there. There was also a huge dining hall. It was a special room with lovely furniture and carpets which had to be cared for. You weren't allowed to drop crumbs, or drag dirt onto the carpets. We used this dining room whenever we had company at the house. There were always plenty of guests in our house, because an active social life was very fashionable back then. My parents usually invited factory owners like themselves, wholesalers, merchants, district borough members and other business people. I loved having these guests, and we were dressed nicely for these occasions. To entertain the guests, I sang, and Mommy played the piano. My sister did not often come in, because she was shy. After supper the women would usually go into the parlor for a chat, and the men would either stay in the parlor or go into the drawing room. The

children's room was furnished with painted white furniture. Our 'Fräulein' slept there with us. There was one room just for the live-in cook, and another small room for the maid. No one slept in the kitchen. Naturally, there was a bathroom with running water, and a tub connected to a bathroom stove that had to be heated up.