

Judita Jovanovic's Father Zoltan Biro With A Friend In The Dormitory



My father Zoltan Biro and his friend Tibor Szekely having breakfast. The photo was taken in the students' dormitory in the room where they lived during their law studies, in Zagreb in May 1931.

When my father finished primary school, they moved from Subotica to Mostar. He completed high school in Mostar and then enrolled in law school at the University of Zagreb, where he lived in the student dormitory. I don't know whether this was a Jewish dormitory. If there was a Jewish dormitory in Zagreb at the time, he certainly would have lived there; if not, he lived in the regular dormitory.

He shared a room with a Jew named Tibor Szekely. Tibor was a fascinating character who happened to look like a short version of Lenin. He finished law school but never practiced as a lawyer. Instead he became a professional traveler and anthropologist. He wrote many books, many of them travelogues, and knew many languages. In his later years he became the director of a museum in Subotica. He died in the 1980s in Subotica.

My father finished his first year at the University of Zagreb and then transferred to the University of Belgrade, because his father had planned to retire and to move to Belgrade that year. However, Grandfather's retirement was pushed back one year, so Father spent his second university year in the King Alexandar dormitory in Belgrade on Revolution Boulevard. The next year his parents were in Belgrade and he lived with them in their apartment on Charlie Chaplin Street. During his studies, my father was an active member of the leftist students' organization, but I do not know whether he was a member of the Communist Party before the war.