

RG-50.944.0089

November 15 and 20, 2019

Budapest, Hungary

Summary

Anikó Gergely Dési was born January 31, 1938 in Budapest. Both grandfathers were farm managers, but moved to Budapest while their children were growing up. There were five children in both families. Neither family was religious or kept Jewish customs.

Her mother, born Margit Förszter (sp?) (called "Mancika" by everyone, including by Anikó) had as siblings: József, Teri, György, and László. Jóska moved to Kolozsvár (Cluj, Romania) where he was the director of a shoe polish manufacturing factory and married a Christian woman, Szilvia, who was an opera singer. Teri lived in Dunaföldvár, and Anikó remembered visiting her and her family by boat. Her husband was István Schwartz. They and their children perished in the Holocaust. László was a talented sculptor, married to the daughter of one of the best glove makers in Budapest.

Her paternal grandfather was Gáspár Gergely (originally Glück), married to Eleonóra (Laura) Fogel.

Her father (first name not mentioned) was born in 1903. His siblings were György, married to a Christian woman, Zsuzsa Kósa (who hid several family members in 1944), Piroska, who never married and managed two small movie theaters in the 8th District of Budapest, Magdolna (married to and divorced from Pál Kókai, a Christian), and Bandi, a photographer, married to Anna Fekete.

Her father had a high school and trade school education. He worked as a branch manager of the English-Hungarian Bank, later in the Hungarian travel agency, IBUSZ. Her mother had a middle school and trade school education and worked in clerical positions. They had a middle-class existence. They lived in a very typical middle-class apartment at 6 Teréz Boulevard. Anikó had a nanny, Mária Bajorosi. Her paternal grandmother lived in the same building with a housekeeper, and they cooked for Anikó's family.

Her parents converted to Catholicism, but she did not remember when. She grew up a Catholic. Her family always celebrated Christmas.

Since she was only six years old in 1944, she did not remember well the chronological sequence of her family's ordeals.

She said that she did not spend many years with her father, but had very fond memories of him. He was called up for forced labor several times and did not return after the last call-up. After the war, her mother learned that he had died on January 5, 1945, somewhere around Szombathely, at Hungary's western border.

She also said that although she realized that they were in danger, she never felt really anxious, because she was always with her mother and other members of her extended family.

Her mother and she had *Schutzpasses* from the Vatican, and Switzerland, but they did not provide real protection. They lived in a protected house for a while, but one day the inhabitants had to line up and leave. A policeman allowed her mother to go back with her to the house where they were the only ones who remained there. Her mother, with the help of a stranger made her way to the movie theater of aunt Piroska, located at Kálvária Square. The movie theater had an attic office space. Her grandmother, Piroska, Magdolna, and Bandi were already

hiding there. Mr. Fördős, the technical manager of the movie theatre brought food for them. She did not remember how long they were in the attic. They left when an explosion close to the house broke all the windows, rendering them visible from the neighboring houses. They went to the air-raid shelter in the basement of the house where Zsuzsi (uncle György's wife) lived, on Gyula Krrudy St., not far from the movie theatre. Her grandmother and Bandi were already there. Zsuzsi hid them in a separate storage place of the shelter. Zsuzsi also hid her husband, György in the apartment, which he did not leave during the siege of Pest. She and her mother had the ID's of Zsuzsi's friend who lived in the provincial town, Gyula. She told everyone about her family's nice house and garden in Gyula. Bandi was killed because he left the shelter to have some fresh air, and a nearby explosion killed him.

After being liberated by the Russians, they went back to their apartment, but it was uninhabitable.

Her mother decided to go to Kolozsvár, to her brother, Jóska. For a while they lived with her brother and his wife, Szilvia, but then they moved to different places within the city, often renting only beds. Her mother worked in uncle Jóska's factory. They knew many people, had a lively social life, and enjoyed music and theatre. She began her schooling in Kolozsvár; for a year in a public school, then in the Marianum, a private Catholic girl school, which she liked very much.

Uncle Jóska died suddenly and unexpectedly, before his factory was nationalized in 1948. That year, she and her mother were expelled from Romania and moved back to Budapest. In the meantime, someone occupied and renovated their apartment. They moved in with her grandmother. Her mother received back payments of her father's pension from the English-Hungarian Bank, and she bought a small one-room apartment where they lived until Anikó married. Her mother worked in clerical and managerial positions at the Hungarian-Soviet Cultural Society, later as a bookseller.

She graduated from high school in 1956. She was not accepted at the university for two consecutive years, because she had no working-class background. In the third year, with the help of her mother's connection, a prominent Communist Party secretary, she was able to study at the university: Hungarian and Russian language and literature.

Before her university studies, she worked as a bookseller in different locations of the city. She met her future husband, Illés Dési in 1958.

The interviewer, János Dési is their son.