

# Veronika Kosikova

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## **My family background and growing up**

My parents were Alica Reitmanova, nee Wassermanova, and Alexander Reitman. They both come from the same region. My father was born in Slepčany, my mother in Dolne Slazany. They said my father had to jump over the stream to meet my mother. My mother comes from a relatively rich farmer's family with seven children. My father was born into a poor Jewish family. His father, Gustav Reitman, was from a family with 16 children. He worked with leather and later he bought out seeds and corn. My parents married in May 1937 and they lived in Zlate Moravce, where my father had his wholesale company, along with his father and brothers. They weren't Orthodox Jews.

I was the only child in our family. I was born on 18th February 1940 in Zlate Moravce. My memories of this region are very vague because I only lived there for a few years because of the war.

The engagement of my parents took place in Dolne Slazany, where my mother is from. The whole family gathered for the celebration: my grandfather Gustav Reitman, my mother's mother Judita Wassermanova, her husband, my mother's father, Jakub Wasserman. Then there were my mother's youngest brother, Jozef Vodny, who was called Dodo; her sister Mana Ehrenfeldova, nee Wassermanova, and Tibor, her eldest brother. There were also Marta and Laci Reitman, my father's brother and his wife. All family members were there, except for Mana's relatives. She was married and lived in Senec. She, her two children and her husband perished in Auschwitz.

My mother's brothers survived the war by hiding in Hungary and in Slovakia. My grandmother Judita, my mother's mother, was shot dead on 16th January 1945 near Donovaly, in a village called Buly, where another 16 people are buried. They were all shot dead and buried in one grave. I have miraculously survived. Several Jews were hiding in Buly and its neighborhood. Children, the elderly and people who weren't able to fight or hide in shelters were left there. That's why I was there with my grandmother. Somebody denounced us and there was an attack. This, as I mentioned before, happened on 16th January 1945. I was the only one to survive. It was by mere chance. Although my hair is now dark, as a child I was blonde, I was almost five years old, a child in a peasant dress, and they didn't recognize me as a Jew.

It's interesting that I don't remember the shooting because I do remember the German. I went on his horse. I remember that, nothing else. My grandmother wasn't in the same house as me, for protection reasons. I didn't know she didn't live any more. I was the only one who survived in Buly. There is a mass grave. After the war my father, along with the local municipality, built a common memorial on that spot. It's still there and we are in contact with those people. In remembrance of my survival, my father bought a cottage at that place and we still own it. Local people call the place 'At the Jews'. That's how it goes there.

### **During the war**

After the Slovak National Uprising [1](#) started, our family split up. My parents went to the mountains with the partisans. My father was fighting, my mother helped wherever she could. However, later they were separated and didn't know about each other. They met again after the war by chance. Then they found me. After the war, my parents moved to Levice, where we lived until 1957.

I have quite a lot of photographs from the Holocaust period. I think that my parents wanted to take pictures, they knew, the situation was very bad. Although I was only a child I have memories from this period but I don't like to talk about it.

We lived somewhere else; my mother says this is a different address, but I cannot remember that place. I have a photo a woman, who helped us in our household, I was hiding at her's some time, alone. Her name is Julka Sykorova, she came from Male Chyntice, Zlate Moravce or Vrable district, I don't know exactly. We were in contact with her long after the war. I called her Julka neni; in a certain period of my life she was like my second mother.

### **After the war**

After the war things seemed at first hopeful, but when the communists gained power, everything got worse. My father was imprisoned in the 1950s. We lived in Nitra. My father was in prison and we had a picture taken for him in 1951. My father was in prison several times. That time it was after the illegal emigration of his brother. The history of Zionism influenced our family all the time and I was excluded from university for that reason.

My cousin Ivan Reitman emigrated from Czechoslovakia under very dangerous circumstances. I had problems because of my father and my cousin who illegally emigrated. I couldn't study at university, which I wanted to do so much. Today I'm retired but I still work in a library.

The stories of the Reitman family were very interesting. They go as follows: The youngest brother, Laci, fled from Czechoslovakia under very dangerous circumstances in 1951. He illegally crossed the border in Komarno and was smuggled, along with his five-year-old son Ivan, to Vienna on a cargo ship. Uncle Laci died five years ago, his wife, Aunt Klari lives in Toronto and their son Ivan lives in Los Angeles. My father died in October 1988, my mother is, thanks God, still alive. The second oldest brother was called Imro Reitman; he lives in Toronto. Unfortunately, Imro suffers from Alzheimer disease. He is 89 and mentally in a very bad condition. His wife was called Magda. She survived Auschwitz. Imro and Laci were hiding in Hungary. Both brothers had more children. Ivan has two sisters and Marika has a sister called Dana.

In 1961 I married engineer Juraj Kosik. We have two children, Peter and Zuzana. Peter is 35 and Zuzana is 28. We got divorced after 30 years of marriage. My husband Juraj Kosik wasn't a Jew. I can say that no Jew would ever do so much harm to his family as he did. He can have a lover, but the family is always above all. At the moment, I live alone. My children come to visit me, I have close friends and, fortunately, my mother.

At the end of 1963, my mother went to Israel to visit her brother Dodo. She met my cousin Judita and Dodo's wife, Dita. She is a marvelous person. She came to Levice by chance from Kalna. They got married in 1938 or even earlier and they went to Israel with the first aliyah. My cousin Judita, who was born in Israel, speaks fluent Slovak. Her husband comes from Poland; he is an architect. They speak Hebrew and English. But when the husband and children weren't present, we spoke Slovak without any problems.

In spite of my health problems, which are partially caused by the suffering during the Holocaust, I'm actively involved in the activities of the Jewish community, especially in the association Hidden Child.

## **Glossary**

1 Slovak National Uprising