

Ilona Porjesova



This picture is my only remembrance of my mother Ilona Porjesova [nee Moskovicova]. The picture was originally a charcoal drawing - a double portrait of my beautiful dark-eyed and dark-haired young mother, and my happily smiling, more than twenty years older father. The charcoal portrait was created by a noted Hungarian artist, whose name I've forgotten. When I returned to my home town of Zilina after the war, in the courtyard of our devastated home I found on a heap of garbage the damaged double portrait of my parents. It was all torn and in horrible shape. I couldn't save my father, but I at least had my mother's likeness restored. My mother was born in 1901 in Michalovce in Eastern Slovakia. I unfortunately don't have any direct memories of my mother, I know only a little of her life as mediated by things told to me by my grandmother and aunties. For my mother died while giving birth to my unborn sibling of something that today would apparently be called an ectopic pregnancy. At least that's how my grandma used to tell it to me as a small boy. But when I

was a little older, my aunties told me that things had happened a little differently. My aunties said that my mother, Ilonka, was a downright angel. However the cause of her premature death was apparently her own mother. You see, when Grandma Fany arrived in Zilina to see her daughter and ten-month-old tot, she found out that my mother was pregnant again. She persuaded my mother to secretly have an abortion, without my father, who was at that time on a longer business trip, knowing about it, so that she wouldn't ruin her figure with another childbirth. Grandma dredged up some midwife, who however botched the procedure, and my mother died of blood poisoning. She was not quite 21 at the time.