

Wacek Kornblum's Aunt Doba Gilf And Her Daughter Mania



This is my father's older sister Doba, or Debora with her daughter Mania - Miriam. The picture must have been taken in early 1930s

Father's family was a large family, where several generations came from Powazki near Warsaw. I only vaguely remember Father's mother, her name was Miriam. I don't know what year she was born in, I don't know what year she died. Father's father's name was Icchak, I have my name after him. I don't remember him. He must have died fairly early. Father's parents must have been religious, whereas all Father's sisters and Father were not.

Father had a couple of sisters and a brother. One sister of Father's, Aunt Doba, had a husband whose name was Szlomo Gilf. They had two sons, Zewek - Zejw and Chylek - Chil and a daughter Mania - Miriam, who was a bit older than me. It was a non religious family. Uncle had a grocery store in Wlochy near Warsaw for many years, but later, because of various anti-Semitic incidents, he moved to Warsaw just before the war. He had a store there for some time, but it wasn't going well. In 1939, Chylek and Zewek were drafting age and they were both drafted to the army. Chylek was in cavalry and was taken to a POW camp, which he escaped from and returned to Warsaw, that was before the ghetto. Zewek was in the army and defended Warsaw until the capitulation.

Immediately after bombings began in 1939, one of the first igniting bombs fell on the lumberyards on Niska. The fire was horrible. Everybody was scared, didn't know where to run. We went to Aunt Doba, on Panska, she had a large apartment. There were lots of foreign people who didn't live in those buildings, but who, like us, were running away from other parts of the city, but nobody asked any questions. We all went to the basement, because they announced a bombing, and a bomb fell on that house. I know I lost consciousness. Everything went dark, it must have taken a while, when I woke up the basement was full of black dust, and people were pushing their way towards the exit to the stairway, I instinctively got out, and then heard some woman scream: 'Vu iz mayn man un mayne kinder?' 'Where is my husband and my children?'. And it was my mom. Then Dad showed up and Borus and Estusia, and it also turned out that in the same house there was Aunt Chawcia with her husband, Kuba and Izaak. And when we met at the gate, it turned out Izaak wasn't able to walk. Aunt Chawcia said there was a wooden exit door, and it hit him in the head. And when we all got outside to the street, Aunt Chawcia decided to go to Aunt Frania's on Wielka Street, and Dad and Mom decided to go back to Niska. We parted and from later stories we know that Izaak died two days later.