

A Photograph Of The Polak Family



This photograph was taken between 1928 and 1930 in Kokava nad Rimavou. Grandma Anna Polakova is down at the bottom, in the middle. First on the left is my mother, Klara Engelova, standing beside her is Aunt Edith, Aunt Melania, Uncle Arnold, Uncle Ernest and a female friend.

In the Polak family, the oldest of my mother's siblings was Eugen, who was probably born in 1894. He died right after World War I, in 1922, of bone tuberculosis. He was a more or less active writer; a poetry collection of his has been found. The next in line was Melania, who was born in 1896; they killed her in the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1944. Next was Ernest, who was born in 1902. He was a pharmacist, and died in a concentration camp. In 1904 my mother was born, then there was another brother of hers, Pavel, who was probably born in 1906, and was a businessman. He died in 1935 I think, of quick pneumonia. The youngest was Edita. Born in 1910, she perished in a concentration camp.

The language of communication in the Polak family was very interesting. Grandma Polakova belonged to Matica, a national Slovak cultural establishment with its headquarters in Martin, and also spoke Slovak with her children. Grandma spoke in very beautiful Slovak. Of course, when she and my grandfather spoke, it was in Hungarian.