

Grandma Jolana Schwartz With Her Grandchildren



This photo was taken in a Bratislava photo studio on 7th September 1929, and shows my grandmother Jolana Schwartz with her grandchildren. I am the first on the right. Sitting beside me is my cousin Edita Fischerova. The baby on my grandmother's lap is Stela Ehrenreichova, and finally my cousin Tibor Perl.

As children, we saw our grandmother on a daily basis. Either we'd visit her, or she us. She lived on Mikulasska Street, and we on Venturska, where my parents had a store. While my parents were in the store, I was usually at Grandma's. My grandmother didn't dress differently from other people. She dressed in a worldly fashion, like most women. Grandma wasn't religious. I remember that she'd occasionally buy a goose, and make soup from it. She'd prepare goose innards with tomato sauce, and bake barkhes. That I foggily remember, those were frequent Friday suppers. During the High Holidays, our whole family would go to the Neolog synagogue on Rybne Square. Bratislava had many prayer halls that were attended by Jews. But our family observed only the High Holidays. I can't describe them, as I was still small. As children we didn't really observe the fast during Yom Kippur [Yom Kippur: The Day of Atonement. The most celebrated event in the Jewish calendar. A day of "cleansing of sins". Fasting is observed. - Editor's note]. But I do remember Simchat Torah [Simchat Torah: the main significance of the holiday lies in the continuation of the Five Books of Moses. The cycle of reading from the Torah ends and begins on the same day, and the public celebration connected with this expresses the joy inspired by this process - Editor's note], how we would walk, with stops, around Rybne Square, but that's also a long time ago. I didn't even have a bar mitzvah [bar mitzvah - "son of the Commandments", a Jewish boy that has reached the age of thirteen. A ceremony, during which the boy is declared to be bar mitzvah, from this point on he must fulfill all commandments of the Torah - Editor's note]. My 13th birthday took place during the war year of 1941, and by then people had other things to worry about.