

Maria Szwarc With Her Mother



This is a studio portrait of my mother, Maria Szwarc, nee Biber, with her mother. It was taken in Lodz in about 1900.

This picture survived the war due to a fortunate incident: before the war, Halina's mother had mailed them to her sister, who lived in the USA.

I know nothing about my grandparents and great-grandparents. Unfortunately, none of my grandparents, either from my mother's or from my father's side, were alive by the time I was born.

I do know that one of my grandfathers was named Daniel, and I suspect it must have been my mother's father, because there was a tradition of naming boys Daniel in that family.

My mother's family comes from Lodz. Mother's name was Maria Biber. She was born on 25th March 1899 in Lodz.

She had lots of siblings: three sisters and two brothers: Sala, Hela, Ruta, Leon and Motek. There were six children altogether.

I knew all my aunts, except Ruta, and uncles. My mother's father died young and her mother died in 1919. The children were left on their own.

The oldest sister of my mother was already a married woman at that time. I don't know her full name, we called her Auntie Sala. She lived in Lask.

Her husband's name was Lajb Borensztajn. After Grandma's death, she took the youngest sister, Hela, to live with her, and my mother was left with the two younger brothers, Leon and Motek, and with Ruta.

My mother was taking care of them, but it did not last too long. She soon got married.

My mother supported herself and her brothers by giving private lessons, they were probably Polish lessons. She would go to her pupils' homes.

By the standards of those days, my mother was quite an educated person – she had completed the equivalent of today's gymnasium. She had graduated from a school in Lodz.

She did the 'small finals' [semi-final exams held in the middle high-school years]. She knew Polish, Russian and German – she had probably studied these languages at school.