

Chawa Wojdyslawska



This is my mother Chawa. The photo was taken in 1930s but I don't know when and where exactly.

Mother's name was Chawa. I don't know where she was born; I do know that her parents came from Zychlin. But whether she was born in Lodz or Zychlin, this I do not know.

My mother never went to school. She had a teacher. She studied, what did she study? Well, anyway she could spell correctly. She could also count, because she helped father in his business. She knew Yiddish, because although Polish was spoken at home, parents sometimes spoke Jewish to each other.

Until she got married, she worked in her father's brother's factory, that is my grandfather's brother's. I think his name was Salomon and the factory was some kind of a textile workshop.

Later Mother only kept house. She was very tolerant when she was raising us. Just like her siblings, she was not a religious person.

Mother had numerous siblings - 5 sisters and 4 brothers. The oldest sister's name was Lonia but she was called Laja, I think Grandmother called her that.

At first she lived with us. Then she moved out to Gdansk and lived there with her husband and 2 sons: Bolek and Lolek. In 1938 or 1937, when they chased Jews out of Gdansk, she came back to Lodz with her younger son Bolek.

Her older son Lolek left for England at that time and that's why he survived the war. He later moved from England to Australia. He started a family, but I don't know if he is still alive.

Lonia's husband died in Gdansk, before the Jews ran away. The younger son's name was Bolek. He died of pneumonia in the ghetto and Lonia was gassed in Auschwitz.

The second sister was Estera. Her husband was Josek Flambaum. He was Father's business partner. Estera died in childbirth, giving birth to her daughter Bluma.

In accordance with Jewish tradition, Mother's third sister - Dora became Bluma's mother and the wife of Josek Flambaum, Estera's husband. Fourteen or fifteen years later Dora gave birth to her own daughter - Gutka.

Mother's youngest sister, Rozka, dealt with dressmaking, she sewed. She was set up by a matchmaker. She got married, but they broke up even before the war.

I don't know what the reason for the divorce was - I heard something about some financial fraud her husband was involved in. And there was one more sister that I know nothing about. It was said she died, but I don't know if she died as an infant, or a small child - I don't know.

There were also four brothers and I remember two of them best: Szyjka, he was called Szyjo, and Icek, whom we called Icio. They worked for Father's company, they came to play bridge, every Saturday.

They also came to the countryside for Saturdays and Sundays, when Mother was renting summer cottages for the children. Usually these were summer houses in places like: Wisniowa Gora, Kolumna, Glowno.

I also remember that once or twice my parents took me to resorts like Iwonicz and Krynica. The third brother, Mojsze, was an old bachelor and lived with his father.

He never visited us, because they didn't have any common interests with him. Mother's fourth brother was a stepbrother, from Grandfather's other marriage.

I don't remember him at all, I don't even know what his name was. He was in Gora Kalwaria, at that famous tzaddik's. He worked there, but I think he mostly studied the Talmud and the Torah.

He was so religious that when he once came to visit us in Lodz, and there was no mezuzah above the door, he didn't want to enter the house. He only talked to Mother on the stairs.

Mother's other siblings were not religious. Szyjek and Icio were not religious, but I have to say that there was this tradition that on Yom Kippur, or Judgment Day or Rosh Hashanah, even non religious Jews went to the synagogue.

With the sisters - I didn't notice and signs of piety. Ah, this Mojsze, who lived with Grandmother, of course he was involved in a religious house [he observed religious traditions, because his grandmother did].

Mother was gassed in 1944 in Auschwitz. She was 56 years old then.