

Heda Ambrova On A Walk With Her Family



This photo was taken in Piestany at the entrance to the park. It's probably from around 1927. On the left is my grandma, Cecilia Duschnitz, then my mother Ruzena Erdelyiova, I (Heda Ambrova), and my sister Magda Erdelyiova. Standing behind us is Grandpa Benedikt Duschnitz.

We worshipped our grandparents in Ruzomberok. They'd visit us in Piestany every summer. The climate in Ruzomberok is quite harsh. My grandmother was sickly. She had bronchial asthma. The way it went in their family was that my grandfather's word was law. Grandpa was a very lively and educated man for the times. In our eyes, he knew everything. He was interested in new inventions, and would then tell us about them. Once he told us that a certain Russian scientist, Dr. Voronov, had performed a transplant of monkey glands. That this transplant, which rejuvenates people, is really very expensive and so on. Back then my sister and I were getting an allowance, and we managed to save up ten crowns. We then gave them to our mother, to give it as a contribution for the transplant that our grandfather had told us about.

My grandfather was a heavy smoker, and so used to cough. He used to eat black licorice candy that he had stored in a silver box. The candies had numbers on them. We asked him: 'What are those numbers for?' He told us that they were Negro [African-American] coins. My sister was a little older and knew that coins were minted. He told us that in Africa they grew on trees. He didn't lose any time, and got up early in the morning and in one garden that belonged to friends of ours he hung those candies on a tree. Can you imagine how we used to worship him when he knew how to play with us like that?! Because our grandparents used to visit us in the summer, we used to return the favor. Our parents had always raised us to be independent. In Piestany they'd put us on a train and we'd travel all the way to Ruzomberok. They told us to stand up in Ilava. There's a jail in Ilava, and back then there was a superstition that whoever would be 'sitting' in the train while in Ilava, could also go 'sit' in jail.