

Wacek Kornblum's Father Szlomo Kornblum With His Sisters And His Brother In Law



This is my father Szlomo Kornblum with his sisters and a brother-in-law. There are standing, from left: Zlatka, Rywka, Szlomo himself and Chawcia. Sitting: Rozia, Szlomo Gilf, the brother in law, Doba. On the reverse of this photograph is the inscription in Yiddish: 'Tzum aybigen un andenkung fun dayne shvester, brider, shvayger. 27. yuli. 1911', which means: 'As a souvenir for remembrance from your sisters, brother and brother-in-law, 27th July 1911'. This picture was sent to my uncle Mosze to France - that's how it survived the war.

[My parents] got married probably in 1921. Since I was born in 1926, I suspect they spent those few years in Warsaw and then went to Paris, where the family of my uncle, Father's brother, was living. They went there to work, because they had a place to stay there. I know that Mom died in Paris. I know she died of tuberculosis. I know that after Mom died Father gave me, a few-month-old baby, to the nuns, to some convent in Strasburg, apparently there was no one to take care of me, and probably after about half a year Father took me back and brought to Warsaw. All these memories are based on unfinished allusions, by Mom's sister, Aunt Mania Zamosc from Mszczonow, who lived in Warsaw. Some time around 1929 Dad got married the second time, to Lonia Mileband and I used to call her my mom.

Father had a couple of sisters and a brother. The oldest sister of Father was Aunt Frania-Franciszka. She lived on 26 Wielka Street, if I remember correctly, they were best off before the war. Aunt's husband, Motek -Mordechaj Braunrot, had a hardware warehouse on Bagno Street. And they had a daughter Manusia - Mania, diminutive for Miriam, most emancipated, there was a son older than her who had already left home, and a younger one, Salek - Salomon, who was about two years older than me. Manusia later married some other Salek and they had a daughter Paulinka Paulina in 1940.

Another sister of Father's, Aunt Doba - Debora, had a husband whose name was Szlomo Gilf. They had two sons, Zewek and Chylek and a daughter Maniusia - Miriam, who was a bit older than me. It was a non religious family. Uncle had a grocery store in Wlochy near Warsaw for many years, but later, because of various anti-Semitic incidents, moved to Warsaw just before the war. He had a store there for some time, but it wasn't going well. In 1939, Chylek and Zewek were drafting age and they were both drafted to the army. Chylek was in cavalry and was taken to a POW camp, which he escaped from and returned to Warsaw, that was before the ghetto. Zewek was in the army and defended Warsaw until the capitulation .

Father's other sister, Aunt Ryfcia, also married a Gilf, Szymon, Aunt Doba's husband's brother. Uncle was a miller. They used to live on 54 Przykopowa Street, and I remember there were huge flour sieves at the back of the house. They had a daughter, Maniusia, born in 1922. Later they were in the ghetto and we even lived together for some time on Niska Stret.

Then there was Aunt Rozia. To tell you the truth, she was a half-sister, because I don't remember whether there was a common father or mother. They lived on 35 Niska Street. The husband of that Aunt was Lejb Gefen, she was his second wife. He was a very wealthy man, he was one of the five richest bakers in the ghetto, a man with a heart of gold. They had two sons. Poldek - Leopold and Julek. Julek and his girlfriend ran away to Russia in 1939 and we never heard from him again. Poldek with his wife Anka stayed with the family all the time. They were a very handsome couple, about ten years older than me. And they remained in the ghetto until the end.

Father's half-sister, but of a different combination than Aunt Rozia was Aunt Zlatka. Her husband was Abram Zymelman and Aunt Zlatka had three daughters, Bronka Bronislawa, more or less same age as Uncle Gefen's children, and two daughters, twins, my brother's Borus age: Halinka - Halina and Dziunia - Jadwiga. Halinka was a very pretty girl, and Dziunia was such a skinny creature, they didn't look a lot alike.

The youngest sister, Father's favorite who he used to always help, was Aunt Chawcia, that is Chawa. Her husband Benjamin was also a Kornblum, he was Father's cousin. They had two sons. One was Icchak, the other one Kuba Akiwa. Icchak was three-four years older than me, and Kuba was my age, my best friend who kept getting me in trouble. They lived in Warsaw, on 17 Panska Street. It wasn't a religious family, but a traditional one, they had a kosher kitchen. Aunt's husband was very active in Zionism. Kuba used to go to a Hebrew school, and probably belonged to Betar. They had a piggy-bank for Karen Kayemet at home and his father, whenever he could, would give money. My father didn't like it, Mom even less. Izaak was very talented. He used to play the violin, paint. He used to go to the Pilsudski School of Lithography on Konwiktorska Street in Warsaw. He also sang in a choir, in the Large Synagogue on Tlomackie, and whenever he had shows, the entire family tried to get there. I remember that synagogue as a large palace, staircase going up, lights. I felt strange there, a bit uneasy.