Judita Schvalbova At A Purim Celebration

The photo is from Purim in 1941, I don't know who took it. Before the war I used to attend the large Neolog synagogue with my parents. I don't remember the details of what the interior looked like. A faint memory of Purim from the year 1941 has remained with me. I remember walking in a procession, and people up in the gallery showering us with candies. I know that the Purim celebration was held for us children. As a small girl I sang very well, so I performed there. I had on a pink knitted dress that was embroidered with small flowers. One copy of this photograph has a very eventful history. In 1942 they sent the first transport of young girls from Zilina. The Guardists appeared at our place too, and wanted to take me with them. At the Hlinka Guard headquarters I was mistakenly registered as having been born in 1926 instead of 1936, so according to them I was

16 years old. My parents had to prove at the Hlinka Guard headquarters via various documents that they only had the one six-year-old child. In hiding with us was this one girl, Ilonka Steinova. Ilonka was from Ruzomberok or Liptovsky Mikulas, I don't exactly know any more. She was staying with us, to take care of me, as if she was my nanny. Ilonka suffered from epilepsy. On that occasion, when they came for me, they saw her and counted her in, that is, took her to the camp instead of me. During the transport, or right after her arrival at the camp, she must have had an epileptic seizure, because they sent her to the other side right away. She went straight to the gas chambers. She had luggage with her, which was being sorted by young women. My photo fell out of her luggage, and the girls from Zilina recognized it. They took it to my aunt, who was also there from 1942. This photo served as a talisman for my aunt. She used to say that she wore it on her breast up to the time of liberation. She brought it home to Zilina completely fallen apart, and you could barely recognize that it had been a photograph.