

Sarah Pagirskaya And Boris Shlapoberskiy With Their Friends



This photograph was taken in Karlovy Vary during my grandmother's vacation. The first to the left standing is grandmother Sarah Pagirskaya in checked dress. The first to the left in the top row is Boris Shlapoberskiy, aunt Frida's husband. He is wearing a hat and a tie. The photograph was made in early 1920s.

My paternal and maternal ancestors are from Latvian Jonava [about 80 km from Vilnius]. It was a small town, inhabited mostly by Jews. My maternal grandfather Aba (he was called Avel in the family, so I used to hear that name oftener) Pagirskiy was born in 1866. Avel owned a rather large house on one of the central Jonava streets. It was a solid log house, which could stand for centuries. Avel was a well-to-do merchant. He owned a large hardware store as hardware goods were in demand.

My grandmother Sarah Pagirskaya, nee Krasko was born in 1865. Sarah had sisters. I just know their names from family tree. I had not known them. Sarah was a rather educated woman. She could read and write in Yiddish and Russian. She spoke Polish. Her Lithuanian was not good though. Sarah ran the house as grandparents had servants. Grandmother was a tall, buxom, stately woman- a true beauty. She and grandfather had their own honored seats in the synagogue. Avel and Sarah were rather religious, trying to keep Jewish traditions. Neither grandmother nor grandpa covered their heads all the time. When they went to the synagogue, grandpa put a kippah on and grandmother wore a hat or a nicely tied kerchief. Grandpa had a modern beard- short and neat. Avel and Sarah often went abroad on vacation. As a rule they went to Karlovy Vary (at that time that resort was called Karlsbad). Grandpa had problems with stomach. He was recommended by doctors to drink healing water every year. In 1935 Avel was operated on in Königsberg -he had a carcinoma behind his ear, which looked like a big plum. It was a malignant tumor, so grandpa lived only for a year after operation. In 1936 he passed away.

After grandpa's death grandmother Sarah did not live in Jonava for a long time. She moved to Kaunas with her daughter's family. Here she bought a house for lease and lived on the rent fee paid by the tenants. She helped children and pampered her grandchildren. In 1941 grandmother did not manage to get evacuated and was imprisoned in Kaunas ghetto. During assortment within a big action in September 1941 she happened to be among the Jews, whose lives were spared. She probably was not willing to go through ordeal having anticipated inevitable death or for the reason of being very proud, she just waved her hand and went to the group of the people to be executed. She was taken to the forest along with other people and shot there. The house of Sarah and Avel and their store burnt down during the bombing in Jonava. It was a huge fire, after which only a cathedral and dilapidated synagogue were spared by miracle.

Sarah and Avel Pagirskiys had ten children. All of them got an excellent for those times education in lyceum. They were literate and cultured people. When children grew up, they were not religious, like their parents merely sticking to the traditions and marking Jewish holidays.

My mother's sister Frida, born in 1890. Her husband Boris Shlapoberskiy was rather feeble. He had heart trouble, which could not be cured. Boris died in 1935. He was a pretty wealthy man. He owned a house in Kaunas and Tel-Aviv. Frida lived in Kaunas several years before Great Patriotic War. When on the first of September 1939 fascists unleashed war beginning with the occupation of Poland, she left Lithuania for Palestine that very day. When the war was over, she got married again. Her second husband's name was Eremei Shochat. Frida had lived a long life and died in Tel-Aviv in 1970. Two sons lived in France- Aria, born in 1913 and Eliahu born in 1915. Both of them got an excellent education in Europe.