

Rita Vilkobrisckaya With Her Mother Bertha Vilkobrisckaya And My Younger Sister Inessa Vilkobrisckaya



My grandmother on my mother's side Khasia Vilkobrisckaya, nee Eishynskaya, photographed after returning from the Far East after the WWII to the town of Dmitrov of Moscow region in 1945.

My maternal grandparents Ilia and Hasia Eishynskiy lived in the town of Lubcha in Minsk province. I don't know where they came from. My grandfather Ilia Eishynskiy was born in the middle of 1870s and my grandmother Hasia was born in 1881. Grandfather Ilia was a cheese maker. He rented a cheese dairy from a landlord, don't know who owned it. He worked alone and only sometimes he hired employees in summer when there was much milk. He mustn't have produced much cheese since he was selling it by retail. The family was very poor and their life became extremely miserable after grandfather Ilia died in 1914.

Grandmother Hasia had to raise seven children. She went to do daytime work: washed floors, did laundry and worked at the bakery. She had no education and had to do any work to support her children. The children helped her about the house. In 1917 the family moved to Minsk running away from pogroms. Older children went to work and the younger ones, including my mother, were sent to a children's home. Before they moved to Minsk they observed Jewish traditions, but after moving to Minsk the children in the family got fond of revolutionary ideas and dropped religion. Grandmother celebrated few holidays as tribute to the past.

My grandmother always lived with our family and moved to all locations where my father got another assignment. We didn't celebrate any Jewish holidays, I don't know whether there were other Jews around us, it didn't matter. I guess my grandmother that grew up in a small town where there was a strong Jewish community celebrated Jewish holidays before the revolution of 1917, but after the revolution she probably was afraid of damaging my father's reputation of devoted communist since he was a commissar of a big aviation unit. Grandmother Hasia spoke poor Russian

and home my mother and father spoke Yiddish with her. I wasn't taught Yiddish, though and Hasia tried to speak Russian to me.

My grandmother died in 1957. We buried her at the town cemetery in Lvov.