

Rita Vilkobrisckaya With Her Husband Jacob Khonigsmann



I, Rita Vilkobrisckaya and my husband Jacob Khonigsmann photographed after the wedding ceremony in Lvov in 1955.

I graduated from the Institute of Polygraphy in 1955. There was a conflict when I was receiving my job assignment. I was the second one to enter the room where a commission was sitting. There were various assignments available. But the commission offered me distant towns in the North: Syktyvkar, Yakutsk. I couldn't go there after I was ill with tuberculosis. Job assignment was a mandatory requirement. I called my mother at home and she came to the Institute at once. She managed to make an arrangement for me to receive a so-called free 'Item 5'. I decided to look for a job by myself. What an ordeal it turned out to be especially when potential employers looked at 'Item 5' in my passport and I got refusals. I even went to the Ministry in Kiev to ask them to help me with employment. They promised to send me an assignment, but nothing happened. Anatolmity Zolotukhin, a lecturer in our Institute, helped me. He had an acquaintance in the Printing Committee that helped me to obtain a job assignment in Lutsk. I got a job of an economist in a printing house.

I went to work at the beginning of October 1955 and when I came home during holidays in November my mother introduced me to Jacob Honiksmann, my mother's acquaintance introduced him to my mother and she liked him. He was a very nice young man. I met with him several times when I came to Lvov: on 5 December, Constitution Day [Soviet holiday] and on New Year. Jacob proposed to me, but I told him that I had to think about it. He was divorced and had a daughter and I had to consider his proposal. On 29 January 1956 Jacob and a friend of his came to see me in Lutsk and on the following day we got married in a district registry office. The procedure at that time included a one month waiting period after submittal of application for marriage, but Jacob was full of charm and managed to convince a girl at the registry office to marry us and we became a husband and wife. It happened promptly since Jacob could only stay in Lutsk for two days and had to return to his work that was important for him. And for me the only opportunity to go with him was to marry him. I quit my work and came to Lvov. We had a wedding party at a restaurant on 10 March. It was a great party, but we didn't observe any Jewish traditions then. We've been together since then.

Jacob was born to a Jewish family in Lublin, Poland, in 1922. Jacob's family was very poor. Jacob studied in cheder, yeshyva and in a Polish secondary school. He began to work as a carpenter's apprentice and studied in an evening school. When Hitler was preparing for intervention in Poland Jacob's mother insisted that he moved to the Soviet Union. His family perished during World WarII. We have no information about where or how they perished, but none of them survived the war.

Jacob crossed the border of the Soviet Union in the vicinity of Brest in Byelorussia. During the war he finished Kuibyshev Pedagogical Institute and later he graduated from Kiev University Faculty of History. In 1945 Jacob moved to Lvov. He was responsible for book stocks collecting books from the houses of Jews that had perished and closed synagogues, He speaks fluent Ivrit, it's his mother tongue. In 1949, at the height of state anti-Semitism Jacob left his work at the library. He taught History at school and Pedagogical Institute and later he became Professor of History in Lvov Polytechnic Institute where he still works until now.

In Lvov my husband helped me to get a job at the printing house of the Academy of Sciences where I worked for 12 years. Later I went to work at the planning department of design institute involved in designing machine building plants. I worked at the Planning department where I worked for over 18 years until I retired and where I never faced any anti-Semitism.

We were an affectionate family. We traveled to the Crimea or Caucasus in summer as tourists. We enjoyed traveling. We didn't celebrate at home Soviet or religious holidays, but had birthday parties. We got together with friends at birthdays and weekends to listen to music, discuss books that we read and recite poems by Soviet poets Evtushenko, Voznesenskiy and Rybakov.