

Fania Brantsovskaya And Her Family



This family photo was taken in Vilnius in 1939. This is me sitting at the front on the left, on the right is my sister Riva Joheles, and my cousin Genia Finskaya is between us. Sitting from left to right: my father's sister Tyoma Finskaya, nee Joheles, her sister Esther Fink, nee Joheles is behind her, then are my grandfather Velvl Joheles and my grandmother Rohe-Gisia Joheles, nee Gilinskaya, and my father's brother Dovid Joheles from Kaunas visiting us, and his wife, whose name I can't remember. Standing from left to right: Tyoma's husband Borukh Finskiy, Nusia Joheles, uncle Meishke Joheles? wife, is behind him, Meishke is beside her, my mother Rohl Joheles, nee Galunskaya, my father Benjamin Joheles, uncle Grigoriy's wife Esther Galunskaya, nee Grinblat, and uncle Grigoriy Galunskiy. My maiden name is Joheles. It's an old Jewish surname and has a local Lithuanian coloring. My paternal grandfather was born in Vilnius in 1868. My grandfather was a painter. He was a very skilled and artistic painter. He made art paintings and exquisite Alfrey works. He was believed to have been one of the best experts in his specialty. Many years after my grandfather perished a friend of mine told me that her father was one of my grandfather's best apprentices. My grandfather also completed the most important tasks during the renovation of the Vilnius University. A few years later, when he needed an eye surgery, he was taken to the university clinic where he had benefits as an employee of the university. I remember my mother and me visiting my grandfather in hospital where he proudly told other patients and doctors how smart and good I was being his older granddaughter. Grandfather Velvl had a natural sense of humor. During World War I, when there were no medications available he used to cure children using just a thermometer. They never doubted that when he measured the temperature, they would promptly recover, and they actually did, however strange this might seem. He also cured his children and grandchildren from bruises by putting an old galosh as bandage over their injuries. I once fell and injured myself and when my grandfather wanted to apply an old galosh, I told him this was nonsense, that I had no faith in. My grandfather was stunned and couldn't forget it for a long time repeating, 'How can you like modern young people, these children? they have no faith!' His wife, my grandmother Rohe-Gisia was three years younger than my grandfather. Her maiden name was

Gilinskaya. She was born in the town of Svencionys, about 70 kilometers from Vilnius. There were actually two towns: Svencionys and Svencioneliai. There was a big Jewish community in Svencionys where my grandmother came from. From what I was told I know that my grandmother had many brothers and sisters. She came from a big family. Velvl and Rohe-Gisia had many children, which was common for Jewish families.