

Communella Bunikovskaya's Mother Gita Bunikovskaya With Her Sisters And Brother



My mother's sisters and brother. From left to right: Anna, my mother Gita, Shura, brother (name unknown) in Yuzovka in 1914. My mother and her sisters got new dresses and their brother - a new suit at Pesach. They were photographed in their new clothes. My grandparents had five children: there was a boy born in 1907 - he died of tuberculosis in 1915, my mother didn't remember his name, and sisters Alexandra born in 1908, Anna was born in 1911, & Clara was born in 1913, my mother Gita was born on 7 November 1909, all of this born in Yuzovka town in Donbass. Their father Mordukh Dubrov was presumably born in a Jewish agricultural colony near Mariupol in

1860s. My mother also wrote in her notes that his father Shaya Dubrov resided here. Grandfather Mordukh was a blacksmith - I only saw his photo. He was a big strong man with short hair and moustache. He owned a forge located in Sobachka, a poor neighborhood near Yuzovka. My grandfather died of diabetes in 1914 when my mother was 4 years old. My grandmother had to raise five children. Her mother also lived with them. Grandmother Fania could read and write in Yiddish, knew all Jewish rituals and rules. Yuzovka was a small patriarchal town and my grandmother was almost the only Jewish woman with education. She read prayers to women at the synagogue on holidays (and other women were listening and repeating after her) and earned some money in this way. Grandmother Fania also grew poultry supplying fat and down to wealthy families. The children made boxes for a match factory. In 1920s, after the Civil War, my grandmother leased the forge to an Austrian captive blacksmith. However poor they were my grandmother took girls to the theater. It was her dream that my mother would learn to play the piano and Ania would become a ballerina. Shura and my mother studied in a Jewish private grammar school for 2 years. This was grammar school for girls: they studied Hebrew and religion, manners, housekeeping and general subjects like mathematic and literature. We studied in Yiddish. My mother told me that they spoke Yiddish, had kosher food and on Friday my grandmother lit candles. They had special tableware and utensils for Pesach. Children always got some new clothes at Pesach. They had plentiful Seder and all traditional Jewish food on their table. Before Pesach all children got involved in searching chametz and its removal from the house. During Pesach the children searched for afikoimen: a piece of matsa hidden in a pillow. The children got a reward when they found afikoimen. At Chanukkah the children got few coins - Chanukkah gelt. At Purim my grandmother made gomentashy. There were 3 synagogues. I don't know how big they were and I was too small to ask any questions about it. There also was a charity community to support poor Jews and a Jewish cemetery. In late 1930s the synagogues were closed and the rabbi was exiled to Siberia.