

Irene Shein And Her Grandmother Rosa Goldberg



This is me sitting on the lap of my maternal grandmother Rosa Goldberg. The photograph was taken in Riga in March 1933.

My maternal grandmother was from Sebezsh [Pskov oblast, Russia, on the border of Latvia and Belarus, 500 km from Tallinn]. Her name was Rosa, Jewish name Tsipe-Roha. I don't know her maiden name. Grandmother came from a rich family. Her father Yankle was a merchant of the 1st Guild. My mother's family lived in Riga.

Grandfather had to take frequent business trips abroad and Grandmother always accompanied him. At customs the officers checked their passports, when they were crossing the border. They often were confused as two names were written in Grandfather's passport - his secular and his Jewish one: Ilia Mironovich Goldberg, alias Ele Meerovich. His wife's name also was written in his passport: Rosa Yakovlevna, alias Tsipe-Roha Yankelevna. Grandfather was irritated with that nagging and gave his children only secular names. The eldest daughter was Tatiana, the second son was Solomon. My mother Evgeniya was born in 1903.

Before the Revolution of 1917 the family was well-off. Mother and her siblings finished a Russian lyceum. Mother was fluent in Russian and German. She was also pretty good at English and read French books in the original.

I never asked my parents how they met each other. All I know is that all father's siblings had pre-arranged marriages. I think my parents also had a pre-arranged marriage. They got married on 2nd February 1930. I don't know where their wedding took place.

I was born on 17th August 1932. I was named Irene. I barely saw Father in my childhood. He left early in the morning and came back late at night, when I was sleeping. He didn't have a car. He took the horse cart. Village roads were earthed roads and after rain they turned into bog. It was hard to ride on those roads. Father came home worn out. I remember there was a gadget to take off our boots. Rarely did Father have a day off and if so he was just lying on the couch almost all day long, trying to recoup.