Berta Trachtenbroit's Family In Their Summer House



My family in the dacha (country house) in Lustdorf in 1927. From left to right: my brother Leonid, grandmother Surah-Leya, I, my father Solomon and my mother Rosalia. We were photographed on the occasion of uncle Leonid's visit. The photograph was taken by Leonid. Here I'm dressed nicely and I have my favorite doll in my hand.

My father Solomon Trachtenbroit was born in Odessa in 1894. He finished cheder like all the other boys in the family. I know little about my father because he left mother when I was 7. My mother Rosa Trachtenbroit, the youngest in the family, was born in Odessa in 1896. (When my parents met) my father was a clerk and my mother worked at the tea factory. They got married on 5 February 1919. They had a traditional Jewish wedding with a huppah. My mother quit her job after getting married. She could afford to stay at home. My father provided well for the family. I was born in 1924. My brother Leonid was born in 1921.

My first memories about my childhood go back to our stay in the dacha in Lustdorf. We rented a house there because my father was manager of a food store in this village. It wasn't a big store, but there were all general consumer goods and food products there. Our landlord was German. I remember a roofed well in the yard. My brother threw my favorite plastic doll on the roof of the well and I was afraid that I had lost it. Our landlord used to stroll in the yard saying "Das ist mein Haus. Das sind meine Baume. Das ist mein Brunnen" (This is my house. These are my trees. This is my well.) Once he picked my doll from the roof of the well and I was so happy that he had found it. I also remember that portrait of Trotsky hanging on the wall of our house. Trotsky was as popular as Lenin in the 1920s. Once in 1929 my father came home from work and said that we had to take off the portrait. This happened in 1929 when Trotsky was deported from the country. I heard Stalin's name for the first time in 1929. I was 5 years old then. I was visiting our neighbor Tsylia and somebody said there that it was Stalin's birthday and he was to turn 50. Tsylia said joking, "Well, I'll mail him two kettles". Kettles were of a big value then.

My grandmother on my mother's side Surah-Leya Kluch was born in Vitebsk (1,000 km-s from Odessa) in 1856. From 1924 when I was born my grandmother lived with us. She always wore a long, dark skirt and kerchief, (she did not have a wig). On Saturday and holidays she went to the synagogue not far from our house. She cooked delicious traditional food: tzymes, chicken broth, stuffed necks of hen or goose and meat with prunes. Only we could very rarely afford meat and

most of the time we ate a vegetarian stew. When she made small pancakes my brother and I tried to steal them when they were still on the pan. Grandmother slapped us on our hands telling us to be patient and wait until she had them ready on the table for us. Grandmother always spoke Yiddish to her daughters. That's how I learned my mother tongue. Grandmother died in September 1941.