

Leonid Kotliar's Grandmother Tsyvia Risman, Grandfather Leizer Risman, And Uncle Ruvim Risman



These are my relatives on my mother's side. From left to right: my grandmother Tsyvia Risman, grandfather Leizer Risman, my uncle (my mother's brother) Ruvim Risman. Makarov, 1914.

My maternal grandfather and grandmother were born in Makarov town of Kiev province in the 1870s. Grandfather Leizer Risman was a tailor and my grandmother Tsyvia Risman was a housewife. My mother said that grandmother Tsyvia was a beautiful woman with full forms, made wonderful sausage and was a very good housewife. They had four children: the oldest Toibl was born in 1888, then came Moisey, born in 1893, Ruvim was a couple of years younger and my mother Rachil was the youngest. She was born in 1900. Their family strictly observed Jewish traditions, as was customary at this period of time. Ukrainian constituted a major part of the population of Makarov, one third of the population was Jewish and the rest of residents were Polish, Russian and Byelorussian. Jews dealt in trades and crafts. They owned taverns and inns. There were a few synagogues, a Jewish hospital, cheder and a Jewish grammar school in the town. My mother's brothers finished cheder.

World War I began and Moisey was recruited to the Red Army. A few years later Ruvim went to the army. My mother loved her brothers dearly. She told me that they were very kind and that they were at the front in the Carpathians. They wrote letters from the front. Ruvim was wounded in 1918 and sent to a hospital in Kiev. On his way there he fell ill with typhus. Grandmother Tsyvia went to see him and contracted typhus from him. She died in Kiev in 1918. Soon Ruvim died, too. Grandfather Leizer couldn't cope with it and died in Kiev in autumn 1919 where he had escaped from pogroms.