

Ilia Rozenfeld's Mother Malka Wolfenfeld



My mother Malka Wolfenfeld. This photo was taken in the Harlap Studio in Poltava in 1918. My mother has trendy clothes on: extravagant wide trousers, a tunic and a hat; she dressed in the European fashion.

My mother's family lived in Poland since ancient times. In the end of the 19th century Poland was under the Russian rule. I don't know the exact date and place of my grandfather Iona Wolfenfeld. My mother's family lived in Zamost'ye town of Radom district. My mother Malka was born there in 1896.

Commander of the division that my grandfather worked for was Anikeev, a Russian general. His family and my grandfather Iona's Jewish patriarchal family were friends. Anikeev's wife and my grandmother became friends. Anikeeva particularly liked my mother, whom she called Mayechka affectionately. She taught her good manners and French. It's hard to explain grandfather Iona's intentions: whether he wanted my mother, the youngest in the family, to be able to support herself, or he wanted her to know about the true life, but when she was about 9 years old, he sent her to a shoemaker to learn his trade. He trained my mother for about a year. I don't know whether it helped my mother in her future life, but at least my mother could do everything with her hands. Then my mother finished a grammar school for girls in Zamost'ye.

In 1914 WWI began and in 1915 the Russian army began to retreat and there were refugees from Russia moving to the south and to Ukraine. My grandfather's family was following the Anikeev division and temporarily settled down in Poltava where my grandfather bought a two-storied

houses with eight rooms. My mother found Poltava a little boring. She was pretty and dressed nicer than local girls in Poltava and didn't find it interesting to socialize with them. To keep herself busy she went to an accounting course, studied French with Anikeev's wife and read books in German to remember what she had learned in her grammar school. My mother was very good at languages. She knew Yiddish, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, French and German. She also knew Hebrew.

My parents met during the Civil War. In 1919 they got married. They didn't have a traditional wedding. They registered their marriage in a registry office and in the evening they had a dinner party with their relatives at my mother's home. After they got married my mother and father lived with grandmother and grandfather Wolfenfeld. However, few months after the wedding almost all of my mother's relatives moved to Poland that separated from Russia after WWI. Only my mother's brother Peretz who was married and had children by that time stayed in Poltava. My mother never saw her parents, sister Gintsia or brother Yakov again. She corresponded with them for a long time, but terminated this correspondence in 1937 since it was not safe to continue it. The fate of my mother's family was tragic. According to the archives grandfather Iona and grandmother were kept in the Warsaw ghetto where they perished.

I was born in Poltava on 1 August 1922. My mother went to work as an accountant in prison. She had a kind heart and began to take messages and parcels to prisoners and my father insisted that she quit her job, or she would have been arrested. My mother went to work as a German lecturer in Poltava Construction College where she later became chief of department.