

Rita Vilkobrissskaya's Father Michael Vilkobrissskiy



My father Michael Vilkobrissskiy (4th on the right in the first line) at the recreation center of the Red army in Kislovodsk in the south in 1930s.

My father had an important position in aviation regiment in Khabarovsk. In summer 1938 I went to a pioneer camp near Khabarovsk. In few days after I arrived the director of this camp came to see me and told me and few other children to pack our things. We were put on a truck and sent home. I cried all the way home. We didn't get any explanation, but I had a feeling that something went very wrong. At home my grandmother was crying when she met me. Ilia was lying on the sofa with his face turned to the wall. My mother was not home. My grandmother and I sat at the table and she said 'Your father is under arrest. He is accused of being an enemy of the people, but you need to know that your father is a devoted communist. He is innocent'. 'I've never forgotten what my grandmother, an ordinary Jewish woman, told me. This is all I was told then, but only much later I got to know the details of this period in the history of the country - the period of repression. Our life changed dramatically.

Members of few other families in our building were arrested. We had to move to another house that was called 'Round Tower'. This was an old round-shaped building with one big room - it was like a gym - where many families lived behind partitions made from sheets. There was no furniture and we slept on the blankets that we brought from home. Our main food was bread and we fetched water from a well. The only thing that united all those people was the mischief that happened. There were no conflicts or even arguments in this building. My mother went at night (since there were lines of relatives and parcels were only accepted from 7 till 8 am) to stand in line with other officers' wife to leave a parcel for my father with dried bread, cigarettes and soap. Sometimes the jail warden didn't accept a parcel and mother came home in tears after standing in line for half a night.

In April 1939 my father was released. He was lucky. In 1939 after Minister of State Security Ezhov was arrested for exceeding his authority and new minister Beriya was appointed some prisoners were released under the verdict to Ezhov about unjustified repression. My father returned home very ill and thin. He had furuncles all over his body. He didn't tell me or my brother anything. He

only said that he was accused of espionage for many countries including Japan, but he didn't sign one single paper. I guess he told my mother about endless interrogations, tortures and what he had to endure: everything that became known after denunciation of the cult of Stalin.

My father regained his membership in the Party. My father got back his job and we received our apartment back. Our life continued as if there had been no arrest.