

Rakhil Vilenskaya And Maya Dembo



This is my mother's aunt, her father's sister, Rakhil Vilenskaya, nee Sivashinskaya. She is holding me. It is an amateur picture.

It was taken in Paris in the apartment located at 8 Rue de Prague, today's Rothschild house, where my mother, Frida Dembo, lived with her husband Gerasim and me together with Aunt Rashel, as everybody called her.

I'm wearing a beautiful dress because the photo was taken on my birthday on May 26th May 1934; I was three years old on that day. Aunt Rashel is 54 years old here. Having no children of her own,

she loved me very much.

Grandfather Moisey had two sisters, Rakhil and Fruma, and one brother, Sinay. His elder sister Rakhil - common name Rosa - Vulfovna Vilenskaya was born in 1880 in St. Petersburg.

Regardless of the order accepted in the religious Sivashinsky family, she graduated from the medical faculty of Bestuzhev, became a doctor and married the revolutionary Vilensky.

He was an associate of Lenin - he worked with Lenin during his stay in Switzerland and was later buried as an honored figure in the Kremlin Wall

[Editor's note: The Kremlin Wall behind Lenin Mausoleum was the most honored burial place in the USSR. There are urns with the ashes of the most prominent figures of the Communist Party and the USSR.]

After the wedding Rakhil and her husband left for Switzerland in connection with his revolutionary activity. However, they got divorced after some time in Switzerland and she moved to France, Paris, where she lived all her life.

Aunt Rakhil was a very good pediatrician and worked in Rothschild hospital. She invited her niece and her husband - my parents - to visit her in 1924 and they stayed at her place for ten years while my father studied at the Sorbonne.

I was also born in France. My aunt didn't have children of her own and she liked to play with me a lot. I called her Aunt Rashel in the French manner.

When my father got his diploma, Hitler had already come to power in Germany and Aunt Rakhil started to persuade my parents to leave France and return home, which they did.

She remained in Paris occupied by the Germans. My mother found out later that Aunt Rakhil got into a raid, after which she was sent to Auschwitz where she perished in 1942.

There are documents confirming everything: an official notification #85926, issued by the International Red Cross, certified by the German Consulate in Leningrad. The name of Rakhil Vilenskaya is indicated on the memorial plate installed at present on the Rothschild hospital wall, where she had worked.

The names of employees, who perished in the battle against fascism, are listed on this plate. When I was in Paris, I saw that memorial plate and the building on 8 Rue de Prague, where I lived the first years of my life.