

Anna Ivankovitser's Family



This photo was taken in 1925 in Polonoye during the visit of my mother's sister Esther from America. From left to right on the floor: Esther's daughter, my older sister Maria and Esther's son Erik. Behind them seated, left to right: Esther, her husband, my grandmother Leya Schigol, my grandfather Iosif Schigol, and my mother's brother Gershl Schigol and his wife. Standing in the last row, left to right: Esther's daughter, my father Iosif Ivankovitser, my mother Mina Ivankovitser, my mother's brother Motl Schigol, his wife Sheindl, my mother's brother (I don't remember his name) and his wife. My grandfather was a construction materials supplier. Theirs was a wealthy family. My grandmother gave birth to 12 children, six of which died in infancy. The surviving children were three daughters and three sons. Their oldest daughter, Esther, was born in 1890. Etl was born in 1892. The next two were sons: Gershl, born in 1894, and another boy, born in 1895. My mother, Mina, was born in 1897 and the youngest child, Motl, was born in 1900. The boys went to cheder and the girls must have been taught at home. My mother knew Hebrew well and she could read and write both in Hebrew and Yiddish. All of the children received religious and secular education as well. My mother and her brothers and sisters finished an 8-year grammar school. My mother always helped us with our geography and history homework. She also knew Russian, Jewish and German literature well. My mother's sisters moved to America before the Revolution of 1917. Esther was the first to go. She was a communist and was involved in revolutionary activities. The police department became aware of this. My grandfather had acquaintances there and was told confidentially that they were going to arrest Esther. My grandfather told Esther to escape to America. She left in 1915. Esther married a Jewish man in America. I don't remember his name. He was an engineer. Esther was very good at embroidery. We had a few collars that she embroidered. But she didn't like housework and her husband did everything about the house, which he didn't mind at all. They had two daughters and a son named Erik. I don't remember their daughters' names. They lived in California. Esther visited the USSR twice at the invitation of the Comintern [Communist International]. She came on her first visit in 1925. She came with her family and we met Esther's husband and children. Her second visit was to Moscow in 1938. She went with Erik.

They lived at the Moskva hotel. Esther's son couldn't adjust to the cold climate. He fell ill and died in Moscow. My mother visited Esther in Moscow. Esther didn't visit us. During the war we heard no news from Esther. We thought she had gone back to America. After the war Mama wrote Etl from Chernovtsy to ask her if she knew Esther's address in America. Etl wrote back telling us that Esther returned to America in 1945 after the war was over. I don't know why she stayed in Moscow so long, because we didn't know anything about her. Mama didn't write them any more, because the relationship with Americans were more complicated after the war and it was not wise to correspond. My sister had just entered the Medical Institute and my mother was afraid that she might be expelled if the authorities found out about our relatives in America. Later, during the 'thaw' of the 1960s Mama wrote a letter to her sisters in America. The letter was returned indicating that the addressee had moved. Her sisters probably died of old age and their children went to different locations. I also tried to search for them but with no results.