

# Michael Kotliar's Sister Riva Shneider, Brother Haim Kotliar And Their Neighbor Pete



From right to left: my older sister Riva Shneider [nee Kotliar], my older brother Haim and his friend, our neighbor Pete, a Ukrainian, near our home in Beltsy in 1937. This is the only prewar photograph that Peter's mother gave to me when we arrived in Beltsy after the war. All our belongings and documents were destroyed on the first day of the war when a bomb hit our house. My parents got married in 1927. They had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah and klezmer musicians in Beltsy. My father earned well, and they could afford to have a big wedding party and invite all relatives to celebrate. After they got married he bought a big house in the main street in Beltsy. He quit his job and opened his own tailor's shop. He had a shop in the biggest and lightest room in his house. There was an orchard and a flower garden near the house. My sister, Riva, was born in 1929, and my brother, Haim, followed in 1932. He was named after my grandfather on my father's side. I was born in 1934. In 1936 my mother's father Shoil died. My parents named their next son Shoil, born in 1938, after our deceased grandfather. All boys were circumcised according to Jewish tradition. My parents were religious. They observed all Jewish traditions and followed the kashrut. We spoke Yiddish at home. My father worked from morning to night. He wanted to provide well for his family and have a decent Sabbath and other Jewish holidays. My father was rather strict with us, but my mother never raised her voice or treated us angrily, and we tried not to upset her. My older brother went to cheder when he turned 6 and began to work at the age of 9. He became a shoemaker apprentice. My sister had a teacher teaching her at home. Riva studied Yiddish and Hebrew. In 1940 Moldavia became a part of the USSR and neither my brother nor I studied at cheder. The Soviet authorities persecuted religion and all religious institutions were closed.