

Mussya Slutsker



This is a photograph of my aunt Mussya Slutsker. It was taken in 1970 in Gomel at the entrance of our house. In 1910, my father married my mother, Mira Yakovlevna Slutsker. She was born in 1888. She also lived in Khotimsk. My parents had six sons and one daughter, and I was the youngest. Aunt Mussya, my mother's only sister, lived with us. My mother was always busy because of the large family. For the most part, Aunt Mussya took care of me. I remember her singing Jewish lullabies to me. She gave me a pet name, Chillinkess, an affectionate version of Rachel. I keep in memory the following lullaby in Yiddish: 'Unter Chillinkess's vigele, shteyt a klor-vays tsigele, dos tsigele iz geforn handlen, dos vet zayn dayn baruf, rozhinkes mit mandlen, slof-zhe, Chillinkess, shlof.' It means: 'Under Chillinkess's cradle stands a small white goat. The goat travelled to sell his wares, this will be your job, too. Trading in raisins and almonds. Sleep, Chillinkess, sleep.' After Aunt Mussya graduated from a chemical technical school, she started working as a foreman in a chemical co-operative in Gomel [450km south-east of Minsk]; they produced violet ink. She didn't get married. When my mother got married, Aunt Mussya had a fiancé, Meir, who was my father's

younger brother. But according to Jewish laws, blood sisters can't marry blood brothers of another family. Therefore, she parted from him. After the end of the war, Aunt Mussya continued to work at the chemical enterprise in Tashkent; she was the workshop manager.