

Sarra Shpitalnik's Family



This is our family in the living room of our house. This photo was taken in Kishinev in 1935. From left to right: I, my mother Beila Molchanskaya, our acquaintance Hana Leizerman, my aunt Sonia Gerstein, standing is grandmother Hava Orentlikher, sitting in the center is Haim Gerstein, my father's friend Levental, a stranger, my father Shlomo Molchanskiy. When I was born in 1928, my parents rented an apartment in the house across the street from where my grandmother lived on the corner of Tsyrelson Lane and Oktavian Gog Street. This house belonged to former Russian aristocrats: the Meche-Nikolaevichs. Maria Petrovna Meche-Nikolaevich liked our family, and I was her favorite. She had two good-for-nothing sons. Though I was only three years old, I remember how adults said that one was gay and the other one a card gambler. To cut a long story short, they brought their mother to bankruptcy. Fleshel, a Jewish man, bought this house and the annex in the yard. We lived there till I turned seven. My father worked as an accountant in a few offices to make ends meet. He also took part in public activities and worked for a number of Jewish organizations: he was a member of ORT, and worked for the League of Culture - Kulturliga. My father had some ties with the communist underground movement. He wasn't a member of the communist party, but he supported communists: they used to type some communist posters on the hectograph in the slaughter house. It was said at home that even Anna Pauker was hiding in the slaughter house. My father also had some contacts with Zionists. He subscribed to a Zionist newspaper in Yiddish in Kishinev, 'Unzere Zeit', it was a must in each Jewish house to have it. We spoke Yiddish and Russian at home. I also remember that my father always somehow got the 'Izvestiya'. I learned to read from this newspaper asking him, 'Which is this letter? And this one?' At the age of three I could read in Russian. My father was a sociable man. When we took a walk in the town, every minute someone stopped to talk to him. Somehow all kinds of people, craftsmen or very educated people, knew him. Our acquaintances from Dombroveni and Vertyuzhany always knew that they would find food and accommodation in our home. Our home was like a caravanserai.