

Naum Bitman's Family



Women of our family: left to right: Fenia, wife of mamma's older brother Zalman Shub; Dvosia Shub, mamma's younger sister; my mother Basia Shub - the one on the right. Sitting from left to right: mamma's older sister Asia Shub; Raya Shub, middle brother Shelik's wife, stranger. Photograph taken in 1935 in Kiev.

Well, after my grandfather's death my grandmother remained with six children and no means of existence or a home. They moved to Kiev in 1921.

The oldest sister Asia Shub was born in 1905. After her came brother Zalman (Zelik) Shub, born in 1906. Then was brother Shelik, or Sasha, born in 1910. Then came my mother Basia. Mamma's younger sister Dvosia Shub was born in 1916. And the last one, Gersh, Grisha, born in 1918 some time before my grandfather passed away. We don't even have his picture.

Mamma's sisters Asia and Dvosia got married later. Asia kept her own last name and Dvosia took her husband's last name - she became Tarakanskaya. Asia worked as cashier all her life. During the war the sisters were in evacuation. Then they returned to Kiev. Asia died in 1987, and Dvosia Tarakanskaya is still alive. She lives in America with her son. Mamma's brothers Zalman Shub and Gersh Shub perished on the front during the great Patriotic War. Brother Shelik was shot by the Germans in Kiev in 1941. Later I will tell about it in more detail.

As it was, the family consisting of six children and my grandmother arrived in Kiev. They arrived in hungry Kiev (hunger of 1921 in Ukraine).

They struggled to survive. We settled down in a building on the embankment. We had a state-owned apartment and I don't know how my grandmother managed to receive it. The family lived in two small rooms. This was a two-storied building. Our family lived on the first floor. Grandmother realized she needed to do something to survive. And she took to baking rolls. Older sisters (Asia and mamma) were selling them. They lived in Podol and it was difficult to sell things there. They had to go downtown - Kreschatik (central street) or Bessarabka (central market) to sell their bakeries. There was a streetcar, connecting Krasnaya square (in Podol) with the Philharmonic. But it cost money, and mamma couldn't afford it. Mamma, to save some money, walked up the hill holding a basket with little pies. They were doing this for some time before NEP (New Economic

Policy) was introduced. During NEP it was possible to sell things, but taxes were more than the family could bear. They were poor again. Then they bought a special machine for making stockings. They were selling them at Bessarabka and thus could afford to buy some food. But the children needed to study. Mamma only studied in the primary Jewish school in Zhytkovichi. Later on she didn't have an opportunity to study. She was reading textbooks while making stockings, and then she passed her entrance exams to the construction school.

Grandmother Haiya was living with us. Every day she saw the person that betrayed her son to the Germans. This was eternal torment for her. Grandmother lived until 1964.