

Klara Dovgalevskaya's Family



In this photo, taken in Kiev in 1931, my mother, Esfir Dovgalevskaya, is seated on the right. Next to her is my sister Sonya Dovgalevskaya. Standing on the left is my brother David, and on the right my brother Pinya. The photo was taken just before David went to serve in the Red Army.

My father, Leizer Dovgalevsky, was a merchant. He had his own small one-room store in Tripolye. He went around villages buying various staple food products - grain, flour, bread, sugar, salt - which he then sold in his store. I remember that during his lunch break my mother, Esfir Dovgalevskaya, would run to work for him while he went home to eat, and then he would go back to the store and my mother would come home. My mother worked from dawn to dusk. They worked a lot and our family was not poor.

We had a big house. My paternal great-grandfather built the house. It was a good-sized house with several rooms: a living room, a boys' bedroom, a girls' bedroom, and our parents' bedroom. But the toilet was outside, and water for the bath was heated only once a week for my mother to wash us one by one. I remember we had a big garden and three cows. One of the cows was very smart, but wild. She could open the gates with her horns, and would come to our kitchen window and call my mother. She loved mother very much. In the mornings I woke up early, ran to the kitchen, and my mother would give me a glass of warm, fresh milk.

Our parents had seven children. The eldest was my brother Moishe, born in 1900. Then came Aba, born in 1903, followed by Pinya in 1905. My sister Buzya was born in 1907; in 1910 came brother David; and in 1912 my sister Sonya. I, the youngest, was born in 1914.

After a pogrom in 1918 in which my father and my brother Aba were killed, we left Tripolye and moved to Kiev. In Kiev my sister Sonya studied at the Medical Institute. She also worked as a nurse at the hospital part-time at nights, and studied during the day. She very much wanted to become a doctor. My brother Pinya worked at the knitting factory. It was a factory where invalids were employed, and he was chief of the section that prepared yarn. Before his army service, my brother David was a worker. He was called up in 1931. My brother Moishe worked at the bakery, but by then it became a plant.

In the 1930s I and my brothers and sisters, joined the Komsomol. We loved Soviet holidays very much. I remember that on 1st May we always came together at the Dynamo stadium, wearing sports suits and marching in demonstrations along Kreschatik Street [the main street of Kiev]. We also celebrated the October Revolution Day and New Year's Eve. At that time, we no longer celebrated any Jewish holidays, as we were all Komsomol members, and Pinya was a member of the Communist Party.