

Enta Begam With Her Children



My grandmother Enta Begam, nee Antokolskaya, and her children. From left to right: my aunt Maria, my mother Judith, my uncle Lev and my grandmother Enta. The photo was taken in Moscow in 1918 when Maria finished grammar school. My grandmother was born to the Antokolsky family in 1872. She was very proud to stem from the Antokolsky family. They emerged at the beginning of the 19th century. There is a town called Antokol near Vilno. Her family's name originated from this town and the Antokolka River, and her Jewish ancestors got their family name from the names of this area. Some of her Antokolsky relatives received very good education back in the 19th century, and some were craftsmen. One of the most remarkable men was the sculptor Mark Antokolsky [1843-1902]. He created many monuments and always remembered his Jewish roots. My grandmother was his niece. An outstanding Soviet poet, Pavel Antokolsky [1896-1978], was my grandmother's nephew. In 1906 my grandmother's cousin Antokolsky, a lawyer living in Moscow, invited my grandmother and her family to move to Moscow. He had a residence permit to live in Moscow and could obtain one for them. My grandparents and their family settled down in Losinustrovskoy, in the southwestern part of Moscow. They rented a wooden house. These were not the best conditions, but it was an opportunity to get out of the Pale of Settlement and give their children good education. Living in Moscow changed my grandparents' way of life. They spoke Russian to each other, their surrounding and their children and learned very soon to speak it without an accent. My grandmother was a housewife and very fond of reading. Later, when they moved to the center of Moscow she often went to the theater and movies. My grandmother had many cousins in Moscow. We didn't socialize much, and I knew very little about them. During World War II my grandmother lived with Aunt Maria and her son Alik in Ashgabat. Alik fell ill with typhoid. My grandmother made every effort to cure him and gave him all her food. My grandmother starved to death and died of pellagra in 1942. We buried her in the cemetery in Ashgabat.