

Rohl Gefin, Her Husband Sholom Gefin And Son Jacob



This is father's sister Rohl Gefin, her husband Sholom Gefin and son Jacob. The picture was made in Kaunas in late 1930s.

My paternal great grandfather was a chimney sweep. I do not know his first name, just surname - Gurvich. Great grandfather was from Lithuanian town Rumsiskes [80 km from Vilnius]. At that time, prior to Lithuanian independence from Russian empire, great grandfather, a simple chimney-sweep, dreamt of getting rich. His dream came true. It was like a fairy-tale. A poor chimney-sweep, who bought all kinds of lotteries, won an all-Russian lottery prize. I do not know exactly how much money he got, but at that time it was a real fortune. My great grandfather bought a large house in Kaunas. He lived with his family there and raised his children. I have no idea how many children great grandfather had. One of them was my grandfather Jacob Gurvich, a rabbi of one of the many Kaunas synagogues. I did not know grandfather. He died in 1911.

Jacob had five children - two daughters and three sons. All grown-up children with their families lived in a large house, demised by a great grandfather. That two-storied square-shaped house had a yard and adjacent premises as well as twenty apartments. There were enough apartments for all children. The remainder was leased. The house pertained to grandmother Ester. After her death in accordance with the Jewish law the property was devolved by the eldest son, i.e. my father. Father, in his turn, divided the property among his relatives.

Father's sister Rohl was born in 1870s. Her husband Sholom Gefin was involved in timber trading. He did not have his own business. He worked for his rich relatives, the owners of timber mill. They had a strange last name Intellegator. They were very rich and Sholom was paid very well. Rohl was a housewife. She took care of children. She died before war. Her husband Sholom perished in Kaunas ghetto. Rohl and Sholom had three children. The fate of their daughters Dveire and Haya is tragic. Both of them, born in the 1910s, became communists. They married their cousins- Lithuanian Jews, who were also ardent underground communists. Sisters and their husbands had

lived in Germany for couple of years. They left for the USSR, when Hitler came to power. I remember that their train was via Kaunas and all of us came to see them. It did not last long. Adults managed to say couple of words at the platform of the train station. It was in late 1930s, when repressions were in full swing [Great Terror] in USSR. There my cousins' husbands were arrested and cousins with children were exiled. Dveire's husband was shot at once. Haya's husband had stayed in Soviet concentration camp for couple of years. He went through ordeal and died there. Unfortunately I do not remember their husbands' last names. In the 1950s Dveira and Haya were rehabilitated, and came back from exile to Moscow, where they had spent the last years. They died in middle 1970s. Each of them had one daughter. They live somewhere Russia. I do not remember their names. Rohl's son Jacob, born in early 1920s served in Lithuanian division during war. Afterwards he came back to Vilnius and was assigned to a high position in the military ministry. He died in 2003. He remained single.

Jewish holidays were usually marked in aunt's Rohl's apartment. The whole family got together there- Bluma and her children, our family, aunt Polya and Berl as well as some distant relatives. There were Paschal dishes, which I had known since childhood- gefilte fish, matzah pies and all kinds of deserts. Matzah was in our house as well. Father brought it from the synagogue beforehand. Sholom, Rohl's husband was a very religious man. He carried out seder with all rules strictly being observed, Brothers asked questions about the holidays. They and I looked for afikoman. When the night came, all of us with bated breath were listening in prophet Ilia. For some reason I remembered only Pesach. The other holidays, marked at Rohls' place, most likely were collected together in my head- Chanukah, Purim, Rosh Hashanah.