

Rita Vilkobriszkaya's Father Michael Vilkobriskiy And Uncle Efim Eishynskiy



My father Michael Vilkobriskiy and my mother's brother Efim Eishynskiy photographed in Minsk in mid 1920s when Efim came home on vacation from aviation school. Both of them are wearing a military uniform.

My father began to work at the electro technical shop of Mr. Mendelson, a Jew, in Vitebsk in 1916. He was an apprentice and finally became an electrician. He worked there until the end of 1918 and at the beginning of 1919 he got fond of revolutionary ideas and went to work at the factory of agricultural machines that belonged to the Unemployment Committee.

This was the period of Civil War, and on 15 October 1919 my father volunteered to the Red army. He became a private in reserve rifle battalion. This battalion was formed in Kazan. On 13 December 1919 my father became a member of the Communist party and then their regiment was sent to fight with the white guard units. My father took part in battles with General Wrangel units. There were military from various parts of the country. They were mainly workers and peasants that believed in the ideas of communism. My father told me that they had sufficient food and uniforms. They lived in barracks that they built themselves. Their living conditions were far from good. In 1920 my father was severely wounded and stayed a long while in hospitals until he was sent to an advanced training course for professional military in Minsk, Byelorussia, in January 1922. He was eager to study and willingly went to Minsk to study aviation.

In Minsk my father met Maria Eishynskaya, my mother's older sister, I don't know how or where they met. They got married and in 1923 their son Ilia, was born, he was named after his grandfather. Maria died of galloping consumption in 1926. Before she died she demanded that my father promised her to marry her younger sister Bertha. She also asked Bertha to agree to marry

my father. She wanted him to be well set and cared for.

My mother was an active and cheerful girl. Her friends were her schoolmates of various nationalities. Nationality was an issue of no importance at that time. She had many friends in Minsk and Smolensk where she went to visit her sister Sophia. Therefore, when her older sister Maria asked her to marry her husband before she died, this suggestion was a complete and quite undesirable surprise for my mother. My mother didn't love my father, but grandmother Hasia said 'Bertha, marry Michael for Ilia's sake'. In 1929 my mother married Michael Wilkobriskiy. At that time he had an important position in Minsk aviation regiment. They had a civil ceremony at a registry office and a wedding dinner at home in the evening. I guess, at that time my father was more like a friend to my mother. She wasn't in love with him, but she had to follow her sister's will. However, in due time she fell in love with him while he just adored her. The more my parents learned about one another the closer they became. They lived their life in love for 25 years.

My mother's brother Efim, born in 1905, became a pilot in the Minsk aviation unit after he finished an aviation school. He married a Jewish girl and they had two children. I have no information about their life before the war. He perished in combat action in Minsk at the very beginning of the Great Patriotic War in 1941. His wife Milia and daughter Tamara evacuated few hours before Germans entered Minsk. They were in evacuation in Olevsk Altaysk region. After the war they lived in Kharkov. We were not in contact with them after the war.