

Yakov Honiksman And Rita Vilkobrissskaya



This is a picture of me and my second wife Rita Vilkobrissskaya. The photo was taken in Lvov in 1956, on the day after our wedding. In 1955 my friends introduced me to my future wife Rita Vilkobrissskaya. Her parents were Jews. She was born in 1930. She is a very pretty, nice and absolutely naïve person. She finished the Faculty of Economy at the Lvov Polygraphists College. Rita's father was a high-ranking military officer, but he had passed away by the time we met. Rita received a secular education and her Jewish roots were abandoned. This family believed in Stalin's ideas fanatically. They said that Rita's father died along with the name of Stalin. Rita and I were dating for some time until I asked her, 'Rita will you marry me?' and she replied, 'Yes.' We had a wedding party at a restaurant on 10th January 1956. My guests were about ten close friends and her guests were her father's former military comrades. They were Russian and there were very few Jews. Rita and I never argued. She is so timid, but she is the closest person I have. I am still affectionate towards my wife. She is so very nice and sweet. My scientific achievements are due to her. During the first years of our marital life she lived in Lvov alone and I came from the village at weekends. I worked on my scientific candidate thesis on the subject of economic development of Eastern Poland at the beginning of the 20th century. In October 1960 I defended my thesis in Moscow. The subject of my thesis was the history of the Polish economy. I was awarded the scientific title of candidate of economic sciences. I got a job in Lvov where I became deputy director of an evening school. I gained a standing in my scientific field, but authorities kept emphasizing that they needed national personnel. There was no open anti-Semitism, but it was clear that the reason why it was so hard for me to find a job was my nationality. Rita worked as an economist in an institute. She was fired along with 10-15 other Jewish employees. I went to see the secretary of the district party committee and asked him, 'Have you received an instruction to get rid of Jews?' He was shocked, 'This cannot be.' Our leadership didn't like direct accusation of being anti-Semitic and my wife got back her job. I couldn't find a job for about a year until I finally got a job offer. There was a vacancy for a lecturer at the Oil College in Drogobych [a small town, 100 km from Lvov; center of the oil industry]. I worked there for 17 years: as a senior lecturer and then as a dean for half a year.