

Israel Gliazer With His Father Iozeph Gliazer, Mother Pesia Gliazer, Brother Moishe Gliazer And Sister Sarra Gliazer



This is a photo of my family. In the lower row there is my father Iozeph Gliazer, my mother Pesia Gliazer. In the upper row from right: I, Israel Gliazer, my brother Moishe and my sister Sarra. This photo was taken in Podgaittsy on our parents' anniversary in 1940.

My father's family came from Pogdaytsy. I also grew up in this town. It's a picturesque town in the Carpathian foothills. This land belonged to Austria-Hungary before World War I, later it belonged to Poland, in 1939 it became a part of the USSR and at present it is a Ukrainian terrain.

My father Iosif Gliazer became a high skilled glasscutter. He owned a small crockery and household store and small glass cutting shop in the center of the town. My mother Pesia Leviter was born in Skalat in 1886. My parents got married in 1906 and my mother moved to Pogdaytsy near Skalat where her husband Iosif Gliazer came from. In 1907 my sister Etl was born. We called her Etkka in the family. Moishe was born in 1909 and Velvel followed him in 1912. I, the youngest son, was born on 3 November 1919 in Pogdaytsy. The youngest of children in our family was Sarra, born in 1922. Our family lived in a small stone house in the center of the town. There were 3 rooms and a kitchen in the house. We actually had all we needed. My mother and father observed all Jewish traditions, observed kashrut strictly. My father wore a kippah at home and put on a wide-brimmed hat to go out. My mother always wore a dark wig becoming to her dark eyes. My parents were very strict about their religious life since they were Hasidim. They went to the Hasidic synagogue near our house.

My older brother Moishe didn't continue his studies after the cheder since he had to start helping our parents to support the family. Moishe finished an accounting course and worked in our father's store. There were no other employees working for my father.

I enjoy recalling the years of my youth. When I turned 13 I had a bar mitzvah ritual. There was a party at home. Of course, I wasn't a deep believer like my parents, but I tried to be loyal to them and attended the synagogue as required. I finished school in 1933 went to work at the printing house where Velvel was working.

The situation in the country was uncertain in 1930s. There was a number of Zionist organizations in Poland and there was also a socialist and a communist party in Poland. My older brothers Moishe and Velvel became fond of communist ideas and joined the Communist Party of Western Ukraine, forbidden in Poland. Velvel and Moishe were arrested and imprisoned in a political prison in Drogobych. In 1934 Moishe was granted amnesty.

I joined the Zionist organization of young Jewish people Hashomer Hatzair, that means a 'young guard'. It was a left-wing social democratic direction preparing Jewish young people to life in the Jewish state and its protection from enemies.

However, peaceful life was not long. Hitler came to power in Germany and we were aware of his attitude toward Jews. In 1938 followers of fascists made their appearance in German neighborhoods, in Poland. The idea of National Socialism had many followers and reached our town gradually. There were fights between the various national groups, Polish and Ukrainian, but at times they united to fight with Jews: their idea was that Jews were to blame for all their troubles and Hitler exterminated them for a reason.

The Soviet power came to Pogdaytsy in 1939. They nationalized small stores and shops, including my father's store. Soviet authorities had them removed and installed a monument to Lenin in the central square. My father managed to take home the remaining goods, tools and materials. He sold out the goods and continued to take orders from clients at home. Moishe assisted him as before. He married Rivke, a Jewish girl, in 1937. Since Moishe was a member of the Communist party he didn't want a Jewish wedding, but our father and his fiancée's parents insisted and they had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah at the synagogue. In 1938 their son was born. I worked in the nationalized printing house. It formerly belonged to Mainlis, a wealthy Jewish widow. In early 1940 I was recruited to the Soviet army.