

Leonid Kotliar's Mother Rachil Risman With Her Fiance



My mother Rachil Risman with her fiance (name unknown). My mother had this photo taken to send it to her brothers at the front. Makarov, 1916.

My maternal grandfather and grandmother were born in Makarov town of Kiev province in the 1870s. Grandfather Leizer Risman was a tailor and my grandmother Tsyvia Risman was a housewife. My mother said that grandmother Tsyvia was a beautiful woman with full forms, made wonderful sausage and was a very good housewife. They had four children: the oldest Toibl was born in 1888, then came Moisey, born in 1893, Ruvim was a couple of years younger and my mother Rachil was the youngest. She was born in 1900. Their family strictly observed Jewish traditions, as was customary at this period of time. Ukrainian constituted a major part of the population of Makarov, one third of the population was Jewish and the rest of residents were Polish, Russian and Byelorussian. Jews dealt in trades and crafts. They owned taverns and inns. There were a few synagogues, a Jewish hospital, cheder and a Jewish grammar school in the town. My mother's brothers finished cheder. My mother studied in the Jewish grammar school. When my mother was finishing grammar school she had a fiance who loved her very much. I don't know why they separated.

World War I began and Moisey was recruited to the Red Army. A few years later Ruvim went to the army. My mother loved her brothers dearly. She told me that they were very kind and that they were at the front in the Carpathians. They wrote letters from the front. Ruvim was wounded in 1918 and sent to a hospital in Kiev. On his way there he fell ill with typhus. Grandmother Tsyvia went to see him and contracted typhus from him. She died in Kiev in 1918. Soon Ruvim died, too. Grandfather Leizer couldn't cope with it and died in Kiev in autumn 1919 where he had escaped from pogroms.

My father met my mother Rachil Risman living in Kiev in the garret in 1920. She and her sister Toibl escaped to Kiev from a pogrom in Makarov town shortly after the revolution of 1917. My parents got married in 1921. Those were trying times and they didn't have a wedding party.