

## Lev Drobyazko's Mother, Leah Vaisblat.



My mother, Leah Vaisblat. She was born in 1905 in Kiev. The photo was made in 1940 in Kiev. When I was born, my father, a famous Ukrainian writer and translator, Yevgeny Drobyazko, was 35 years old; my mother, Leah Vaisblat, just turned 32. I was their firstborn. My parents had known each other for a very long time, approximately 10 years before their wedding, but the problem was my mother's father. He was famous Rabbi Nukhim Vaisblat, and he was very much against his daughter's marriage to a Russian Orthodox man. So, their wedding could take place only after the rabbi's death. It is also worth nothing that my father's father, Anton Drobyazko, never opposed their wedding. So, when I was born, I combined two different cultures and two family lines, each of which is interesting. My mother, Leah Vaisblat, Rabbi Vaisblat's tenth child, was born in Kiev in 1905 and brought up there. After obtaining a Jewish education at home, she studied at a secondary school and then attended the artistic reading studio of Sladkopevtsev which was very famous and popular in Kiev in the 1920s. Then she worked in a library. By the way, she attended that studio

together with her brother Milya, who was also a very good artist, as good as his brother Yosif. For several years Milya attended the Jewish artistic studio 'Esther' and only upon his brother's strong insistence became a dentist. The turning point in my mother's life was her marriage to my father, Yevgeny Drobyazko. Her elder brothers, Solomon and Vladimir, recognized my gentile father only after ten years of knowing him, and certainly not until after the death of Rabbi Nukhim and Basya Vaisblat. The marriage of my parents was typical in its other characteristic: apart from uniting people from the Russian Orthodox and the Jewish Orthodox families, it also united two strong atheists. Nevertheless, this marriage was very happy for my father and my mother. From her marriage until her death, my mother's main profession was being the wife of the famous Ukrainian writer and translator Yevgeny Drobyazko, and serving as his literary secretary. Mother's Jewish education was also an advantage in this union: she actively helped father in his Yiddish to Ukrainian translations. They translated Sholom-Aleichem's works into Ukrainian together. Side by side, my parents lived a long life. They lived through the war, the evacuation, and through post-war hard times. My mother kept father's literary salon in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, and she preserved our house up to her death in 1997. She died at the age of 92.