

Itta Aronson's Family



This is a photo of my grandma Itta Aronson's family, taken several years after the Kiev pogrom of 1905.

The parents of my father, Aron Movshevich Aronson, Granny Itta Isaacovna Aronson and Grandpa Movsha Aronson lived in Kiev. Grandma Itta was a housewife. She died when she was approximately 37, when her daughter Freidochka was killed in the course of a massacre. This shocked the whole family, and my daddy Aron, while recollecting some events, used to say: 'It was when Freidochka was so-and-so many years old...' This massacre of 1905 was a famous one.

Afterwards I read about it in books. Grandpa and Grandma lived in Kiev surrounded by anti-Semites. At that time Daddy was just an infant. When he was wounded in Kiev and people carried him towards home, neighbors yelled at Grandma: 'Go out, your little kike is being carried around dead!' I don't know exactly, what the cause of Granny's death was: the murder of her daughter Freida or her son's serious injury.

The family of Grandma Itta lived very poorly. When Daddy was going to school, Grandma used to give him breakfast to take with him, and at school he boasted of how his mamma loved him as she spread a thick layer of butter on his bread. Only later Daddy realized, that it was not butter, but mashed potatoes. It was an unpretentious Jewish family. However, Grandma had an Astrakhan fur coat, there were a few silver glasses at home, and my daddy as the elder son inherited the largest silver one. Grandma had a long pearl necklace – you can see it on a photo I keep – but at the time of the pogrom she hid all valuables in the stove, and when pogrom-makers came, Grandma stoked the stove as she didn't know that pearls could burn.

Grandma Itta had several sisters. I saw and poorly remember one of them; her name was Chasya. She was married to the jeweler Libenzon. Grandpa had a brother, Boris, a very rich person. He owned four small houses in Kiev. In 1977 I was in one of them, there was a big orchard near the house. The only daughter of Boris was called Bella, she fell in love with a poor, handsome man, and when her parents didn't permit her to marry him, she ran off with him to a small nine-square-meter room, where his mother lived as well. Bella's mother didn't stand firm and after some time went to see her daughter. She saw that her little Bella, brought up by a governess, was washing the floor in this room, so she burst into tears and took her daughter and son-in-law to her place. Bella gave birth to a son, who was named Mikhail in honor of Grandfather.