Fania Brantsovskaya And Her Family

This is our family: my mama Rohl Joheles, nee Galunskaya, my papa Beniamin Joheles, I (on the left) and my sister Riva Joheles walking in Bernardinskiy Garden in Vilnius, where we usually went for walks. The photo was taken in the 1930s. My parents had their wedding in Vareny on 22nd July 1921. My parents got married under a chuppah at the synagogue and had a traditional Jewish wedding. It couldn't have been otherwise in Jewish families at the time. My parents rented an apartment in Kaunas. I was born on 22nd May 1922 in Kaunas. I was named Feige, but since my early childhood everybody called me Fania, which is a Russian name. In 1927 my sister Riva was born. This was when my father got arrested for being a Polish citizen having received his passport in Vilnius. He was accused of espionage. At this time President Smetona came to power. Grandmother Hana-Leya, who had come to stay with us around the time the baby was due, and I visited mama at the hospital. My grandmother decided to keep silent about my father's arrest. Since my mother didn't like it that I was wearing a different coat than she had expected me to

wear, my grandmother told her that my father had gone on a business trip and taken the key to the wardrobe with him. Well, it's always like this: one has good intentions, but they don't usually work. Another woman told mama about my father's arrest. My mother started bleeding and had to stay in hospital for a long time. My grandfather Velvl's apprentice, a rather high official, pulled strings for my father. My father was released from prison, but was to leave the town within three days. I have some vague memories of us moving out. I remember the horses dragging our wagon across a little river. We crossed the border between Lithuania and Poland and arrived in Vilnius, which belonged to Poland at the time. My father's parents and sisters lived there and we found ourselves staying with a big Jewish family all of a sudden. They all shared love and support.