

Esther Fink And Zelda Joheles



These are my father's sisters Esther Fink, nee Joheles (on the left) and Zelda Joheles. This photo was taken in Vilnius in the 1930s. My father's sister Zelda, who was two years younger than Tyoma, finished a teachers' training seminar in Vilnius. This was a workshop for Yiddish teachers. Zelda was single. In 1939 she went to work in a Jewish school in Belarus and disappeared there at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. My father's sister Esther, born in 1912, was a beauty. There was even a duel between the son of the brewery owner and another admirer. Esther gave preference to a poor Jewish teacher whose surname was Fink. They moved to Grodno in Poland. Esther's husband was a convinced communist. The Polish authorities didn't appreciate such convictions and he rarely had a job. Esther supported the family by making clothes. She even had clients from other towns. Esther had a son, and our family used to tell a funny story related to his coming into this world. Grandfather Velvl went to his daughter in Grodno for the brit milah ceremony. He hired a wagon at the railway station. It took the wagon driver a long time riding him around town till he brought him back to the station. Esther's house was right next to the station. My grandfather kept talking about the Jewish wagon driver's greediness for making him pay three times over the price for the ride. When the Soviets came to power, Esther's husband started working in the town department for education. On the first day of the war a shell hit their house, but fortunately, nobody was hurt, though at times I think it would have been better for Esther's family if they had perished on that first day. They walked to Vilnius, which was occupied by the Germans. Esther's husband was one of the first Jews whom the Germans killed. Somebody reported that he was a communist. Their son starved to death in the ghetto during the first months and beautiful Esther followed him a short time later.