

**RG-50.477.0087**

**Polya Liza Pekker**

**Interviewed 3 September 1992 in San Francisco**

**Summary**

**Family members**

Polya Liza Pekker, born April 4, 1923 in town of Polonnoe, Kamenets-Podol'skaia oblast, Ukraine.

Father Gershen Burkovich Zosis, born 15 January 1896; a mechanic

Mother Ida Vol'ovna Zosis, neé Balk, born 8 March 1894; housewife

Sister Rakhil, born in 1920 in Polonnoe

Brother Aleksei, born in 1925 in Polonnoe

Uncle Misha Balk (mother's brother), born in 1922, lived in Kiev

Aunt Anya Zosis (neé Balk; married to father's brother), lived in Kiev, had son Lev [Lyona] and daughter Rita.

**Pre-war**

Polya describes prewar life. In 1925 the family moved to Kiev, where they lived at 82 Krasnoarmeiskaia Street. Two other Jewish families were neighbors: the Fedorovskys and the Grynshpans [later in the interview called Grinevskys]. Rakhil worked at the telegraph office, and Aleksei was in a vocational school. Polya went to a Russian school.

**War years**

In June 1941, Gershen volunteered, Rakhil became a nurse, Aleksei was evacuated with his school, and Uncle Misha joined an anti-aircraft unit. Aunt Anya, a schoolteacher, sent her children to their grandmother's in Polonnoe; her husband was in the army. Polya describes a chaotic evacuation of Kiev beginning 19 August. Anya refused to evacuate without Lev and Rita. On 26 August, the Germans occupied Kiev. Aunt Anya and Uncle Misha were seized, beaten and shot near the Vladimir bazaar. The building superintendent Stepan Berezovsky "betrayed the Jews." Lev and Rita were also killed along with Grandmother and Grandfather Balk.

Polya's friend Raya Troyanovskaya, was saved from execution at Babi Yar because she said she was not Jewish and "looked like a Russian."

Polya and her mother were evacuated to a village in Saratovskaia oblast [either to Lysye Gory, Lisogorskii district, or to Lisovka, Petrovskii district: not clear in interview]. On the way, Polya and her mother were temporarily separated in Kursk, and Polya broke her leg. Her mother worked on a nearby collective farm and dragged Polya to work in the snow and cold so that she could be fed.

Upon their return to Kiev, they lived in one room of their old apartment, now occupied by another family. After the war, Rakhil returned; Polya's father returned in 1947, and Aleksei, who had been a POW in Germany and then detained in Soviet camps, returned in 1951.

In 1946, she met her future husband [maybe Pekker?]. However, before they could get married, Polya got pregnant and her future husband was imprisoned for "saying

something stupid.” Claiming that Polyá was not married, her husband’s brother took the child. No one ever knew, including Pekker, that Polyá had a daughter (named Fenechka). (In 1948 Polyá also had a son.) Polyá’s husband died, but his brother and wife refused to let Polyá take Fenechka. (Her husband thought that Fenechka was Polyá’s niece.) Before she left the USSR, Polyá told Fenechka that she was her mother; by then Fenechka had a son and a grandson. [From the interview, it is clear that the most traumatic event for Polyá occurred after the war. She is very upset and cries.] Rakhil died in 1991 of a blood disease connected to Chernobyl, according to Polyá. In 1992, Aleksei was living in Israel. Polyá does not state when she came to the US.

**Summary by Joseph Bradley**