

Rosa Gershenovich's Father, Moisey Veltman



My father, Moisey Veltman, in a photo taken in Odessa in 1915. My father was born in 1887 in Bershad, in Vinnitsa region. Bershad was a Jewish town. The majority of its population was Jewish. The Jews were mostly tradesmen and craftsmen. The Ukrainians living in the town were mostly farmers. My father was born into a very religious Jewish family. His father, Aron-Shloime Veltman, born in the 1860s was a melamed in the cheder. My grandfather was a very educated man for his time. He had excellent knowledge of the Talmud and the Torah, and taught children to read in Hebrew. He was a very well respected teacher in Bershad. My father was a worker and a painter. He finished cheder and didn't want to continue his studies. He participated in various revolutionary organizations. Unlike other Jewish boys he wasn't afraid to serve in the tsarist army. He was tall

and strong. He served for six years in the cavalry, from 1906 to 1912. From what my mother told me, my father was proud of his service in the tsarist army. He didn't know Russian before he went into the army. While in the army, he learned to speak, read and write Russian. I believe my father brought his revolutionary ideas from the army. He came back a member of the Bund. After their wedding my parents moved to Odessa. My father worked as a painter there, but he didn't work in that job for long. He was kept busy with revolutionary activities. He spread leaflets, took part in meetings, and participated in publishing revolutionary newspapers in Russian and in Yiddish. My father believed that the revolution would liberate poor Jews from national oppression. My mother said that he even had to hide from the police. He involved her in party activities as well. I have dim memories of my father, but I remember the day when he went to defend Odessa from the White Army [the Whites]. I was only 5 years old then. I remember that three visitors came that night - my mother said that they were from the Bund - my father's comrades. My father left with them. He was wearing his casual trousers and a jacket. He was tall and wore a moustache. My nice, kind father kissed me and said to my mother: 'I must go with them so that our daughter can have a better life'. My mother was crying and didn't want to let him go. That was the last time when we saw him. We were told later that he had perished.