

Larissa Khusid's Grandfather Iosif Ortenbergs' Family



This is a photo of the Ortenberg family, taken in Odessa in October 1922. Top row (left to right): my Uncle Abram's wife, Bertha; my uncles, Arnold and Akiva Ortenberg; Alexandr Kangun, Polina's husband; Polina, and Grigoriy (Grisha) Ortenberg. Middle row (left to right): Abram Ortenberg with his son, Naum. Fania, Akiva's wife holding their son, Alexandr; my grandmother Dora and grandfather Iosif; Maria, Grisha's wife, holding their baby son, Emil. Bottom row: my mother, Maria Ortenberg, and her brother, Iliozar. My mother, Maria Ortenberg, was born in 1898 in Kishinev, the capital of Bessarabia. In 1922 she met my father and married him on June 22, 1923. The oldest of my father's siblings was Abram, born around 1884. After Abram finished high school in Kiev, my grandfather sent him to the Netherlands to pursue his studies in economics. Abram's wife was named Bertha, and they had two children: Naum and Larissa. Abram died in 1953. My Uncle Grigoriy (Grisha) was born in 1886. Grigoriy married a wealthy Jewish girl named Maria. It was a love match. In 1922 at the end of the civil war Uncle Grisha, his wife, their son Emil, and Maria's four sisters left for Bucharest via Constantinople on the last boat, carrying the family's jewels and diamonds. The girls opened a cafe there that went broke, and the family's finances suffered. Grisha got a job as an economist at a big textile factory. He died in Bucharest around 1970. My mother's sister, Polina, married Alexandr Kangun, a revolutionary from a large Jewish family. Polina and Alexandr adopted a girl, Eraclia, who was half-Greek and half-Jewish. During WWII Polina was evacuated. She died in Odessa in 1968. Akiva changed his name to Nikolay. He was very tall. He served in the grenadier regiment in the tsarist army in Moscow. Members of this grenadier regiment participated as supernumeraries in crowd scenes of operas such as 'Life for the Tsar,' and 'Boris Godunov' at the Bolshoi Theater. Nikolai got to stand on the stage beside the great bass, Chaliapin. During the Soviet era, Nikolay was Chief Engineer of the Port of Odessa. His brother Arnold was Chief Engineer at the Odessa canned food factory.