

Frieda Portnaya's Mother's Brother Iosif Mandemberg And His Wife Sonia Mandemberg



This is my mother's younger brother Iosif and his wife Sonia. The photo made in 1924 in Kiev. The photo is signed, 'With fond memories, to my sister and her husband, from Sonia and Iosif.' . My mother had another brother, Lyova, and a sister, Fiera. Fiera died before the revolution. Lyova was born in 1899, and Iosif was born in 1900. Both Lyova and Iosif were laborers, locksmiths at a factory. Iosif married a young woman Sonia ,and Lyova married Sonia's mother, Frieda. Iosif and Sonia had a daughter, named Fiera after my mother's sister who had died. Iosif was missing in action in World War II. Sonia and the baby were evacuated with other members our family to the East. At one point they put us on a train going to Central Asia. It was a long trip. We hardly had any clothes that could be bartered for food. We were starving. Sonia didn't have any milk to nurse the baby. When the train stopped my brother ran to the fields to get some snow and melted it on our little stove. We gave this drink to the baby, but Fierochka, the baby, died. Sonia held her, afraid that somebody would take her baby away. Our neighbor who was traveling with us asked her 'Why is Fiera so silent? Why isn't she crying?' and Sonia said 'I don't know. She may be asleep.' The neighbor looked at the baby ? Dear Lord! She was dead! And she began to cry saying that Fiera had died. Soldiers came immediately and said they had to take the dead baby to a special car of the train -- many people were dying on the train, and their bodies were taken to a special car. It took my brother some effort to take the dead girl from Sonia. He took her to that car. At one point, the train stooped and all the dead people were buried in a common grave. And our Fierochka stayed there too, in a common grave somewhere, we don't even know where it is. After the war, Sonia couldn't bear the loss of her husband and daughter and died in 1947.