

Grigori Shukhman



This is a picture of my uncle Grigori Shukhman, my mother's brother. The photo was taken in Kiev around 1934 when he came on a visit. My maternal grandparents, Avraam and Sophia Shukhman, had three children: my mother Rachil was the oldest. She had two brothers: Yakov, born in 1900, and Grigori, born in 1902. They got secular education. Their parents spoke Yiddish and Russian. The children spoke both languages. I don't know exactly where my mother's brothers studied, but they were intelligent people. Grigori got fond of revolutionary ideas. When the Reds came to town he left with one of their units. He took part in combat actions during the Civil War. He also joined the Communist Party at that time. After the Civil War Uncle Grigori was sent to the border with Romania where he served in a frontier unit. In 1937 he was arrested and charged of espionage like thousands of other innocent people. He was taken to an investigation cell in Kiev where he was tortured and abused. He was devoted to the Soviet regime nonetheless and believed everything that happened to him to be a mistake. In 1939, when Yezhov was arrested and Beriya replaced him, my uncle was released. He was lucky because in order to make accusations about Yezhov the authorities reviewed many cases and released prisoners. During the Great Patriotic War Uncle Grigori served with SMERSH [Editor's note: special secret military unit for the elimination of spies; lit. translation: 'Death to spies']. After the war he became a professional military. He moved with his wife Polina and their children Stanislav and Nadia [Nadezha] from town to town as his service required. After his demobilization from the army in the 1960s they moved to Kiev. He received a nice apartment and a good pension. He died in the early 1980s. His wife Polina passed away shortly afterwards. Nadia and her children live in Kiev. We speak on the phone occasionally. Stanislav and his family moved to the US in the 1970s.