

The Tsyfrinovich Sisters



These are the Tsyfrinovich sisters, when they were students of Bestuzhev school in St. Petersburg in the 1910s. This was a prestigious school, where girls from the mundane society were educated in domestic science, good manners and foreign languages. They wore a uniform. Tsyva Tsyfrinovich is the second on the right.

There were four sisters, their last name was Tsyfrinovich and my mother was raised by them after her father died. They were her mother's cousins. My grandmother Hana sent my mother to be raised by her cousins because she understood that educated and modern women living in St. Petersburg would be able to give her daughter a lot more than she could.

I only know the name of the oldest of the Tsyfrinovich sisters. Her name was Tsyva. They were students and they were so emancipated that they didn't want to get married. Only Tsyva, who became a doctor, was married. Her daughter Martha Tsyfrinovich was a puppeteer at the puppet theater. The rest of the sisters stayed single. They spoke Russian and wanted to forget the language of their parents - Yiddish. They read Russian books and communicated with young poets, artists and revolutionaries.

My mother grew up a modern emancipated young lady under their influence. She couldn't even speak Yiddish and when my father introduced her to his parents they couldn't communicate because they didn't speak Russian. My mother finished grammar school in St. Petersburg and after the Revolution she and her aunts moved to Kharkov. In Kharkov my mother entered a course in law. She never worked as a lawyer but she was a very educated woman. In 1925 my mother met my father and they got married in April 1926.