

Seraphima Gurevich's Husband, Isaac Tomengauzer, And his Sister Tusia Tomengauzer



This is a photo of my husband, Isaac Tomengauzer with his sister Tusia Tomengauzer, whom he saved from the ghetto. The photo was taken in 1949 in Mohilev-Podolsk, where my husband came to visit his sister and father. During World War II the Germans occupied Mohilev-Podolsk very quickly. My husband's family, his parents, his younger sister Tusia, then a 5-year-old girl, and he were in ghetto in Transnistria. Isaac's mother went insane from the horrors of the ghetto. She became a violent lunatic and was dangerous to the community. I don't know the details of her death. My husband was reluctant to discuss this subject. I know that she was poisoned. I don't know whether she was poisoned by the Romanians or by inmates of the ghetto. Shortly after this event, Isaac arranged an escape from the ghetto, taking his father and sister with him. They were captured. The Romanians were not as violent as Germans. They didn't kill them. They beat them and returned them to the ghetto. Some time afterwards there came a rumor that a German punitive unit was coming to the ghetto to do away with its inmates. Isaac stole a Romanian truck and rescued his father and sister and 7 other inmates of the ghetto. A few days later the punitive unit came to the ghetto and exterminated all its inmates. Isaac, his father and his sister returned home to Mohilev-Podolsk. It was under Romanian occupation, too. Isaac's father was drafted into forced labor. Isaac went to work instead of his father. He registered himself on the lists and went home. Once, he was captured. The Romanians kept him under arrest in a cell for a long time and then sent him to Bucharest. I don't know why they did that. There, he was under the guardianship of the local synagogue. He did some work at the synagogue and received meals and clothes for doing this work. The synagogue was looking for Jews who needed help and made every effort to make their life more tolerable. If possible they tried to exchange Jews for food and valuables. When the Soviet army liberated Bucharest in November 1944 Isaac went home. His father had remarried

by that time. His 2nd wife Mara was a Jewish woman. Isaac was very unhappy about his father marrying another woman and left for Chernovtsy. He spent his first night there on a staircase and the next morning he went to the Construction College. He was admitted there. He lived in the hostel. He attended classes during the day and worked as a loader at night. He was very successful with his studies and was trade union leader at college. He received a food package as a former inmate of the ghetto. He sent all this food to his father and sister in Mohilev-Podolsk. Isaac finished college with honors and received a recommendation to the Institute [higher educational institute]. He could be admitted without exams, but he had to refuse. He had to go to work. He was appointed chief engineer of a brick factory. My husband and I raised his sister Tusia. After finishing school she entered the Dental College in Odessa. We supported her. Upon finishing college Tusia got a job and married a Jew from Odessa. We gave them money to buy an apartment. They had a lovely daughter. In the early 1970s Tusia and her family moved to Israel. Tusia supports me now. She calls me and sends money sometimes.