

Simon, Solomon And Yakov Gutman



This is a picture of me, my twin brother Solomon and my elder brother, Yakov. The photo was taken in the Rembrant photo studio in Dvinsk in 1912.

We were three brothers. The eldest was Yakov and then came my twin brother, Solomon, and I. Solomon, or Salya, as we called him, was 20 minutes older than me. I was very small - no bigger than a scoop. Daddy took mum to the maternity house. Later, when he went back there on a cart to find out who was born, he was told, 'A boy!' - and he answered, 'Okay, that's fine!' Then, a couple of hours later, he went there again asking, 'Well, how's that boy?' And they told him, 'You've got another one!' Daddy apparently told the carter, 'Just don't you go in that direction again!' That was later told as a joke. Yakov was two years older than we, born in 1905. We had a governess in Dvinsk.

Before we left for evacuation, we lived on 20 Rizhskaya Street in Dvinsk. Once, when mum was seeing her sister Tirtsa off to Vilnius [today Lithuania], she took me and Salya to the station. They were standing in front of the railway car and talking and had temporarily forgotten about us. And we didn't know what to do. We were six years old at the time. Salya was a dashing guy and he said, 'Let's go!'. So we addressed the cab driver, 'Hey, old man, have you seen our mum?' - 'What does she look like?' - 'She is tall and beautiful.' - 'No, I haven't.' - 'Take us home then.' And off we went to 20 Rizhskaya Street, right down the road, near the station! It seemed to us a long way to walk, but very close on a horse-cart. Just imagine, my mum turning around at the railway station, and both of us being gone! She cried, panicked and was scared to death.