

Faina Minkova's Mother Tzyva Shyfrinson



My mother Tzyva Shyfrinson photographed in the yard of the house in Orsha where she lived with my father before my older sister Elizabeth was born. The photo was taken in 1936. My mother was born in Orsha in 1916. My mother's older sisters were raised religious. A teacher came to teach them Jewish traditions and how to read and write in Yiddish. The rest of the children were growing up after the Revolution of 1917 during the struggle against religion. My mother and her sisters Slava and Haya studied at a Russian secondary school. My great-grandmother taught them to write and read Yiddish. After the Revolution they spoke two languages in the family. The older daughters and their parents spoke Yiddish, and the younger daughters spoke Russian. They studied at a

Russian school and it was easier for them to communicate in Russian. My mother finished secondary school when she was 17 and went to study in Nizhniy Novgorod. Somehow she failed to continue her studies. She worked at a factory for some time and then moved to Moscow. She tried to enter an institute [college] in Moscow. She had a certificate confirming her work experience at the factory, but she was the daughter of a profiteer and was not admitted. My mother returned to Orsha. She had known my father since he had moved to Orsha after his parents died. They dated for some time and then decided to get married. My mother's parents were against their marriage. They believed my father to be a poor man. Besides, he was a party activist, and my grandfather didn't like that at all. They got married in 1936 anyways. They didn't have a religious wedding. Religious weddings were considered to be vestige of the bourgeois past. My parents had a civil ceremony. My mother said that her bridal gown was made from an old dress of my great-grandmother's. After my parents had a civil wedding ceremony they went to my mother's home. My father loaded her belongings - a pillow, a blanket and some clothing - onto a cart. My father worked at the peat deposit in a village near Orsha, and they went to this village to start their married life. They rented a room in a house. My sister was born in 1937.