

Elkona Shif, His Sister Sore-Elka Shif, Their Cousin Elkone Zalkind And Another Cousin



This photograph was taken on January 6, 1910 in Minsk, when my aunt and uncle arrived for the holidays from Germany, where they were studying. Sitting in the front row from left to right are Elkona Shif and Sore-Elka Shif, my father's elder brother and sister. In the second row stand two of my father's cousins. Elkone Zalkind (right) at that time was also studying in Germany. The women are wearing similar blouses. My father, Ilya Iosifovich Shif, was born in 1904 in Minsk. From 1911 until the Revolution [1917] he studied in a Jewish school in Minsk. From 1920 till 1926 he worked in Minsk as a worker. In 1926 he moved to his elder brother's in Leningrad, where he worked as a metalworker at the Metal plant and later was an accountant at the same plant. That's where he met my mother. My father came from a big family. Everybody spoke Yiddish and Russian in his family, and the elder brothers and sisters also had a good command of German and French. All the children were close. The family was a religious one and followed all the traditions. My father's elder sister was called Sore-Elka. She was born in 1888, and after her mother's death she took the place of a mother for the younger children. She studied in Germany like her brother Elkona, and he and she visited Minsk on vacation. Sore-Elka got married to a certain Ura. She died in 1943. My father's sister Eli-Sheva was born in 1895 and lived with her father and elder sister in Minsk. In the war they were all put in a ghetto and died in 1943. My father's elder brother Elkona Shif was born in 1890. He moved to Leningrad after the Revolution. He was a highly educated person and studied in Berlin until 1917. He worked as an economist in Moscow and for a few years before the war was a bank executive in Leningrad. He had great authority and even after he fell ill with Parkinson's disease, the bank used him as a consultant and sent employees to his home to ask his opinion. During the war he was evacuated to Sverdlovsk. His wife, Bella Solomonovna Shif, a doctor, was drafted into the army and later transferred to a hospital to Sverdlovsk. Uncle Elkona died in 1953.