

Mark Rozenfeld With His Military Unit



This is my father Mark Rozenfeld, third on the left leaning his elbow on somebody lying, photographed with his military unit. This photo was taken near Chernigov in 1917. My father was good at music, learned to play the violin and dreamed of becoming a musician. After finishing school he went to Astrakhan, where the cousin of my grandmother's sister lived, and entered the Conservatory. Then World War I began. My father was on vacation in Boguslav and from there he was recruited to the army. His unit stayed in Boguslav, then they went to the front and returned to Boguslav for training. My father was promoted to the rank of ensign in the tsarist army. My father had many friends among the young officers. When they were in the rear they had a good time knowing that soon they were to go to the front. My father also served in a military unit near Chernigov. He was an enlightened young man for his time. After the Revolution of 1917, when propaganda of revolutionary ideas began in the tsarist army, he joined the Red army. My father struggled against the gang of ataman Zeleniy [the so-called Greens] and Denikin troops in Kiev and was at the front. In early 1919 my father was sent to Boguslav where the power switched from one unit to another. There were gangs and pogroms and the Jewish population was on the verge of extermination, hiding in cellars and basements. My father's uncles and aunt and their families perished. Many other citizens of the town fell victim to the pogrom makers. My father spoke at a gathering to the young Jewish people appealing to them to organize a self-defense unit to struggle against the bandits. There were about 600 people in their units. They had 250 rifles, two automatic guns, bombs and grenades. I have no idea where they managed to get these weapons. The unit raided nearby villages and towns fighting the bandits. Boguslav became a center of self-defense in Kanev district, Kiev region. The local population sympathized with them and supported them with food and accommodation. They struggled for three years. At the third anniversary of their fighting unit my father made an ardent speech expressing his appreciation of their bravery. In summer 1923 the fighting unit of Boguslav was dismissed since there were no bandits left in the country and the country and its people were starting peaceful reconstruction work.