

Irina Voinova's Bother And Sister Mikhail Aizman And Eugenia Govorkova



This photo shows my brother Mikhail (Moses) and sister Eugenia (Zelda) after our mother died in 1937 from a failed abortion. We were five children. All my brothers and sisters were born in Petrograd, but I was told that I was born in Perm -- most likely, I was born there when my mother was on a visit there for some reason. Daddy was a tailor. Mom was a housewife, but she sewed at home as well, helping Dad. Mom was very religious. I always wonderd why she didn't allow us sometimes to carry things from somewhere, and only now I realize that, most likely, it was Shabbat. She tried to keep all the traditions, but she went to synagogue only rarely and in secret from Daddy. Daddy never went to synagogue. Our flat was situated in a big building that had several floors. We lived on the third floor, and Uncle Leva (dad's brother) lived on the ground floor. Our family was poor. There was only one room in the flat, a big one ? may be, of 40 square meters. There were beds and a big table. We all, seven people, lived in one room. We never had any nannies. Mom always cooked and cleaned up. She was a very orderly person. Mom died on May 23, 1937 as the result of an unsuccessful abortion. She is buried in the Jewish cemetery in Leningrad. I remember that she had a burial service in the synagogue of the Jewish cemetery. When Mom died she left 5 little children, one smaller the other. Dad was 42 years old, and he became sexually involved with an 18-year-old slut, an Estonian named Selma. He drove us to the country, to Elizavetino (near Leningrad), to her mother's place, and he and his girlfriend left us for somewhere. Selma's mother lived in a big one-story house, where there were a lot of children. They lived very poorly. They treated us badly; I recall that they would add water to the milk they gave us ? they even begrudged us milk. But we didn't live there long. After a few months we were all placed elsewhere. Zhenechka, Misha and I were put in orphanages. The older two, Lena and Borya (Lena was 14 and Borya - 12) were sent to a vocational school in Krasnoe Selo, near Leningrad. It was then that we completely lost touch with our youngest brother, Mishenka, who was 5 at the time. He sought us out only in 1955. I was at the orphanage for about a month. It was in summer. A lot of us lived in one room. I always sat in the corner, separately, constantly crying. I didn't want to eat anything and grew very thin; I missed Mom and Dad terribly. When Aunt Anya Feitelson, dad's

cousin, came to see me, she was told: 'If you want this child to live, take her away.' So she and Uncle Vitya, her husband, took me in. Aunt Anya became my guardian, but they only took me. Maybe they didn't know where my brothers and sisters were. Or may be they did know but didn't want to assume such a responsibility and take anyone else.