

Minna Birman's Father Mordko Birman With His Brothers And Sister



This is my father Mordko Birman with his brothers and sister. From left to right: my father's sister Rieva, Shmil Birman, my father Mordko Birman, Iosif Birman. This photo was taken in Paris in 1965. In the photograph on the table in front of them is my paternal grandmother Birman.

After the October revolution my father's family stayed in Poland that had separated. In 1926 Pilsudski [Editor's note: Yuzef Pilsudski (1867 - 1935), actual dictator of Poland after the military coup that he headed in May 1926. In 1926-1928, 1930 - Prime minister of Poland] came to power. Iosif had to go to the Polish army. He didn't want it and was thinking of moving to the USSR. At this time Pilsudski executed a treaty with France that needed workers and many Polish workers moved to France. Both brothers were glove makers. They were both married and decided to move to France with their families. In Paris they rented a room on the top floor of a house. Top floors were commonly accommodated by servants. They worked at home and also gave work to other Jewish immigrants. Sister Rieva worked with her brothers in Paris. She married French Jew Moris and they had a daughter named Rachel.

During WWII my father's brothers and families left Paris. Iosif and Shmil took part in the Resistance movement [Editor's note: national liberation anti-fascist movement against German occupiers during WWII]. Before departure they assigned their shop to their neighbor, an Italian immigrant, since Germans took away Jewish property. During occupation this Italian man cooperated with fascists and expanded his business. After the war, when Iosif and Shmil returned to Paris, this neighbor reassigned all rights for the shop to them. Iosif's son married this Italian neighbor's daughter. In the 1950s my father's brothers belonged to middle class and had houses on the outskirts of Paris.

In 1965 my father traveled to Paris at the invitation of his brothers Iosif and Shmil. It took him quite an effort to obtain a permit to go abroad. He had to go to various authorities to prove his right to visit his brothers. Life abroad made a great impression on him. He used to criticize the soviet regime, but after he returned from France he said that even workers had very decent life there. My father wanted to move abroad and his French relatives offered their assistance, but he didn't want to go there alone and my family wanted to stay at home.