

Larisa Shyhman's Uncle Mikhail Trachtenberg



My father's brother Mikhail Trachtenberg (Jewish name Moishe). This photo was made in Kiev in the 1930s.

My paternal grandfather and grandmother lived in Pervaya or Vtoreaya Slobodka near Kiev, I am not quite sure where exactly. Now it's in Darnitsa district of Kiev, but at that time it was on the outskirts of the city. Their family wasn't religious and I don't know why. They didn't celebrate holidays or Saturday. The only Jewish sign was matzah that my grandmother's brother sent them from America at Pesach, but my grandmother never showed her appreciation of it... They had six children. They finished a secondary school and some of them continued studies.

Uncle Mikhail was an NKVD officer. When arrests and purges began in 1937 he started drinking and quit his job. He couldn't bear it: they were arresting decent and intelligent people... He had many different women. He got married in 1937, but I don't know whether it was his first marriage. His wife's name was Murah. She was attractive and sewed well, but after my uncle died we hardly ever saw each other. I remember much better that my uncle had an affair. Her name was Nadezhda, but I don't remember her last name. She lived in Moscow and visited him. He loved her a lot, but it didn't work out. My mother said that Nadezhda was an illegal daughter of a prince or count and that her sisters lived in France where they left before the revolution of 1917 and she stayed. Her stepfather treated her like he would his own daughter. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman. Her father had a mansion in Khmelnytskyi. In the late 1920s Mikhail was NKVD chief in Khmelnytskyi and they met. She often visited us and my grandmother liked her a lot. She died in Moscow in the

1960s. Uncle Mikhail perished like a hero near Smolensk during the Great Patriotic War. His name is engraved on a gravestone there. My aunt went there to annual meetings at the invitation of a general...