

Miriam-Debora Meyertal And Her Family



This is my mother's family. From left to right sitting: my grandmother Roche-Leya Meyertal, her youngest son Pesach Meyertal, my mother's younger sister Sheine, my grandfather Zalman Meyertal. Standing from left to right: my mother's eldest brother Isaac Meyertal, my mother Miriam-Debora Meyertal and her elder brother Hirsh Meyertal. The picture was taken in Tartu in 1928.

Mother's family lived in Tallinn. My maternal grandmother, Roche-Leya, was born in Tartu on 29th November 1884. Grandmother was illiterate. She started working at the age of 13. She rolled cigarettes. Grandmother stopped working when she got married. I don't know where my paternal grandfather, Zalman Meyertal, came from. He was born in 1880.

Mother's parents lived in Tallinn. Grandfather was a cobbler, Grandmother was a housewife. She raised five children. The eldest, Isaac, was born in 1905 and the second, Hirsh, in 1907. Mother's third brother, Pesach, was born in 1910. My mother Miriam-Deborah was born in 1913 and the youngest, Sheine, in 1916.

All children got good education. My mother and her sister finished the German lyceum in Tallinn, studied music. Mother's three elder brothers got higher education. They studied in Estonia and then in Czechoslovakia, in Prague, in the technical high school. Subjects were taught in German; all Estonian inhabitants knew German.

I have no idea why my uncles studied in Prague. Many young Estonians went there to study as the tuition for higher education was cheaper there than in other European cities. Besides, at that time there were no technical universities in Estonia. Mother's eldest brother, Isaac, finished the machine-building department. The other two brothers studied at the chemistry department.

Mother's brother Hirsh, who was called German in the family, was a wonderful sportsman. He was very good at ping pong and football. He was a goal-keeper in the Maccabi sports team, and he was also a goal-keeper of the Prague team Sparta, when he was studying there. There are pictures of my uncle in some museums in Prague, snapshots taken at the matches in which he participated. His active participation in sport contests interfered with his studies. There was no chance for him to

pass a certain exam because of a match with a Spanish team, as German's team refused to play without him. Only after the match, he was given the opportunity to finish his studies. He came back to Tallinn with the diploma of a mechanical engineer.

The youngest of the three brothers, Pesach, got a diploma in chemical engineering. He later became a chemical engineer.

Mother's family was religious, Jewish traditions were kept. And the children always stuck to Jewish traditions even though they were modern people.