

Elkhonen Saks' Father David Saks With His Siblings



My father David Saks standing on the right, his older brother Moisei standing on the left, and his younger brother Josef and sister Hanna. The photo was taken in 1920 in Valga after my father returned from Austrian captivity. My uncle, Moisei , wasn't religious in any way and never visited a synagogue, which upset his father very much. He finished Russian high school in Valga, studied jewelry and worked in Valga as a jeweler. When Estonia became an independent republic in 1918, he moved to Tallinn and worked there in a big jewelry workshop. He was well off financially, but, for

some reason, he adhered to socialist ideas from childhood. He was one of the active Yiddishists that carried out propaganda among Estonian Jews against Zionism and the emigration of Jews to Israel. They felt that Jews would be all right in any state provided cultural autonomy was created there. Uncle Moisei was firmly convinced of the correctness of the ideas of Marxism-Leninism. He was one of the founders and directors of the leftist organization 'Licht' [German for light] in Estonia. Members of this organization preached the ideology of communism and distributed Marxist literature among Jews. I saw The History of the VKP(b) in Yiddish at Uncle Moisei's house in 1937 with my own eyes. Later he got disappointed in his ideas and at the end of 1941 he committed suicide. Uncle Josef was a rather active young man. In the 1920s, after completing elementary school, he worked for a few years in some store in Tartu. Then he decided to see the world and went to America in 1925. He lived there for eight years and was a simple worker. During this period Uncle Josef managed to save 10,000 dollars. He kept his money in a bank, but during the crisis in the USA the bank went bankrupt, and Uncle Josef came back home as poor as he had left. What he had saved for memory's sake were a few coins with the portraits of American presidents. After Uncle Moisei's death, he went to Karaganda to find out how all that had happened. He thought it was possible to say what you thought in the Soviet Union, just like in America. He talked too much in Karaganda and was arrested for that. When they searched him they found the American gold coins and declared him an American spy. He was sentenced to five years in prison. After the war, when he was about to be released, and we were already waiting for him, we learnt that he had died in the camp. Hanna was the last child in the family. She was born in 1902. She finished Russian high school, and, already in the Estonian Republic, graduated from the Medical Faculty of Tartu University. She married Haim Ring, who was also a graduate of Tartu University. All their life, except for the time of the war, their family lived in Tallinn, where Hanna worked as a doctor. Before the war she had a private business, and after the war she worked as a doctor in a state clinic. They brought up two daughters, who still live in Tallinn: Ruth is a doctor, and Nata is an engineer. Aunt Hanna died in 1980.