

Elke Kagan



Elka Kagan, elder sister of my grandmother on mother's side; she left for the USA by sea via Odessa together with other brothers and sisters of grandmother Golda in 1920.

My grandmother's name is Golda Yankelevna Sorkinà, nee Kagan. She was born in Belorussia in the small town of Krupki of Tolochin district in 1885. It was a large Jewish family (7 or 8 children). She received religious education in this town, finished a cheder, and considered Yiddish her native language. She could read and write Yiddish, also knew Belorussian and, living in Russia afterwards, studied Russian as well, so she could read newspapers and write letters. She loved to read all her life and respected educated people.

Grandmother lived with her parents for quite a long time. She got married rather late, and gave birth to her first child, my mother Tsiva, in 1912, that is at 27 years of age; then there were two more children, who died in infancy, and son Alexander (Alter) was born in 1920. She kept the house, brought up children and helped the family of her brother Girsha, who died in 1912.

Living with grandmother Golda in Vsevolozhskoye, I brought her matzot from the synagogue in the city on Pesach, lit candles for her on Sabbath, so I could see her performing all the religious customs, but still we didn't have a very strict religious atmosphere at home. Grandmother observed kashrut.

She was a strong-willed woman enough. When at the age of seventy five she got to hospital with a cataract, people were asking her: "How are you going to live there, what are you going to eat, there is no kosher food there?" and she answered: "No problem, I'll eat whatever they give me". And she lived ten years more after that. From grandmother Golda I learnt a little bit of Yiddish, so I can understand the language and I know some Jewish traditions from her stories. She died in Leningrad in 1970 in the family of her granddaughter Polina.

The burial service was read over grandmother Golda according to Jewish custom in the Small synagogue, which was situated in Preobrazhenskoye Jewish cemetery. She is buried in the Jewish area in the "Cemetery of Victims of the 9-th of January ", in which 2 sites of land (numbers 62 and 64) were specially allocated as burial places for Jews. I remember how I took the priest back to the synagogue after he had completed prayers.

The destiny of her elder brothers and sisters is almost unknown to me, except that some of them, including her brother Meyer and sister Elke had left for the USA in 1920, when it was still allowed, and grandmother helped them with money; but then their traces were lost. I only heard from some relatives, that Vulf, nephew of grandmother Golda, the son of one of her sisters who left, married a German lady and lived in Germany, and they had a son. Vulf was rich and had a factory.

When in 1930 Russia was struck by famine, he sent a letter to his relatives here welcoming them to come and live with him in Germany. When fascists came to power in Germany, he was executed, as were both his German wife and his son. All their property was confiscated by Gestapo.