

Shapsha Rubel And His Family



This picture was taken in Rezina by photographer Golovanevskiy in 1937 before the departure of Pesya Rubel, my uncle Yankel's wife, and her children to Argentina. From left to right - Uncle Yankel's elder daughter Revekka Rubel, and my father Shapsha Rubel is next to her, to his right is Yankel's younger daughter Leya Rubel, my mother Tabl Rubel (nee Lerner), my grandfather Moishe Lerner is sitting, Yankel's wife Pesya is behind him, Yankel's son Monya is sitting, Grandfather's sister Perl Roitman is behind them, with Yankel's elder daughter Golda.

My grandfather, Abram Rubel, was born in 1870 in Rezina. He got married rather early, which was traditional for the Jews. Abram and Nehama had nine children. I only knew my father's eldest brother Yankel. I remember the names of the rest - Nahman, Srul, Revekka, Golda, Lena... The thing is that in 1913 Grandfather Abram left for Argentina to look for a job and a better living for his children. Some of the elder children left with him, and Grandmother Nehama with the rest of the children joined them in a couple of years. That is why I never met my grandparents, my uncles and aunts. Only the eldest son Yankel, born in 1892, and my father Shapsha were so much against the departure to Argentina that Grandfather Abram got upset with them and left without his elder sons. Father and Yankel also were frustrated that they parted with the family and didn't keep in touch with them for a long time. Only ten years later did they start to correspond with the family.

Father and Yankel had already been working when their family left. They were loaders at the creamery since the age of 13. Yankel lived in Rezina. He got married rather early. His wife was a Jew called Pesya. They had four children - a boy, Monya, born in 1922, and the daughters Golda, born in 1917, Revekka, born in 1924, and Leya, born in 1926. Yankel worked really hard to provide for such a large family. He worked two shifts at the creamery. On 12th October 1935 my uncle died as a result of the collapse of the ceiling in one of the creamery premises. During his funeral the coffin wasn't open so that the relatives wouldn't see Yankel's dreadful remains.

For two years Pesya and her children lived on the money given to them by my father and the kin from Argentina. In 1937 they received an invitation from Argentina and Pesya left with her children. I loved them a lot, especially Revekka and my peer Leya. We took a picture together before they

left. That was the last time I saw them. Before 1940 we received letters from Argentina and then the Soviet regime was established in Bessarabia and it was impossible to write to our relatives abroad. We couldn't correspond with them after the war either.

My father worked as a loader at the creamery. He loaded milk and butter and delivered it to the sales agents. Owing to his intelligence and good sense he became the assistant to the owner. During one of his trips he met Moishe Lerner, the owner of the creamery located in the small town of Vad-Rashkov. He invited him to come over to his house. Shapsha was rapt by the beauty of Moishe's daughter Tabl and began to make frequent trips to his colleague from Vad-Rashkov. In a couple of months Shapsha sent a shadkhan to Moishe and in 1924 my parents got married.

My mother's parents, Moishe and Sura Lerner, born in Vad-Rashkov in the 1870s, had a modest living. Grandfather's creamery was the only source of income for the whole family. Although the yielded income wasn't high, it was enough for the Lerner's to get by. The creamery premises are still preserved in the town. Moishe had an adobe house, consisting of three rooms. The members of this large family usually gathered in the largest room during family reunions on Sabbath, on Jewish and family holidays.