

Clara Shalenko's Father Mendel Finegold



This is my father Mendel Finegold. The photo was made in Odessa in 1923.

My father Mendel Shterbul was born in Odessa on 3 January 1895. I know nothing about father's childhood. In 1914 he was recruited to the army. My father didn't go to the army, but got involved in some revolutionary activities and went underground. Therefore they made forged document for him with the name Finegold. He had this name all his life long. He was hiding at his friend Shymon Barskiy's apartment. In 1917 my father joined the Bolshevik Party. During the Civil War he was in the Bolshevik underground movement. In 1919 my father was sent to the town of Galatz in Romania to take money to Romanian communists for liberation of Russian communists from jail. When my father came to the secret address there was an ambush of gendarmes. Gendarmes took my father to sigurantza [secret police of Romania] where they interrogated my father where he got such a lot of money from. My father replied that he was going to his father in the US and his relatives in Odessa collected this amount for his trip. He was imprisoned and convoyed to work every day. My father's job was to wallpaper rooms in a Romanian lord's mansion. Romanians Bolsheviks sent their messenger to my father. She called herself his fiancée and brought him food to jail. She managed to give him an escape plan. My father escaped at the time when he was at work at that mansion when his convoy dozed off. He met with Romanian communists at a secret apartment and they helped him to get to Moscow. In Moscow my father entered the Communist University named after Ya. Sverdlov. His co-students were communists from many countries. He graduated from the Communist University in 1923 and was sent to do Party work in Odessa. The Party Town Committee of Odessa appointed my father a leader of the Party unit of the town mental hospital.