

Dimitri Kamyshan's Uncle Victor Zilberberg



My father's brother, Victor Zilberberg, photographed in 1916 in Kharkov.

My grandparents had six children. Victor was their second child. He was born in 1894, and he finished grammar school in Kharkov. He was an actor. He was a very handsome man and always

dressed very neatly. He lived alone - his wife left him when he fell ill with asthma. He loved cats and dogs, and many of them came to his house, and he gave them food. He was called 'cat man'. Boys often teased him about his love for cats, but he didn't get angry - he just smiled at them. He was a very kind man.

Victor was the next one in our family who perished [during the war]. He had asthma, had an attack one day and was gasping for air. He went out to get some medication. At that time Soviet forces blasted the Kossior mansion, which was housing the German Headquarters, with a radio-controlled mine. It killed three German generals as we found out later. The Germans issued an order to arrest 1,500 hostages, all men. Victor was among these hostages. One day he and a few others were hung. The Germans hanged these men from a balcony. They tied their hands and feet, put on a loop and threw them from the balcony. If somebody from the crowd cried out, policemen killed them immediately. The policemen were from Western Ukraine and spoke their own dialect that we didn't understand. They were wearing yellow and blue bands, the symbol of the Ukrainian liberation army, which cooperated with the Germans.