

## **The Rafalchik and Rubenchik Families - Finding a Cousin in Minsk**

by Sandra Hirschhorn

My paternal grandmother's maiden name was Bessie (Bascha) RAFALCHIK. Through genealogy I located a second cousin who was familiar with the family history and gave me a good family tree, which came in very handy later on. However, I wanted to know more about my grandmother's family. Since my husband Donald was very active in obtaining Pages of Testimony for Yad Vashem we went online to search for any Rafalchiks. Eventually by entering Berezino, Belarus we located a Page for a Basya Rafalchik born in 1890 and murdered in Berezino in 1941.



**Mikhail Rubenchik**

The page had been submitted by her grandson Aleksandr RUBENCHIK (note the different surname) in Israel in 2005. Using the family tree mentioned earlier I saw that Aleksandr was a second great-grandson to David Rafalchik, my great-grandfather. So, we were related!

Since I was doing this research several years ago, I felt there was a good chance that Aleksandr was still alive. A relative living in Israel found an Avram Rubenchik in the phone book, called him and found out that his father Aleksandr was back in Minsk, understood English, and had an email address, which he sent me. That began a wonderful correspondence that lasted until Aleksandr's death.

Aleksandr told me about his family. His grandmother Basya married a Rubenchik. They had a son named Mikhail, Aleksandr's father, who was drafted into the Russian army in WWII. Fellow soldiers killed him because he was a Jew. In 1941, Aleksandr (then about two years of age) and his mother left Berezino and went to Minsk to shop. On that very day the Nazis invaded Berezino and killed all the Jews in town including his grandmother Basya. Aleksandr and his mother were able to get on a train to Siberia, where they lived out the war.

Aleksandr was kind enough to take the train from Minsk to Berezino just to take some photos of the street and houses in the modern town (below), which I am happy to share with all of you.

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Byerazino/>

**Photos of Byerazino by Aleksandr Rubenchik**

