

Solomon Manevich's Mother Rachil Manevich



This is my mother Rachil Manevich. The photo was taken in Tomsk in 1908.

I know little about my mother's family. My mother and her siblings were born in a small town of Chahussy in Belarus in the 1850s. My mother told me that Chaussy where she was born was a small town with numerous Jewish population. Jews lived in small houses in central parts of the town. My mother's family belonged to middle class. They lived in strict accordance with halakhah, followed the kashrut and celebrated Sabbath and all Jewish holidays. My mother didn't tell me any details since she and her sisters and brothers found their father's requirement to strictly observe Jewish religious traditions a burden. It wasn't a burden only for Nohim, one of my mother's brothers. The family was very poor.

My mother Rachil Katz was born in Chaussy in 1886. At birth she was given the Jewish name of Rokhlia-Genia. My mother didn't like talking about her childhood and so I know only fragments of her life. After finishing the Jewish school she spent few years at home helping her mother around the house. My mother read a lot. She was fond of Russian classics and liked Pushkin, Tolstoy and Turgenev. She was bored with living in a small town with its old traditions and customs, she was attracted by new progressive ideas. Besides, my mother was eager to get a good education and become a teacher or a doctor. She left home at the age of 16. Looking for a job she visited few towns in Belarus. Somehow she happened to come to Tomsk, a big town in Siberia, in 1907. She found a job and was an attendant at the pharmacy in the town hospital, then assistant pharmacist and later she became a pharmacist. She didn't attend any school, but she was smart and the doctor she worked for sympathized with her and trained her after work. My mother lived in Tomsk until 1910 and then she began to travel in Russia.

She worked in Syzran, a town near the Volga River, Troitsk and few other Russian towns. I don't know where or how she lived at that time. I think she probably rented rooms from various people. At that time she became fond of Bolshevik ideas and attended clubs: there were communist units in every town, but I don't know how she got there. They studied Marx and Engels. My mother didn't become a Bolshevik, but in one of Bolshevik groups she met my father Henry Manevich. They went to the front together in 1914 when WWI began. My mother was the director of pharmacy in the hospital in the Southern front. She worked in Tiflis (the capital of Georgia, Tbilissi at present) and Sverdlovsk. In 1918 she and my father settled down in Ekaterinoslav [Dnepropetrovsk at present, a big industrial town in central part of Ukraine]. My parents were married by that time, but I have no idea when or where they got married or whether they had a wedding of any kind.