

Mikhail Katsenelson, His Wife And Grandson



This photograph was taken in 2001 during my birthday party.

My daughter (together with her family) came from Israel to celebrate my 80th birthday. Their departure in 1990 influenced my life much.

But at that time my daughter, her husband and their little child left for Israel. They both were doctors, and in Israel they had to pass through examination to confirm their professional status.

They were having a hard time, therefore we together with my wife decided to go there and help them at home. As it was clear that we were leaving for a long time, I had to leave my service.

We went to Israel on December 27, 1990. We were afraid to be caught by the war in Persian Gulf. [The Persian Gulf War was a conflict between Iraq and a coalition of 34 countries led by the United States. It followed Iraqi capture of Kuwait in August 1990.] And it happened.

The first thing we saw in our daughter's apartment (in the hall) in Jerusalem was a gas mask. In the room there was a special cabin of anti-gas protection for our grandson. State of emergency was declared.

We heard air-raid warnings many times a day. An official from the Soviet Consulate called us and suggested to come back home by special flight. Of course we refused and stayed with our children.

Rocket bombardments of Israel became frequent. We helped our children as we could: my wife cooked, I went for a walk with our grandson and put out the rubbish. We were short of money. We did not starve, but could not afford buying local newspapers.

One day in the garbage can I saw accumulation of papers in Russian. I took them home and read with great interest. The most interesting for me was to read about Israeli civil defence actions during that war. I participated in those actions: used my gas mask, placed my grandson into the cabin of anti-gas protection, etc.

I realized that my personal experience in that war and everything I read about it in newspapers would be interesting to people in Russia. Having come back home, I wrote about it. Later I decided to write about Israel as a country. So my next book was called First-Hand Report on Israel. It was published, they printed 10,000 copies.

The book was quickly sold out. Later I wrote more books about Israel and one about Spain. I'd like to tell you that my first trip to Israel changed my life. Due to my new hobby (writing books) my life became rich and interesting. Total number of copies of my books is about 25,000. They all were sold out. I'd prefer to say the same another way: they all were bought, and I hope they all were read by people.

Regarding my first book: in 1993 I went to Israel for the 2nd time and took some copies with me. One of them I sent to the ambassador of Russia in Israel Alexander Bovin. [Alexander Bovin (1930-2004), a famous journalist, diplomat and politician was an ambassador of Russia in Israel (1991-1997).]

He was well-known in Russia as a journalist and political correspondent. During hard times Bovin managed to tell people some sort of the truth, and many people in Russia are grateful to him for that. Bovin thanked me for the book and said that he had read it with interest. He put spirit into me.