

Mikhail Katsenelson's Parents



This photograph was taken in Dedovsk near Moscow in 1949.

It shows my parents. Here I'll tell you about them and about my childhood.

I can tell you nothing not only about my great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers, but even about my grandmothers and grandfathers. Evidently my grandmothers and grandfathers had died before I was born.

I do not remember any stories or memoirs of my parents about their childhood or about their ancestors. Unfortunately I also remember not so much about my parents, but I'll tell you about it later.

I was born in 1921 in Rostov-on-Don. I do not remember the city, but I know that it is an ancient one (founded in the middle of the XVIII century). By the beginning of the XX century it was a large industrial center, an important river port and a university center.

My father worked as a drugstore manager (the drugstore was situated in one of the main streets of Rostov-on-Don). My mother worked at the same drugstore as a pharmacist though she had no special education.

I do not know why, but my father was considered to be a very good expert in his sphere. Therefore when the authorities decided to reinforce rural drugstores with skilled personnel, my father was sent there for work.

He was sent to a great sovkhos, which was called accordingly Gigant (Giant). He had to work there as a drugstore manager, too. It happened approximately in 1925.

We lived there not long. I can't recall our rural life very well. We lived in a house which seemed to me to be very huge. We kept rabbits. Now I think that we also had a vegetable garden. I also have a hazy recollection of the fire which happened in the village where we lived.

Soon my father was appointed a drugstore manager in Millerovo. Millerovo was a regional center, not far from it there was Veshenskaya Cossack village, well-known because of Mikhail Sholokhov who lived there. [Mikhail Sholokhov (1905-1984) was a Russian Soviet writer, a Nobel Prize winner, an author of different novels: Tikhii Don, Podnyataya Tselina, etc.]

My parents' names were Sara Pavlovna (nee Manevich) and Efim Natanovich Katsenelson (Belarusian by birth). I do not remember where exactly they were born. They were born in 1890s.

All their life long my parents worked at different drugstores. One might say that I was born in a drugstore: my parents occupied a service apartment near to the drugstore. I know neither how they met nor how they got married.

I already mentioned that I do not know my father's education level. I think he graduated from a University or a Medical College, because he was considered to be a pharmacist of the highest qualification. My father was a gentle and easy-tempered person.

But my Mum was hot-blooded. I already mentioned that she got no special education (she only finished a school), but living together with my father she acquired knowledge and skill and always worked as a pharmacist in the drugstores my father was the head of.

Our parents were not authoritarian, but rather respectful to me and my brother. Our family observed no traditions; the family was absolutely not religious. To tell the truth, our family was absolutely not Jewish.

I do not remember my parents talking about politics. I guess that they were the so called real Soviet people. I remember almost nothing about brothers and sisters of my parents: I only remember that my father's brother and sister lived in the center of Moscow.

I visited them when I studied in Moscow. I used to come to them on holidays to watch military parades on the Red Square. I have a faint idea of my Mum's brother: he was a well-known intelligence officer Manevich. [Manevich Lev Efimovich (1898-1945), an intelligence officer, a Hero of the Soviet Union (1965, posthumously).

Most probably the interviewee is mistaken, because patronymics of Manevich and the interviewee's mother do not coincide.] During the war my father was again sent to a new place of work: to Dedovsk near Moscow.

Parents lived there for some time and died in the beginning of 1950s.