

Lubov Ratmanskaya's Mother Sofia Ratmanskaya



My mother, Sofia Ratmanskaya. The photo was taken in Kiev in the late 1920s. My mother came from the town of Pogar, Belarus. She was born in 1886. Her father was a tin-maker. He also had seven children: Monya, Khaya, Etya, Sosha, my mother Sofia, Riva, and Yakov. There were two brothers (the elder one died of tuberculosis) and the rest were women. By the way, uncle Yakov was also a tin-maker. His son Ilya was a pilot during World War II, now he's a colonel and lives in Leningrad. My mother and father got married through embroidery. Traveling to different cities in

search of a job, my father found himself in a workshop where my mother was sewing coats, and my father began to work there as an embroiderer. They got married in Pogor. It was a small town. My father was involved in some revolutionary group, so he was given a false passport under the name of Pasternak and he was illegally sent to Tsaritsyn. My mother went with him. My elder brother Abram was born in Tsaritsyn in 1908. I don't know any details of my father's revolutionary activities. He never talked about it. But my brother was Jewish, so he was circumcised in secret: father found a rabbi in Tsaritsyn and received a special certificate for Abram. Abram is Jewish, but his skin is very dark. Later, the group that helped my father sent him to Vladikavkaz. It was some time around 1909. We lived in an underground flat, and my mother told me how scared she was every time the police came. The flat looked like a sewing workshop. My mother worked as a tailor and sewed dresses and some other things, pretending she had other sewers there, while my father embroidered. I remember when we already lived in Kiev and our house hadn't been bombed yet, I saw a postcard from some general's wife, saying 'Mrs. Sokolov, please prepare this and that for my arrival'. My mother was a fully-fledged member of the revolutionary organization. My mother told me how once the police misunderstood the name of a person and for some reason came to our house to look for somebody called Shimon Sak. There may have been such a person in another organization. My mother showed them the documents for Alexander Sokolov, and the police left. Then my parents immediately decided to move from Vladikavkaz. It was in 1917. We left the town immediately after the February Revolution. I remember Vladikavkaz only a little. At the end of 1917 we came to Kiev, to my father's parents. Later, because my father was an embroiderer and his work was in demand, my parents found a flat. My parents had practically no education. I have some of their letters and I can see that they were not very well educated. But my father knew literature very well. Mother liked to read very much. During military communism we lived in a house in Proreznaya Street and when there were shootings we hid in the basement. There was no light in the basement, and my father would recite works by different writers by heart to all who hid with us. I should add that all the Ratmanskys were very talented; it was a wonderful family, where each member felt the need to learn always more and more. My mother read Russian literature. She couldn't read in Yiddish. She spoke Yiddish very well and knew about Mendele and Bialik. She told me that in our room in Proreznaya Street the portraits of her parents hang on one wall and the portrait of Mendele, on the opposite wall.