

Sara Yankelevna Raitsykh



In this photo you can see the employees and patients of the clinic for mentally disabled patients in pre-revolutionary Kharkov. Among the employees of this clinic was my grandmother, a nurse, Sara Yankelevna Raitsykh (then under her maiden name of Shamesh). Before working in that clinic Sara obtained a medical education and worked as an obstetrician.

My maternal grandmother, Sara Yankelevna Shamesh, was born in 1887 in Kharkov in Ukraine. She had received an education there, became an obstetrician, or a midwife, as they used to say then. But as a medical nurse she could also work in other fields. She aspired to education, attended language courses and accounting courses. She passed examinations, took a great interest in Marxism, and was a member of a Marxist circle, where they read 'The Capital,' and where they were supposed to keep revolutionary leaflets. In general she was involved in the revolutionary life of Kharkov, since Kharkov was an industrial city, and there was a strong revolutionary mood there.

If it hadn't been for the intervention of her mother, Grandmother would probably have had a different fate. Her mother had literally implored her to quit that infatuation with Marxism, and Grandmother got rid of it after all. Grandmother definitely went to the synagogue. Still in Kharkov, as it was customary, she was taught Judaism. A teacher of Jewish traditions and Hebrew language used to come to their house, and he treated her rather harshly. Whenever her answers were incorrect, he used to batter her, and Grandmother was a brisk girl, she would reply, 'Why are you fighting?!' And at that time her father was praying. And during prayer you are not allowed to talk. And only when he'd finished, he would turn and ask, 'Who is fighting, what's the matter, who is fighting?!'

And then Sara left Kharkov for Petrograd, though her father and mother, her sister and brothers tried very hard to talk her out of that decision. She left all the same, and found a job in Petrograd, however strange it is. It was very difficult to find a job in Petrograd then. She had the right of

residence, because she was the daughter of a Nikolai's soldier. In Petrograd she worked in the house of rich people by the name of Shuster, in the position of a nurse. The family was so rich that they could afford to hire their own nurse. Her duties included providing massages and injections, as they weren't very healthy people, all of them. And there in Petrograd in 1917 she met Iosif Lazarevich and married him. They got married in Petrograd, and then went to Baku. Sara Shamesh died in 1964 in Leningrad, and was buried at the Jewish cemetery.