

Abram Yudelevich With His Brother Isaac And Sister Pera



From left to right in this picture are my father Abram Yudelevich, his brother Isaac Yudelevich and sister Pera, the picture was made in Jonava in February 1922 (they were single at that time).

My paternal grandparents Lazar and Gitel Yudelevich had three children. The eldest was my father Abram Yudelevich. Isaac was the middle son. He was born in 1896. He was a subcontractor before war. He took the orders for construction of the houses. He was in charge of a construction crew, practically having the functions of the foreman. Isaac lived in Kaunas with his wife Raya Melamed and daughter Giten, born in 1929. When Soviet army came to power, he had to be in hiding as he might be deported for being rather rich. During Great Patriotic War all of them, including Raya's elderly mother were in Kaunas ghetto. Being rather active Isaac understood at once that they should get out from ghetto at any cost. He managed to ingratiate with Lithuanians, who were helping out Jews. All of them left ghetto in different time and by different means. Uncle Isaac was in hiding for a long time. He was sheltered by Lithuanians, passing from one reliable person to another. In 1943 he lived on a picturesque island on a farmstead of two Lithuanian brothers. Somebody gave away Isaac and he was found by politsei. Both Isaac, and brothers, who sheltered him, were beaten black and blue and imprisoned. He was sent to Estonian concentration camp from the prison, and then to Dachau. There he lived to see the liberation. All those years Isaac had known nothing about the fate of his family and he was sure that all of them perished. Uncle was afraid to come back to his motherland understanding that Stalin's camps would be imminent for him instead of the fascists' ones. He left for Palestine upon liberation. Being there he found out that Raya and Gitel were rescued. They lived in Vilnius. The family reunion took place only in 1972 as before that time Raya and Gitel were not issued a permit to depart for Israel. Being tortured by yearning for her husband in long separation, Raya had lived with him for ten years. Uncle Isaac passed away at an old age - 89 or 88.

Father's younger sister Pera, born in 1900, married Emmanuel Katsnelson - a mirthful and witty man. He well-read and possessed encyclopedic knowledge. Pera and her husband lived in France for a while. Emmanuel was involved in revolutionary movement in Russian and was an adherer of communist party, so he talked Pera into leaving for Russia. In 1926 Pera and Emmanuel happened to be in Moscow. They were lucky not to have come in the period of repressions. Emmanuel and Pera had a serene life in Moscow. Emmanuel was acquainted with outstanding activists of Soviet regime and communist party. He knew most of them from the underground. Either somebody gave him a hint, or Emmanuel himself understood what was going on, he decided 'not to stand out'. Thus, he was assigned to inconsiderable positions and escaped almost inevitable arrest in his position - native of bourgeois Lithuania and resident of France. Emmanuel died at the age of 70. Pera died shortly after him, in 1997. Pera's son Yuri, born in 1930s, is currently living in the USA. Younger daughter Nina, born before war, is currently living in Israel.

My father was born in Jonava in 1894. He went to Russian lyceum in the town of Suwalki [Poland, 10 km away from the border of Lithuania and Poland and 170 km from Vilnius]. Upon graduation he decided to enter university. He dreamt to become a lawyer. Grandpa Lazar was very displeased with father's decision. He hoped that his son would follow in his footsteps, but my young father was adamant. That is why grandfather practically cut him off a shilling. Father went to Russia to enter the institute. I do not know how he happened to be in Siberia. He entered Tomsk university [about 3000 km from Moscow]. Father studied there for couple of years and got transferred to Yekaterinburg [Russia, 1500 km from Moscow], where he graduated juridical department. Father came back to the motherland in 1918 right after Lithuania became independent [Lithuanian independence]. In couple of years, namely in 1923 father proposed to mother.