

Iosif Gotlib's Mother Dora Gotlib, And Father Abram Gotlib



These are my parents: my mother Dora Gotlib (nee Levandovskaya), and father Abram Gotlib. This is a photograph from our family album; my parents made it on their 20th wedding anniversary. This photo was taken in Sambor, 1937 in our house. My parents left it with our neighbors when moving to Israel in 1945 hoping that I would get it after I returned from the front. It happened so and since then I've kept this photo as the only memorabilia of my parents whom I never managed to see again.

In 1910s my father moved to St. Petersburg where he entered the medical Faculty of the university. My father was a very talented and educated man. He knew 5 European languages: English, French, German, Italian and Romanian; he could draw well and play the piano. After finishing his studies he was trained in a hospital for a year where he obtained qualifications as a surgeon. My father worked in this hospital until the beginning of World War I. When Russia entered the war my father was recruited to the tsarist army. He was a surgeon in a frontline hospital.

After finishing Froebel school in 1915 my mother and other graduates were sent to a hospital at the front where my future parents met. They worked in the same hospital. They fell in love with each other and got married in 1917. They didn't have a Jewish wedding, but registered their marriage. When in 1917 a revolution took place in Russia and the Russian Empire fell apart, new borders were established. The Western Ukraine was annexed to Poland. There was famine and war in Russia. My mother's family lived in Poland and my mother convinced him to move to her mother in Poland.

After they moved to Poland my father's life was hard. Poland didn't recognize his Russian doctor's diploma. He had to take exams in Polish, but he didn't know it. He tried to work illegally in Lvov, but it was dangerous. My parents moved to Biskovichi village Sambor district Lvov region [580 km

from Kiev] also belonging to Poland. My mother's family helped them with money, even though the grandfather died in 1915, before the marriage took place, and they bought a house. My father worked as a veterinary. My mother didn't work after getting married. My parents were religious. My mother and father observed Jewish traditions. We always celebrated Sabbath at home.

In 1930 there was a big fire in Biskovichi. Few houses in our street including our house burnt down. My father received compensation from the municipality for his burnt house and managed to buy a house in Sambor for this money. My father was good at drawing and woodcarving and he chose to do this to earn his living. My father carved wood sculptures. Wealthier people used to decorate their gardens with them. He also made stucco decorations on ceilings and building facades. All of a sudden his works happened to be in demand and my father began to earn a lot. My mother began to work as well. She was a very good cook and began to do this to earn her living. She cooked at weddings or other celebrations in wealthy families. Shortly after she went to work, my mother bought a piano that she had long dreamed about. She had wonderful hearing. She didn't know notes, but she played tunes by ear. I remember that we gathered in our parents' room on Saturday and sang Jewish songs that we knew many and my mother accompanied for us and sang too. Our family was very close and I often recall those happy hours.