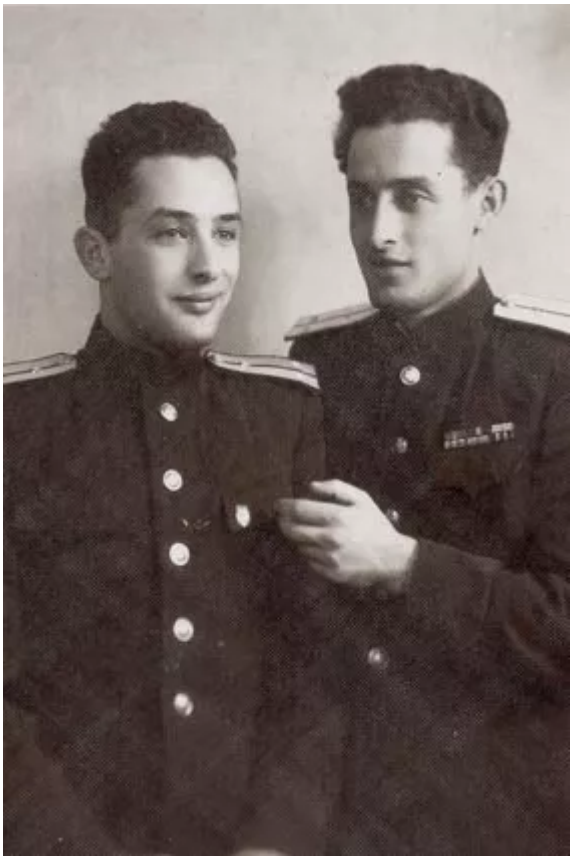
Mikhail Katsenelson And His Brother



This photograph was taken in Leningrad in 1945.

Here you can see me and my brother Naum.

In our boyhood days we were good friends. He held me in respect as his elder brother. He became a professional soldier, too. He served in Ukraine, but he was no conjurer and rose only to the rank of captain.

When we grew up we became completely alienated and I blame his wife for it. Naum died in 1980s. He had got a daughter and a grandson, but they turned their back on me.

Here I'll tell you about our meeting in Leningrad.

After the end of the war I was given a courteous reception at the Air Force Academy named after Zhukovsky in Moscow. Few of entrants had military awards.

I passed through the entrance examinations for access course at the radio engineering faculty. But on the bulletin board I saw my name in the list of not accepted with a postscript to come to the Academy direction for an interview. I polished my boots (for some reason it seemed to me very important) and went to the Academy chief.

He was very kind to me and said that he considered me to be quite ready to become a first-year student. I said that I came directly from an earth-house at the airdrome. He answered 'Get back to your military unit and come next year to study at the first course'.

I told him about various tricks I had to resort to, about my overcoat in the study of our political leader, etc. He said 'Don't worry about it, I'll put a call-letter for the next year in your documents.'

He did it. I knew that every document went through the Staff of Long-Range Aviation before we received it. The staff was situated next door and I went there.

They listened to me attentively and suggested to take my documents and enter the Leningrad Air Force Academy named after Mozhaysky. [The Leningrad Air Force Academy named after Mozhaysky was founded on March 27, 1941.]

That suited me fine. Besides my brother Naum lived in Leningrad (he was a student of the Leningrad Military Engineering School). Our last meeting took place before the war and I was looking forward to seeing him.

In the Leningrad Academy they already started studying. I passed in my documents. They asked me to wait, and a teacher of mathematics came up to me. He came to examine me.

Till now I remember his question: 'What is logarithm?' I gave a correct answer and became a student of the access course (they lodged me in the hostel).

There were 63 students at our course. Almost all teachers were Jews. I was chosen to be the Komsomol leader of the course, and later - a secretary of the local Party organization. Sorry, I forgot to tell you that I became a Communist Party member in 1942 at the front line.

There we studied one year (most time was devoted to reviewing of the school program). Besides that we had a lot of work introducing order in the city: we cleared away blockages, cleaned streets (in fact by that time Leningrad still did not get rid of the blockade traces).

In 1946 I became a first-year student of the radio engineering faculty of the Academy. Our teachers were remarkable persons. Almost all of them were outstanding scientists and experienced teachers.

Later, when I became a teacher myself, I tried to copy teaching manners of my favorite teachers.