

Yuri Tsvey



This is my, Alexander Tsvey's father Yuri Tsvey. The picture was made in Vitebsk in 1922 shortly before parents' wedding. This picture was kept by grandfather Moses Tsvey in Leningrad and was given to me by my uncle Solomon Tsvey after grandfather died in 1966.

My paternal grandfather Moishe Tsvey and grandmother Basya-Riva Tsvey (nee Mostova) lived in the town of Volyntsy [800 km to the west from Moscow] Gomel oblast, Belorussia. My paternal great grandfather Berl Mostov also lived in the town Volyntsy. I do not know when and where he was born. He was an elderly tall man. He was well respected in the town. My father took after him, and I after my father, but my mother and all her kin were of short height. Great grandfather Berl was a merchant. The Mostovs family was one of the three richest families in the town. Great grandfather Berl died in 1919. I do not know how many children were there in the Mostovs family. My grandmother Basya-Riva was born in 1883.

My father was the first-born. Grandmother gave birth to him in 1902. I know only his Russian name [common name] Yuri. He must have had a Jewish name, but I did not know it. Mother had escaped to talk about father. He was a grey-eyed, tall and good-looking man. He played mandolin very well. The Tsvey family was musical on the whole. Unfortunately there is little I know my father's siblings. Now the family is gone, and there is nobody I can ask questions. I remember father's brothers Abram, Israel, Solomon, Efim and sister Sofia.

The family Tsvey was well-off. They dealt with leather - beginning from the tannery, making leatherwear and selling it. Grandfather had his own store. Children also were involved in work. They bought skin of the animals and tanned it. Being the eldest my father did most of the work. He tanned the skin manually by using hazardous chemical agents, staying by the tub with the solution

for tanning. He must have undermined his health during work and was afflicted with tuberculosis, which caused his death, also during his work. After revolution as of 1917 authorities took production from grandfather and the family was bereft of the source of income.

I do not know how my parents met. It was a love wedlock. They had a traditional Jewish wedding. After wedding mother moved to father's house. They lived with his parents. Grandmother used to boss around in the family and had quite a difficult authoritarian character. Mother-in-law was hard on my mom and blamed her in everything. Mother was an orphan and her brothers were far away and there was nobody to stand up for her. Besides, nobody told my mother about father's disease - open form of tuberculosis. Father's kin was aware of it and they found it unnecessary to inform mother of it. I was born in 1925 in the town Volyntsy. I was named Israel after my deceased maternal great grandfather. I do not know what was the reason of the tiff between my parents. All I know is that they separated in 1927.

My father died from lung tuberculosis in 1927. He was buried in Volyntsy. I do not know where his grave is. Mother did not tell me hardly anything about father. Even Uncle Solomon did not tell me all about him. Grandfather commemorated the day of father's death till the end of his days. He always went to the synagogue on that day and read kaddish for his son, who died earlier than he. Candles were lit at home on that day. Father's kin probably felt guilty and tried to help mother the best they could. Grandfather's family had been taking care of me, especially uncle Solomon.