

Minna Birman's Parents Mordko And Sophia Birman



These are my parents Mordko and Sophia Birman. This photo was taken in Yelisavetgrad in 1922.

My mother Sophia Gredenitskaya was the only daughter in her family. She was born in Odessa in 1893. At that time my grandfather had a three-bedroom apartment. My grandfather let one room to a Jewish teacher who was only allowed to teach Jews. This teacher helped my mother to prepare to study in a grammar school. My mother went to the 7th grade in a grammar school in order to save money and receive a certificate as soon as possible. After finishing the 8th grade in grammar school students were allowed to teach. My mother wanted to continue her studies, but her family couldn't afford it. During WWI all relatives of veterans of the war were issued a permit for free education. One of my mother's uncle Yakov's sons was at the front during the war. He sent my mother confirmation that he was at the front and my mother managed to enter the medical Faculty of Novorossiysk University in 1915. In 1917 a revolution began. My mother got involved in revolutionary activities and quit the university. Her fellow students were involved in revolutionary activities and they involved my mother.

My mother had ties with the Zionist socialist working party. Once in 1917 she heard somebody saying 'A comrade has returned from exile. He has hemoptysis and is staying at the railway station'. My mother and her friend Manya Gombakh went to the railway station to pick up a former convict. My mother took my future father to her home. Grandfather Mordko and grandmother Ghiti didn't mind. They helped my mother to look after my father. The young people fell in love with each other and began to live in a civil marriage. They also belonged to the same party. At that time left procommunist wings separated from bourgeois Jewish socialist parties and united into a Jewish communist union that supported Bolsheviks. My father was a member of the committee of the union and my mother was his messenger. When Denikin troops came my parents went into the underground with Bolsheviks. In 1920 when the Soviet regime won over they officially joined the

party of Bolsheviks. My father was sent to the Romanian border. During the famine of 1921 many people tried to leave Russia for Romania and there were many arrests. My father had unlimited authority. He could even cancel arrests of ChK. Later he started hemoptysis and had to return to Odessa.

My grandmother and grandfather wanted my parents to have a religious wedding and convinced my parents to enter into one. My mother and father went to the synagogue. There was a chuppah at their wedding. However, I've never seen any document from the rabbi's office. When in 1921 my father was a member of the regional committee of the Communist Party there was a Party purge. My mother was trying to tell my father to keep the fact of their wedding at the synagogue since she had already been through it and told them everything. However, my father didn't understand such things. He wrote the truth in his report and was expelled. He lost his position, but he had ties with Jewish organizations. They valued him and during the famine in 1922 my father was appointed a Joint representative in Yelisavetgrad of Odessa province. My mother went with him. She was manager of a women's department. My parents were paid in golden 10-ruble coins. They sent some money to my father's mother in Poland.