

Asia Matveyuk's Father Shoilik Leikind With His Friend Solomon Levi



My father Shoilik Leikind (on the left) with his fellow villager and friend Solomon Levi, in the tsarist army. They were photographed in their cavalry uniform in 1915. This photo was taken during recruitment in Nikolaev. My father and Solomon were mobilized to cavalry with their horses and served together during World War I.

My father Shoilik Leikind, born in 1898, studied in cheder in Novopoltavka village. Then he finished three or four grades of a Jewish school. Like many other residents of Novopoltavka he took to farming and winemaking. They said my father was very strong and so was Arkadiy. They used to haul a wagon full of grain to the mill. In 1915 my father and his friend Solomon Levi were taken to the czarist army. They were to serve in cavalry and my father's horse was also assigned to the army. During World War I my father was wounded in his shoulder. He returned a different person from the war: like many other representatives of poor Jewish families he got fond of revolutionary ideas and dreams about a better life and construction of a communist society. I cannot say what particularly had this effect on my father: it might have been the communist propaganda thrust on soldiers. My father stopped going to the synagogue, joined Komsomol, and became the leader of the village poor.

My father was also thinking of marriage. He knew my mother since childhood and before going to the czarist army he got her acceptance of his proposal to get married. However, their parents didn't give their consent to this marriage. My mother was not the oldest daughter in the family and had to wait until her older sister got married. My parents got married in 1918, shortly after my

mother sister Rokhel-Leika's wedding. Although my father wasn't religious any longer and spoke against any religious traditions, to be able to marry his beloved girl he had to observe all Jewish religious wedding traditions. They had a chuppah at the synagogue according to the rules. However, there was no big wedding party since it was a hard period of life shortly after the revolution, the power shuffled from one group to another resulting in destitution, pogroms and hunger.