

Volf Kabakov



This is my father Volf Kabakov.

The snapshot was taken by me shortly before his death in Moscow in 1968.

My father Volf Kabakov was born in 1896. Having finished lyceum father left for Saint Petersburg, where he studied at Law Department of the University. He managed to finish only two courses.

He could not go on with his education as the civil war was unleashed, there was no scholarship, no heating in the hostel, no prospects for future and in a word it was not the time to study.

Father went to his relatives in Minsk. He married my mother Anna Pelix in 1919. I do not know what kind of wedding they had- secular or religious. Unfortunately, I know hardly anything about my parents for two reasons: first the upbringing of our generation, the motto of that time was: "We would raze the world of violation...!", and we were taught that after October 1917 [Russian Revolution of 1917] we would start a new life and we should not care for the past and forget it.

I belonged to that generation Secondly, it was even more aggravated by my service in fleet since the age of 16. I was rarely at home and was hardly involved in the life of my kin.

The only thing I know that parents' wedlock was considered to be a misalliance. At that time the gradation of the past was still there, and Soviet regime had not affected the minds and mentality of Jews.

The marriage between Haim Pelix daughter, who had his own business, and the son of Gersh Kabakov, who owned no business, was reckoned as misalliance. Nonetheless, they got married.

Daughter Sofia was born in 1920. She died soon. Then they moved to Leningrad. Father was an officer, i.e. performing office functions. Such profession was called clerk in the west. Clerk was supposed to work in different branches, one day in one, tomorrow in another etc.

My father was such type of a clerk. Though he was called the economist or statistics expert, all the same it changed nothing. He had never been involved in legal work.

My parents came of traditional Jewish families, but they were rather liberal in mind. They belonged to such type of Jews, who wanted to escape from Jewry and patriarchal principles of the past. It was not rare at that time.

Though, as the experience showed, they were not able to do as they wished. They remained Jews subconsciously. Having denied religion and Jewry in the years of adolescence, my parents at a mature age came back to Jewry and started thinking of God.

Father being over the hill, at the age of 70 started to go to the synagogue and fast on Yom-Kippur. Mother also took an interest in religion. I remember her cry when she was listening to Hatikvah.

Father was hot-tempered. He had a hard life which made his temperamental character even more acerbated. He was declared peoples' enemy and imprisoned in 1929 being charged with bourgeois views.

He was exiled to Solovetskiye Islands [about 1000 km to the north from Moscow]. He got off with that pretty easily and was released in 1932. His incarceration in GULAG left an imprint on his further life. Father was broken down.

That year 1932 he left mother and married another woman. He was still thinking of mom and he loved me very much. It is hard to say who had a bigger influence on me. Both of my parents equally took part in my raising.

After divorce, father was very tender and affectionate to me. Moreover, I spent most of my childhood with father. The reason for it was that my mother's apartment was in the basement- father had much better living conditions. The most important for parents was to care of me, but not thinking of their offences.

Father was drafted in the army in August 1941. He was in the lines. Before war he worked in procurement ministry. He was drafted and given military uniform. In the front he dealt with procurement of forage. He had worked there for a year, but since he was rather old for military he was sent back to Moscow, to his previous job.

After war father kept working for the ministry as a clerk. I saw him couple of times, since I rarely came to Moscow. Father died of infarction in 1968 and was buried in Moscow in Vostryakovskoye cemetery.