

Isaac Gragerov With His Mother



My mother Raissa and I are pictured after we returned from Rostov-on-the-Don to Odessa in 1918 . My parents got married in the fall of 1916. They had a wedding in Odessa. Although my parents were atheists, they gave in to their numerous Jewish relatives and had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah, even though there were only the closest relatives and friends at the wedding. My parents lived in my grandfather Abram's apartment in Odessa. One month before I was due my mother went to Rostov. She felt safer having her mother close to her. I was born in Rostov on 14th October 1917, a few days before the Revolution. My grandparents convinced my mother to stay in Rostov. When I turned 1 year old my father came to Rostov to pick up mother and me and take us to Odessa. My first memories go back to 1920 when my mother, who had a strong will and character, decided to visit her family in Rostov. It was the time of the Civil War in Ukraine and the debauchery of gangs robbing and murdering passengers on trains. My father was begging her to stay but she got on the train to Rostov-on-the-Don anyway. There were no bandits, but something else happened. I had a high fever and diarrhea on the train. Other passengers were afraid of

cholera - there was an outburst of cholera in Russia at that time - and decided to force my mother to get off the train at the next stop. That's what I remember: my mother crying, other people yelling and a kind man bending over me. He was a doctor, stood up for us and didn't allow these people to throw us off the train, where we would have fallen prey to bandits. The doctor explained to the passengers that the temperature gets lower in the course of cholera and that I had very high fever. It turned out that I had dysentery. We got off in Kharkov where my grandfather's relatives on his mother's side lived. Their family name was Kovarskiy. I loved my great-grandmother Kopochka. She was a plain woman and had no education, but she was so kind and nice. She looked after me and gave me food when I was on my way to recovery. The Kovarskiy family was a poor family, but they treated us with warmth and shared what they had with us. We lived in Kharkov until I recovered, and then we returned to Odessa.