

37 Pokrovka Street

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The project *Posledniy Adres* (Last Address) is an independent initiative started in Russia in 2014 to commemorate the victims of political repression and state tyranny in the years of Soviet power. Small metal plates are attached to the last known residences of these persons as part of a program based on a similar one for Holocaust victims in Germany and other countries. Installation of the plates requires the cooperation of the current owners of the buildings and surviving relatives of the victims. Several hundred plates have been installed in Moscow alone.

The multi-story building at 37 Pokrovka Street in Moscow has eight of these plates: six were installed in 2016 and two more in 2018. Designed in the constructivist style by a team of architects led by N. V. Lukin, the building was intended as a housing cooperative for the Society of Former Political Prisoners and Exiles (VOPiS), which took occupancy in 1931. The apartments in the building did not have kitchens on the grounds that Soviet women were emancipated from housework duties and everyone would be eating in the communal dining room.

VOPiS was a thriving organization for many years, growing from 200 members in 1921 to a maximum of 2159 in 1931. With branches in 50 cities, it carried on an ambitious publishing and research program. Its members had access to special housing, jobs, and pensions. There were other perks of a lesser nature, such as not having to stand in line to board a streetcar.

But all this came to an end in 1935, when Stalin shut down the Society (of which he was a member). Soon the ranks of the former members of VOPiS were decimated by the Great Terror. According to the records



37 Pokrovka is the tall building in the middle background. Photo was taken around 1935. The building in the left foreground also belonged to the VOPiS

of the Russian Memorial Society, 21 residents of 37 Pokrovka were repressed.

Of the eight former residents commemorated by the Last Address Foundation, two had backgrounds in the anarchist movement. Their stories are given below.

A. M. Shavelzon

ANATOLY MOISEYEVICH SHAVELZON was born in 1880 in Minsk into the family of an office worker. He received a secondary education, and found employment as a teacher. In 1901 he joined the General Jewish Labour Bund in Lithuania, Poland and Russia, commonly known as just The Bund. In 1901 – 1904, operating under the nickname “Pavlusha,” Anatoly directed study circles in the Minsk organization of the Bund, and was arrested twice. In 1905–1906 he was a

propagandist for the Bund in Tolochin (now in Belarus), then transferred to the anarcho-communists, participating in groups in Vilna, Riga, Grodno, and Minsk—now using the nickname “Berliner.” In April, 1907, Shavelzon was arrested and sentenced to six years at hard labour, which he served until 1914 in Riga and Pskov. Then he was sent for another three years of exile to Yeniseisk (Siberia).

After the 1917 revolution, Shavelzon left the anarchist movement.

Up until his arrest on March 3, 1938, Shavelzon worked in the artel (workers' cooperative) "Khimkraska" (Chemical Paint) in the Moscow suburb of Bolshevo. The artel was also a creation of the VOPiS. The paint factory was an unhealthy place to work, and the workers received a ration of milk as part of their pay. In the late 1930s, the NKVD uncovered a "counterrevolutionary SR-Bundist organization" in the factory: many workers were arrested – ranging from the director to the night watchman. Among them was 58-year-old Anatoly Shavelzon.

On May 28, 1938, all those arrested, among whom were a number of former political prisoners from



Workers of "Khimkraska" in an undated photo. At least 20 workers of the artel were arrested and shot in 1938.

tsarist times and some former anarchists like Shavelzon, were sentenced to be shot. The sentence was carried out on June 3.

T. I. Shatalova-Rabinovich

TATYANA IVANOVNA SHATALOVA-RABINOVICH was born in 1891 in Kherson (now in Ukraine), into the family of a shoemaker and a laundress. She was carried away by revolutionary ideas from an early age. Home-schooled, she became a teacher herself. In the early 1900s, Tatyana joined the Socialist Revolutionary Party (PSR). In the summer of 1907, she was arrested for helping to organize the escape of political prisoners from Yelizavetograd Prison and ended up in prison herself for almost two years. In 1909 she was sentenced to five years of hard labour for storing explosives and belonging to the PSR. She served her sentence in Yekaterinoslav until 1911, and in Riga from 1911 to 1913. Then she was exiled to far-off Irkutsk province (Siberia).

In Siberia she met her future husband Isaak Isayevich Rabinovich and transferred her allegiance to the anarchists. She became one of



Tatyana Shatalova-Rabinovich

the most prominent members of the Federation of Anarcho-Communist Exiles of Eastern Siberia, and editor of its underground newspaper *Rabochy Golos* (The Worker's Voice), published in Irkutsk. In 1914 she was arrested for

these activities, but was released pending trial after the birth of her daughter in prison.

After 1917 Tatyana ceased political activity. In the early 1920s, she and her family moved to Moscow and in 1935 moved into the building at 37 Pokovka. Unhappy with the absence of a stove, they installed one in the bathroom. Tatyana worked as a packer in the artel "Technokhimik," which produced fruit and vegetable derivatives and belonged to the VOPiS.

Her husband, Isaak Rabinovich, was also not politically active after the 1917 revolution. An engineer by profession, he worked at a plastics factory in Moscow. Misanthropic by nature, he did not get along with other members of VOPiS and soon left the organization. In 1936, grasping the danger of the political situation, he abandoned his family and moved to the Caucasus, thereby saving his life.

In 1937-38, there were wholesale arrests at 37 Pokrovka. The residents did not sleep at night—everyone listened to hear if the elevator stopped at their floor.

Tatyana's granddaughter Katerina Kompaneyets described the disaster that struck the family:

"On January 29, 1938, grandmother was arrested. In the apartment at the time was her son, a school-boy, my mother [22 years-old], and a neighbour, Bliznetsova. Grandmother's room was searched, her papers were confiscated, and on the floor there was a photo of Trotsky with the inscription 'Tanya from Lev.' Nobody even knew who this Lev was. . . . Grandmother was taken away. Her son was crying. Her last words to him were: 'Don't cry, Valya. I'll be back soon.'

"But she never returned. The family carried parcels to the Matrosskaya Tishina Prison, where, they were told, grandmother was being held. They kept on bringing parcels for several months after she had been shot – the prison staff were well



Relatives of the victims of state violence at the installation of six plaques at 37 Pokrovka Street, Moscow, including those for Shavelzon and Shatalova-Rabinovich.

fed at the expense of the families of those arrested."

In fact the sentence—shooting—was delivered quickly, on February 27, on the charge of "belonging to an illegal SR counterrevolutionary organization . . . and preparing

terrorist acts against the leaders of the Communist Party and the Soviet government." Tatyana refused to acknowledge her guilt, but was convicted on the testimony of two "witnesses."

The 47-year old Tatyana was shot on March 7, 1938, along with other workers of Tekhnokhimik. Altogether 39 workers of the cooperative were shot.

As often happened in those times, her first death certificate indicated a false date—March 22, 1942—and there was no cause of death given. It was only in the 1990s that relatives learned the true circumstances of Tatyana's death. She was rehabilitated in 1956. The Rehabilitation Commission recognized that "the investigation used prohibited procedures . . . to secure the conviction of the accused."

After Stalin's death, Isaak Rabinovich moved back to Moscow and re-established relations with his family. He died in 1960.



37 Pokrovka Street today.



Sources

The ceremony during which plaques for Shavelzon and Shatalova-Rabinovich were installed is described in a press release of the Last Address Foundation, here:

<https://www.poslednyadres.ru/news/news158.htm>

Katya Kompaneyets has written biographies of her grandparents Tatyana Shatalova-Rabinovich and Isaak Rabinovich, here:

<http://berkovich-zametki.com/2012/Zametki/Nomer6/KompaneecI.php>

Supplementary information about Tatyana's anarchist activities is found in Anatoliy Dubovik's "Kalendar":

<http://www.makhno.ru/forum/showthread.php?t=1464&highlight=%D8%E0%F2%E0%EB%EE%E2%E0>