

Galina Barskaya, Her Son, Roman Natov, Aunt Olga Barskaya And Her Husband, Nikolay Rukoyatkin



Standing: I, Galina Barskaya, my son, Roman Natov. Sitting: my aunt, Olga Barskaya, her husband, Nikolay Rukoyatkin. The photo was taken in Kiev in 1960.

In general, anti-Semitism was manifested in everything. For instance, Aunt Olya and Uncle Nikolay came to live with me. We all lived in one room, which was crowded, so Uncle Nikolay went to fight for a personal apartment. A representative of the Communist Party district committee came over to see how old party member Rukoyatkin was living. Suddenly he exclaimed with indignation, 'Couldn't you find a Russian or a Ukrainian woman for yourself! Why did you have to marry a Jew!' For a long time after that Nikolay could not get an apartment. Later he was given two small rooms in a communal apartment.

My son experienced full measure of anti-Semitism. He finished a regular Ukrainian secondary school with good marks. It was very hard to enter university right after school, so he went to college. But it was hard for him to even enter the college because he was Jewish, so Nikolay had to help him. Very often Nikolay had to put on all his medals that he was awarded during the Civil War and go and help us see justice.

After the college my son tried to enter the university for several years. He tried to enter the Polytechnic Institute two years in a row, then the Food Institute, then another institute. But the result was always the same - he got high marks on the profile subjects, like physics and mathematics, but for written exams he got poor marks, which the teachers gave him on purpose to prevent him from entering the university.

I went to see the education minister and showed him a pre-war book about Soviet draughts-players, where a whole chapter was devoted to my husband. I asked the minister to help my son to get to university. It did not work. But the minister said that my son could enter the mechanic department – the most difficult one – of the Agricultural Academy to study by correspondence. Finally, my son entered it.

When he was defending his diploma project, he was singled out as one of the best students. So, he finally got a diploma – and hence started his problems with finding a job. The same situation repeated itself – going from enterprise to enterprise, from plant to plant; nobody wanted to give him a job. I went to the second secretary of the district Communist Party committee, who knew me for my propagandist work. Only due to his help my son was offered a job as a technologist at a plant.

My son's private life was unlucky. He was married but for a short time. Then he divorced his wife. Now he is working at a big plant, but he was never promoted because of his nationality. However, he does not demand much; he is easily content. Many of his friends have moved to Israel, America, or Germany, but my son does not even want to think about it. He loves Kiev and Ukraine very much; he cannot imagine his life outside this country.