

Zinoviy Belenkiy With His Son Naum Belenkiy



This is my cousin Zinoviy Belenkiy with his son Naum. This photo was taken in 1930s in Moscow.

My mother's older brother Zinoviy Belenkiy (his Jewish name was Ziama) finished a gymnasium as an external student. His anti-Semitic teacher refused to give him an excellent mark in the Russian literature and language till a curator came from the district town and my uncle passed his exam with an excellent mark. My uncle entered the Philological Faculty of Moscow University in 1911 or 1912. Having all excellent marks in his school certificate he was admitted within the quota without exams. He graduated from the Philological and Medical Faculties. Since the family could not support him he gave private classes to earn his living. He taught the son of an officer for the mayor

of the town. The boy improved his knowledge and his father once called my uncle: 'Young man, I owe you a lot for helping my son - I could not handle this before. What can I do for you?' My uncle said he wanted his family to move to Moscow. This officer said he could not help them obtain a residential permit to live outside the Pale of Settlement, but they could move to Moscow without a permit and that he would make arrangements with a policeman for my uncle to pay him 3 ruble bribe per month to leave them alone. My mother's family rented a small apartment in Moscow and paid the fee to the policeman until the Pale of Settlement was cancelled after the revolution. My mother's brothers and sisters finished a gymnasium in Moscow. My uncle Zinoviyy Belenkiy supported them. Then they got married and moved to various towns. I don't know the names of my mother's brothers or sisters.

During the Soviet period my uncle's professor of medicine invited him to take part in the consultation for the child of a big Soviet official and my uncle diagnosed the disease correctly. This was the beginning of his career as a private doctor. He married Rosa, whose father was an oil manufacturer from Baku [Azerbaijan]. In the 1920s their sons Lev and Naum were born. They lived in a nice apartment in the center of Moscow. When the Great Patriotic War began, my uncle volunteered to the front. He was awfully fat. He was assigned to a cavalry kazak regiment where they made him to ride a horse for 4 hours to lose some weight. Zinoviyy was a well educated man. He knew Jewish history, Hebrew and literature. He was well respected in his regiment. He was a good doctor and did his job well. He visited all locations of mass shootings of Jews: cemeteries, pits, burial locations to honor the deceased Jews. He told me about this and mentioned the names of towns. People respected him for honoring the memory of his people. My uncle Zinoviyy always stressed that he was a Jew. At the end of the war he was chief doctor in the Marshal Rokossovskiy army. On their way back home Marshal Rokossovskiy asked my uncle: 'Well, then, and what are you bringing your wife, Doctor?' 'Nothing special', - said my uncle. Rokossovskiy ordered his aide to take my uncle to their trophy stocks and my uncle brought home some clothes. He gave me a pair of cavalry pants and I wore them. We lived on the 6th floor and there was no elevator. When my uncle visited us, it was no problem for him to walk upstairs. He continued his private practice. Then he got blind, but his former patients still came with their children and grandchildren and he examined them by touch. He died in the late 1980s and was buried in a town cemetery in Moscow.