

Yakov Honiksmann With His Friend Michael Geyer And Wife Ninel Venediktova



This is me, the first on the left sitting, visiting my friend Michael Geyer in hospital. The woman on the right wearing a hat is my wife Ninel Venediktova. The photo was taken in Lvov in 1948. In Kokand I met my first wife. Her name was Ninel Venediktova. I corresponded with Rosa Sheinina and she gave me the address of her friend Ninel, who was a student of a teacher's college in Kokand. I fell in love with Ninel. She was a pretty Russian girl. She was 18. Her mother came from Kiev. She was a business-oriented woman. Ninel's mother was very unhappy that her daughter's boyfriend was a Polish Jew, but when I fell ill with typhoid on my way to Kokand and was removed from the train when I fell unconscious, she took a very active part in my life. She got in touch with my management and got penicillin for me. She visited me in hospital every day. Ninel and her mother returned to Kiev from evacuation in 1944. I had to obtain a residence permit to live in Kiev. I entered Veterinary College in Kiev and obtained a certificate confirming that I was a student. On the basis of this certificate I got registered at the hostel of this college. However, I took no interest in the Veterinary College. I lived in the family of my future wife in a communal apartment in the very center of Kiev. Ninel got pregnant and we registered our marriage on 13th August 1944. I studied in college and worked as a loader at a wood-cutting facility. I wanted to be a teacher, but when I was told that a teacher earned 550 rubles per month - this was the price of a loaf of bread - I went to the university. I had an appointment with the rector of the university. He said that if I were a graduate of their university I could become a post-graduate student. During that year I passed 13 exams and got a degree from Kiev University. There was another rector though, and when I came to see him he said, 'We are encouraging national specialists.' This was April 1945, after Victory Day. For the first time I faced state anti-Semitism. I lived in Kiev for a year. I didn't get along with my wife or my mother-in-law. She used to say 'What kind of a Jew is it that cannot provide for his family?' I went to Lvov since I was told that it was easier to get an apartment there.

My wife joined me in Lvov. We found a three-bedroom apartment, but we still didn't have a good life together. She didn't understand me. In 1947 I went to the Department of History at the Pedagogical College and they employed me as an assistant at the Department of Marxism-Leninism. I kept my job at the library, but my wife didn't find my earnings sufficient. We had arguments and rows with her. My mother-in-law also moved in with us. She became the mistress of our home. She was very good at making money. I left home and lived at the library, where I worked from 1946 to 1948.