

Boris Girshov And His Relatives



This photograph was taken in Leningrad in 1960 and shows me, my sister and my cousins.

I started working as a Pediatrician in the hospital at T.B. prophylactic center. There I met Rotenfeld, a radiologist. He became my teacher both in medicine and in life. He was born in tsarist Russia. He told me about establishment of Soviet power, about soviet leaders.

Rotenfeld used to listen to western broadcasting stations, and I read our newspapers. He demonstrated me barefaced lie in soviet newspapers, he engrafted dissident ideas in my mind. So long before the Doctors' Plot I was filled with anti-Soviet ideas.

You see, our talks were a weight on my mind, but did not surprise me. He used to say 'It'll be even worse. This country is alien to us, our country is Israel, we have to go there.' At that time I was still a young doctor. I always felt like a Jew, though I lived in the family of veteran Bolsheviks.

In the USSR when everyone was afraid of everything, I used to visit synagogue on holidays. Only my wife Tamara knew about it, and her parents didn't. My wife didn't accompany me to the synagogue. As for me, I understood religious essence of Jewish holidays.

I was a qualified doctor. I had serious surgical practice at the front hospital. Phthisiology required surgical skills, and I managed. The head physician of our clinic was Konstantin Andreev, a real Russian intellectual.

During the period of Doctors' Plot he was brave enough to give jobs to professors and assistant professors fired from different institutions. At our clinic there was a nurse, who was a secretary of the local Communist Party organization.

We were on familiar terms with her. She told me that they called her in and asked 'When will you stop giving jobs to Jews at your tubercular clinic? Tell the head physician that it is a scandal to invite fired Jews!'

To tell the truth the invited doctors were among the best doctors of the city. I was lucky to be engaged in research work under their supervision. An assistant professor Bergman gave me a topic for my dissertation.

I wrote an abstract and reported to professor Tsigelnik. Tsigelnik gave me good references and said 'Do you know who you are?' I answered 'Yes.' Tsigelnik 'I can do nothing for you. If you wish to become my postgraduate student, get your own way, go ahead! I gave you the testimonial - that's all I can do for you.'

I carried my documents to the personnel department, they looked through them and said 'Boris Davidovich, go on working, and we have to send your documents to Moscow for approval.

We will inform you in case of affirmative reply.' You know, they have been considering my documents till now.