

Alfred Liberman's Uncle, Yevsey Liberman, With His Wife Regina Gorovits, Daughter Yelena And Granddaughter Olga



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Here is a photo taken from Paris Match magazine of March 5, 1966, that shows my uncle, Yevsey Liberman, with his wife Regina Gorovits, daughter Yelena and granddaughter Olga. It accompanied an article by Mark Geiler.

My father's brother, Yevsey Grigoryevich Liberman, was born in 1897 and graduated from Kiev University. From 1923 he worked in Kharkov. He was an undoubtedly talented man: he later created an economic school famous all over the country. He started in Kharkov [which was the capital of Ukraine then] as an assistant or a secretary to a famous party leader of the Ukrainian Republic, People's Education Commissar Nikolay Skrypnyk. When famine hit the Ukraine [in the mid-1930s] and they began arresting the national Ukrainian intelligentsia, Skrypnyk, as one of the honest people of the old generation of party members, committed suicide. My uncle was among those arrested, and working for Skrypnyk was one of the charges against him; he was accused of supporting Ukrainian nationalism (they apparently forgot that he was Jewish). He was imprisoned for almost a year and even tortured. But he did not sign any papers. One of his students, who was teaching at the Kharkov Economic Institute at the time, helped obtain his release. Later, this student became the leader of the city party organization.

People tried to hush up the truth about the arrests. The extent of people's fear at the time can be seen from the following episode. Uncle Yevsey and his wife Regina Gorovits [the sister of the world's famous pianist Vladimir Gorovits, who lived in the USA], was visited by the Vladimir Gorovits' wife, V. Toscanini. My uncle thought it was necessary to ask the NKVD [People's Commissariat of the Interior] for permission to receive this foreign guest. He also asked them to send a representative of the authorities to every family meeting with her. It was probably due to the fact that his sister-in-law was known worldwide (she was a daughter of the famous conductor Arturo Toscanini) that there were no negative consequences for the Liberman-Gorovits family for

having had 'contacts with foreigners,' even though in many other cases it was enough for someone to have a relative abroad in order to be arrested and disappear.

Later, my Uncle Yevsey's lectures, articles and speeches drew the attention of the highest Soviet leadership; he won support from prime ministers Khrushchev and then Kosygin. An article titled 'Plan, Profit, Prize' that he published in 'Pravda' [the main newspaper of the USSR] in 1962 touched off a whole discussion among economists, while his line of reforms, supported by the leadership of the USSR, was nicknamed 'Libermanization' in the West. The journalist Mark Geiler called my uncle a 'leader' in the new Soviet economy and devoted a big article with photos of his meeting with Yevsey Liberman in his flat in Kharkov. This article was published in the French «Paris Match» magazine (March 1966).

My famous uncle died in 1984. Many economists say today that the basis for the liberalization of the economy in 1990s was missing the input of Yevsey Liberman, the 'father of the reforms' of the 1960s and the head of the Kharkov school of economists.