

David Levin's Aunt Frada Zelenova



This photo was taken in 1930s in Vitebsk, where my mother's sister Frada Zelenova came for a holiday together with her husband Mikhail Zelenov and their son, my cousin Gennady.

Mother (there were quite a few children both in family of my mother and of my father, as usually in Jewish families before the [Russian] Revolution) had seven brothers and sisters. Step by step, beginning since 1928, they moved to Leningrad. Soon almost all relatives of my mother came here: brother Naum together with his family, brother Isaac, sister Zinaida, and sister Bertha. In Vitebsk Boris, sister Frada, sister Emma stayed, and one more brother died earlier, to my opinion.

We communicated to mother's relatives a lot. I saw my cousins every week, especially Efim and Zalman, the sons of aunt Bertha. There was also Zinoviy, the son of Isaak, mother's brother. Often we celebrated holidays, all mother's brothers and sisters came to visit. Brother Naum, when drunk a little, began to argue to his wife, and everyone about that. In one room they placed about twenty or thirty people, a crowd of kids, it was very funny. Grandmother came to Leningrad too: hosted at one daughter, then at another one, and later she left for Vitebsk.

I remember that I was always happy to see uncle Naum, because he always brought three rubles to the child. That was a big event. And if I had money, I went to the Writer's corner [popular soviet bookstore in the center of the city], placed on Nevsky Avenue, and bought books.

We went to Vitebsk together with my cousins, sons of mother's sister Bertha. That was during the summer, we went to Letsy [small village near Vitebsk], to dacha [cottage], that uncle Boris rented. He had two sons too, called Mikhail and Efim. Boris worked on a moving machine with films, so-called cinema 'peredvigka' [the car or track with movies, traveling throughout the country]. He wasn't a head, he was some kind of operator, or dispatcher, and directed those cars to all corners.

Efim was doctor's assistant during World War II, and Mikhail was too little, so he didn't serve in the Army. They all survived, and Boris died later, after the War. His sons immigrated to America, first

Mikhail, and then Efim. I think they both are alive, but I don't keep in touch with them.

Other brothers, Isaac and Naum, who lived in Leningrad were civil servants both, they didn't get any special education, I think. Isaac was married to Eugenia, she was Jewish, and they had a son, called Zinovy, who was an active Komsomol leader, he was on the front and then he became a geologist. Perhaps, his mother was geologist either, I don't know exactly.

Finally Zinovy moved to America and died their one or two years ago. Naum had a wife, called Lubov, she was Jewish too, and she's been civil servant, just like her husband. They gave birth to two daughters: Lilia graduated from an Institute in Leningrad and worked as engineer, and Anna was a cashier. I remember her working in the bookstore not far from us, on Moscovsky Avenue.

Mother's sister Zinaida was a librarian and worked in a library her entire life. She had a son, called Genrich, he was married to a Jewish girl with high education. When he studied at the Institute, he's got sick, and instead of that our doctors gave some medicine, he died. He was twenty eight, I think. He is buried in Jewish cemetery.

Mother's sister Bertha was a civil servant, but after the World War II she was retired and lived on the pension, which she's got after her son's death, who was killed on the front. Frada was a bookkeeper and she was involved in coal industry.

Her husband Mikhail was a mine surveyor, he died during World War II from typhus. They had a son, called Gennady. They lived in Donbass [part of Ukraine]. And Emma was killed in Latvia during the World War II together with her son, they lived near Riga, in Meguapark [neighborhoods of Riga], and she was quite rich person, I think, because they had their own house, they even sent us its photos.