

Feiga Grienblatt



This is my aunt Feiga Grienblatt in a sanatorium, she is sitting second from left.

The picture was taken in 1937, probably, the most somber year of the Soviet history. Look at the tense unsmiling faces of her sanatorium acquaintances. The watchful eye of a portrait is hanging over them. Looks like it is A. A. Zhdanov.

This picture is indeed a document of the epoch.

My grandmother's younger sister Feiga, whose common name was Fanya, was born in Orsha in 1899. In 1924 she moved to Leningrad and entered the First Medical Institute. In 1929 she was assigned to work as a doctor in the Urals. Some years later she returned to Leningrad, where she lived till the end of her life.

Feiga was considered a person subject to the draft. When in 1939 World War II broke out, she was summoned to military service. She took part in the 'liberation' of western Ukraine and later in the war with Finland. Thus, she participated in the war since 1939. She served in the 'medsanbat' [medical sanitary battalion] attached to a military airdrome during the war with Germany. She was in the war from 1941 to 1945, obtained the rank of a major of medical service and was awarded for service in battle with the Order of the Red Star and the Order of the Patriotic War, and various medals.

After World War II Aunt Feiga returned to Leningrad. She lived in a communal apartment in a small room of 14 square meters. Our family - my mother, me and my maternal grandparents - were in Alma-Ata, capital of Kazakhstan at that time, where we had evacuated when World War II broke out. My mother wanted to return home to Kiev, where we lived before the war, very much - but there was nowhere to go back to for us in Kiev, all our relatives perished and our rooms in the communal apartment were occupied. And Feiga wrote a letter to my mother, saying that since

there were so few left of them, they had to get together. Mother went to Leningrad. My grandparents and I also came to Leningrad several years later, after Mother and Aunt Feiga managed with great difficulty to obtain a bigger space for us in another communal apartment.

After demobilization in 1945 when Aunt Feiga returned to Leningrad she worked on Vassilyevsky Island as the head of the Therapeutic Department in a hospital. When the Doctors' Plot started in 1953, we were very much afraid that she would be arrested or fired. Many Jewish doctors were treated like that at that time. Fortunately, she was simply dismissed from the position of a department head and made a common physician. Probably, the hospital management respected her and her services. After Stalin's death she was soon appointed head of the department again. Unfortunately, not all Jews survived like that the persecution in those years.