

Adolf Landsman With His Nanny



That's me with my nanny, unfortunately I don't remember her name, she worked for us only a few months. The picture was taken in Nizhniy Novgorod in 1928.

I was born on 14th April 1924 in Nizhniy Novgorod. My parents called me Adolf. I don't have a Jewish name. My father still worked in his shop with his brother Pavel.

My mother was a housewife and took care of me. We were pretty well-off during the NEP times, and the Soviet regime encouraged entrepreneurship. I remember hardly anything about my life in Nizhniy Novgorod. We left it for Moscow in 1928.

My parents spoke only Russian with me. They spoke Russian, too with each other and they switched to Yiddish when they needed to conceal something from me. Unfortunately, I wasn't taught Yiddish. I don't think my parents were religious. They stuck to Jewish traditions rather conventionally.

My parents didn't pray. My father worked on Sabbath and my mother also had things to do. Maybe it was connected with the rigid struggle of the Soviet regime against religion. Religious people were persecuted and disdained. Pesach was the only holiday we celebrated at home. We bought matzah for the holiday.

My mother cooked traditional festive dishes: chicken broth and gefilte fish. She also baked strudels. I think they just paid tribute to the tradition. My mother never went to the synagogue.

My father went on Pesach and Yom Kippur. He had a prayer book and a tallit made from rich silk. That tallit was kept in the family for many years.

When we moved to Moscow, my parents decided to give me the best education possible. I went to a private German kindergarten, where there were eight to ten children. The group was organized by a German lady, from the Froebel Institute.

She wasn't young and had graduated from that institute before 1917. She spoke only German with us. Children were good at learning foreign languages and soon we spoke pretty good German.

In the morning we went to her and brought food for the whole day.

We went strolling with her. She played with us. We didn't speak German only with her; we were supposed to communicate in German amongst ourselves. We were forbidden to speak Russian. Then we went back home and had lunch. She read books in German.

Then we took some rest. I continued studying German at school. When I went back home after the war my hatred towards the Germans was so strong that I couldn't stand hearing German speech and gradually I forgot the German language.