

Arnold Fabrikant



This is me when I was a Komsomol member. This photo was taken in Odessa in 1940. I started school in 1931. I was doing well at school, though I didn't have all excellent marks. I had many friends. We, boys, were fond of James Fenimore Cooper and Alexandre Dumas, and we played characters from their books. We had our coats of arms, swords and tomahawks and fought like musketeers and Indians. There were groups of children in each district. It happened so, that in my groups there were professors' children. We didn't like some teachers, for example, Ksenia Ivanovna, nicknamed 'Ksendza'. We played ugly tricks on her as best we could. On the other hand, our physics teacher Anatoliy, whose patronymic I don't remember, was a very good man, on the contrary. We all looked for tricky questions in popular magazines to ask him. When he didn't know the answer, he said: 'Kids, I don't know, I shall look it up at home and explain it next time'. He did

give us an explanation, but we already had another bunch of questions ready for him. However, we knew physics brilliantly. We had an interesting Ukrainian teacher, a gorgeous big man with a round head. He translated Beranger into Ukrainian and used to recite these poems to us in our classes, and at the end of each class he promptly gave us the homework. In the next class he asked us for ten minutes and then started reciting poems again. We liked our geography teacher, Yelizaveta Konstantinovna Dikoina, so much that our whole class went to her birthday parties - 25 of us. We kept this tradition even after she went to lecture at university. After she died we visited her children. There are few of us left. This year only seven of us were there. We hated the German language and didn't know it at all. Our teacher was a short German man who murmured something through his nose. Our teacher of mathematics was Pavel Ivanovich, an invalid of World War I: he had lost his leg, was short and old with a moustache yellow from smoking. He got angry with poor pupils and knocked on the table with his stick, exclaiming: 'You, dummy, you know nothing!' There were no demonstrations of anti-Semitism at school.