

Meyer Goldstein With His Jewish Friends



This is me, Meyer Goldstein (on the left) with my Jewish friends - students of the Odessa Polytechnic Institute. The photo was taken in 1936 in Odessa. In Odessa we were told that we could not be accepted without documents, so we were sent to the Worker's Department (an institution of learning created by the Soviet authorities for youth without full school education). There we had exams. Only one other boy, Izya Kotlyar, and I passed those exams and were accepted to the third year, while the rest had to go home. In 1934 he and I studied at the Workers' Department and then transferred to the Odessa Pedagogical Institute. I chose physics and mathematics because I liked them and also because at our school we had studied in Yiddish, so we did not know other languages well enough. We lived in a dormitory and were paid scholarship, but it was not enough. It was thirty rubles plus some kopecks. That is why, even though I was a Komsomol member then, I did no public work. I was never an active Komsomol member, I simply had no time for that. I worked at a bread store: at night I would bake bread, and during the day I would study at the Institute. In our dormitory there were young people of various nationalities from different places ? Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, et cetera. I was on good terms with all of them. We never divided people by nationalities. Life was hard for everyone. At that time the Stalinist arrests and repressions began. My mother's brother Munya served in the army leading an orchestra, for he was a very gifted musician. But he lacked self-control. Once he did not like the food they were given, and he was arrested. That's all. He disappeared. We could not inquire about his fate. No one would answer such questions. In the beginning of 1939 I graduated from the Institute. I was sent to the town of Pikov, a Jewish town in the Vinnitsa region. As soon as I arrived there, the Germans captured Poland, and our troops entered the Baltic countries and western Ukraine. The country was on the verge of war, but few realized it.