

Yakov Honiksman



This is a picture of me as a student of an evening school for working people. The photo was taken for my pupil's identity card in Lublin in 1938. When I was 12 I took my school certificate and went out looking for a job. I had excellent marks in my certificate and spoke fluent Polish and a leather craftsman employed me in his shop. This leather craftsman was a Jew. His name was Zygmunt Zygielwarc. My brother Haskel said to me, 'You are a genius and need to continue your studies.' He talked to my master and I was allowed to continue my studies. I went to the first evening school for working people in Lublin to complete my secondary education. I lived at home. This leather craftsman lied to us. He agreed with my father that I would work as an errand boy for a year until he approved my contract and forwarded it to the chamber of crafts and commerce, but I worked for him as an errand boy for four years and he paid me peanuts for my work. My brother Haskel was a communist and brought communist books to our home. We enjoyed reading those books. I worked for this leather craftsman for four years until he fired me. I was 16. My master had three or four

apprentices. On 1st May I decided to make a speech and told them that they shouldn't work on this holiday, but go to the working people's demonstration. I made a very emotional speech, but other employees laughed at me and weren't interested at all. However, I continued to demonstrate my revolutionary spirit. At last my master lost his temper and said, 'Just get out and I hope I will never see you again - we could all be arrested for this.' At about the same time, in the middle of the 1930s, I gave up going to the synagogue. I had observed all holidays and fasted before and had gone to the synagogue with my father, but then I said, 'Father, I'm not going to the synagogue tomorrow,' and the next day was Yom Kippur. My father asked me why and I told him that I didn't believe in what was written in the religious books. I began to prove that there were many discrepancies in the Torah. My father told me to get out of the house. In a couple of days my mother found me at the home of some acquaintances and took me back home. In fall 1936 I began to attend a school for people working at the plant. My master fired me right before my exams in May 1939. I had another year of school, but I had no money to pay for my studies and so I quit school. Wherever I went to study afterwards I told people that I had a secondary education.