

Vladimir Olgart With His Brother Mikhail Olgart And A Friend



From left to right: my brother Mikhail's friend, my brother Mikhail wearing his working cap of the Arsenal Plant and I. This photo was taken on Mikhail's balcony in Kiev in 1933. I came from Moscow to visit him. My brother completed 5 years of Russian secondary school. He decided to learn a profession. He was apprenticed to a locksmith who repaired clocks, sewing machines and bicycles. In 1926, when he turned 16, Mikhail moved to Kiev and became a locksmith apprentice at the Arsenal Plant [biggest military plant in Ukraine]. I had a cousin in Moscow: the son of my mother's older brother Dudik. When I turned 16 and obtained a passport I decided to go to Moscow. My relatives invited me to come there. Besides, I found it exciting to go to the capital. In Moscow I got a job as a barber. I rented a room. There were three other tenants in this room: three Jewish guys from Belarus. We became friends. At work I became a Komsomol member; I was fond of the idea of 'building communism', just like so many other young people. My friends and I often went to the Jewish theater. I watched several performances featuring a well-known Jewish actor, Solomon Mikhoels. Sometimes we attended Jewish concerts. Religion was no longer popular among young people. We didn't go to the synagogue and didn't celebrate Jewish holidays. However, I went to the synagogue on Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah, but I didn't fast on Yom Kippur any longer. After I became a Komsomol member I left religion behind. Winters in Moscow were cold. We didn't have enough warm clothes, but we were young and we didn't really get cold. We had meals there during the day in a cheap café and in the evening went there to eat, dance and listen to music. We didn't drink alcoholic drinks. There were a few girls in our group. They were Russian girls from Moscow. My friends and I celebrated Soviet holidays. We enjoyed watching parades. Entrance to the Red Square was restricted, therefore, we sneaked in before 5 o'clock in the morning. To avoid militiamen we hid in building entrances before we could come out to watch the parade. I saw Stalin quite a few times. Once I saw Kalinin buying something at a kiosk. Leaders of the country went out without any guards. People loved them a lot.