

## Lasar Blekhshtein's Brother



This photograph shows my elder brother. He was 6 years older than me. The photo was taken in prison or in the camp, where he spent 2 years. Here he is taking part in some performance.

During 3 years I did not talk to my brother, trying to persuade him to study at the secondary school. I told him that Soviet authorities allowed us to study, we got an opportunity to study and we had to study.

But my brother stood his ground and refused. So he finished only 2 classes. He was able to write and read, but he did not want to read.

My brother was dandyish: it was important for him to have two suits for each season (one for working days and one for days off), and he managed to have.

Pay attention that I had got only 1 suit and wore it all the year round. Solomon liked to dress well, liked jolly crowds. But I remember no interesting persons or Jewish intellectuals among his comrades. At that time (in 1920s) it was in fashion to have parties.

They used to gather every week. There they mixed with their equals, got acquainted, and married. I was never present at those parties: at that time I was too little and they did not invite me. They never arranged parties at our place.

During the NEP period my brother became interested in trading and got a small stand at the market. He sold fancy goods there. Later NEP was abandoned and in 1930 or 1931 he arranged manufacturing of woolen caps and scarves together with his friend, a Jew.

They bought a knitting machine and hired a worker (a woman). That woman had no place to live, therefore we invited her to live at our place.

My brother and his partner registered her as a homemaker (I guess it was cheaper, than to register her as a worker). To cut a long story short, it was illegal. Both of them (my brother and his partner) were condemned for their crime.

His partner managed to escape and ran away to China (together with his family). And my brother was brought to prison, and later to a camp. He spent two years there.

Till now I suffer, because I did not send my brother parcels while he was in prison and in the camp. Two years I sent nothing to him. You see, I was a student, I was poor, but now I think I was able to send a parcel to him!

That idea did not come into my head and nobody suggested it: neither Mom, nor sisters. We acted like strangers, not relatives. We were wrong. It was necessary to send him a lot of cigarettes, so that he could change them for food... Unfortunately that cannot be remedied.

Later when he returned from the camp, he worked as a bookkeeper. You see, he was not educated, but very clever: he managed to finish courses for bookkeepers and worked as a senior bookkeeper at KIROVSTROY!

The Kirov factory [The Kirov machine-building factory was founded in St. Petersburg in 1801] was a great factory! They had got a special building organization engaged in construction of new factory workshops: it was named KIROVSTROY.

My brother was the Head of that organization and had got 6 subordinates. I guess he could have come to the forefront, because he was more talented than me. But he did not study...

He got married. I do not remember her name. She was a Jewess. As my brother wanted to be better and better circumstances, his wife had to have abortions (one after another) until he got a room, furniture, cut-glass ware, clothes, etc. In the issue they had got no children. So they died having no children.