

Israel Shlifer With His Cousin Mark Polisski



I am on the right, and my cousin Mark Polisski. This photo was taken in Kiev in 1940.

The majority of my mother's relatives and some of my father's relatives lived in Kiev. They often visited us. We met on birthdays and wedding anniversaries. We also celebrated Soviet holidays: 1st May and the October Revolution Day. The adults danced to Jewish and Soviet records and sang. We didn't celebrate Jewish holidays at home. Only once a year relatives came to celebrate Pesach with grandfather Benjamin. I didn't attend the celebrations, and not know, as it was. I preferred my friends' company. My friends and I often went to theaters. We didn't give much thought to nationality that actually didn't matter to us.

In 1939 I finished school with a so-called 'gold certificate'. There were no medals then and a gold certificate had a golden frame. I was eager to study science - physics- and went for an interview to the Leningrad College of Physics. I had a successful interview, but my mother was against my studying away from home. I obeyed her and submitted my documents to the Kiev Polytechnic College (it was called Industrial College then) to the Faculty of Radio Physics. I was admitted and studied two years in this College. My friends and I knew that fascism came to power in Europe. Nevertheless, we didn't have a feeling that the war was near or that Hitler would attack the Soviet Union. Even lecturers of the Military Faculty in our College said that we had to learn to defend our country, but they never mentioned a possibility of war against fascism.