

Ferdinand Chernovich



This is a photo of me. The picture was made as per request of mother's younger sister Ida. Mother sent the picture to her. The picture was taken in Moscow in 1924.

I was born in 1923. I was named Ferdinand in honour of my relative. Father left us shortly before I was born. He had another family. That is why I know so little about my father's family.

Mother did not like talking about father, and I did not ask much about him. I considered father to be a man who had broken my mother's life. It is an unpleasant recollection for me.

My father was not interested in my life either. I treated him likewise. I practically did not know him. When I was born, the year of 1923, there was a terrible unemployment.

Mother lost her job and remained unemployed for three years. We lived on father's alimony and on monthly child support in the amount of 7 rubles. We were indigent.

Mother never got married again after she divorced father. She lived only for me. I was the essence of her life. Mother did her best to bring me up. She tried to teach me how to read and write in Yiddish. But I was not good at it.

Either I was a poor student or my mother was a poor teacher. Mother did not tell me about Jewish history and religion. She did not observe Jewish traditions and did not mark holidays.

Maybe it was caused by the struggle of the Soviet regime against religion. Mother understood that I would be raised an atheist at school and she did not want to make my life more difficult.

In 1931 I went to the first grade of Russian secondary school. It was the school in the closest vicinity to our house. It took me 15 minutes to walk to school.

I was the only Jew in my class, and of course I felt anti-Semitism in every day life. I was teased and hurt. When I managed to stand up for myself, teasing and hurting stopped. I could not feel anti-Semitism from teachers, moreover I felt their support and assistance. Our teachers were very good.

Most of them came from intelligentsia. I liked learning at school. I was an excellent student since the 1st grade and I finished school with excellent marks in my certificate.

I did not learn things by rote. I had a good memory and it was easy for me to learn things. Chemistry was my favorite subject in senior grades. I also studied chemistry in extra-curriculum classes.

I was a young Octobrist in the first grade. Then I became a Pioneer, joined Komsomol. I did not even admit a thought that it was possible not to join Komsomol.

I joined Komsomol in 1939 at the age of 16. I was never interested in social life, and I kept away from all kinds of social events. I loved reading and playing football with the guys at the stadium.

During the weekend my mother and I used to ski during winter and in summer time we took long strolls and went to the forest to gather berries and mushrooms.