

School On Unishevskaya Street In The Jewish Borough Yanovichi, Where Blyuma Perlstein Lived



This is the school on Unishevskaya Street in the Jewish borough Yanovichi, where I lived. This drawing is from the year 1926.

The Yanovichi settlement, where I was born, was located 30 kilometers from Vitebsk. It was a very cultural place, since literate and intelligent Jews and Russians lived there. Before and after the Revolution all children, both Jewish and Russian, went to school together and I never heard the word 'anti-Semitism,' because we all lived in friendship. Only the Kolonitsky family stood out. It was a Russian family of intellectuals and three people from this family were our teachers: two women and one man, Alexey Yakovlevich, thanks to whom we have the possibility to remember Yanovichi, looking at pictures made from his drawings.

The Kolonitsky family had a big stone house with a huge fruit garden. They even had wonderful 'antonovka' [type of apple] in winter, which they stored in the attic. Alexey Yakovlevich's brothers and sisters worked a lot; they had a very big garden. They made everything with their own hands and never hired any assistants. After the Revolution their household was ravaged by the 'Reds' and communal sites were arranged on Kolonitsky's former land. One by one the Kolonitskys left Yanovichi. These very intelligent and good people taught my sisters and brothers. Alexey Yakovlevich also taught me drawing, history, mathematics and physics. He lived the last years of his life in Moscow. My brother Aron also lived there and they kept in touch with each other. Alexey Yakovlevich gave all the pictures made from drawings, which he drew in Yanovichi, to my brother. My brother Aron died in 1977 and I inherited all these pictures.

Our family at first lived on Porechskaya Street, behind the bridge. The streets were rather poor, paved with cobblestone and the houses were mostly inhabited by workmen. You can see a hill in the background, there was a Russian cemetery. All buildings to the left were wooden. This street led to the road to Vitebsk.

The two-storey building of the school was situated on the outskirts of Yanovichi, on Unishevskaya Street. The school was old, several generations had studied in it. School teachers were mostly local intellectuals, however, during my and my brother Aron's school years a lot of newcomers taught us. They lived in an extension of the school building; you can see it in the picture as a single-storey corridor. The school owned a big plot of land, there was a vegetable garden located in the yard. I studied at this school for seven years. The school was very good with a distinguished teachers' team, who taught us a lot. Since the school was situated outside of town and the cobblestone street ended there, a planked footway was constructed to the school entrance along the school fence.