

Irina Soboleva-Ginsburg



This photo shows me as a schoolgirl in Moscow in 1932. I was good at painting. I was ten years old when I was admitted to an art school. I made good progress there and soon went to the Art College. I also studied at the Russian secondary school until 1935. I remember some Jewish

teachers in our school. One of them was Semyon Gurevich, a very ugly man. He noticed that I wrote nice poems. I wrote about Soviet labor and about Lenin. I was four when Lenin died in 1924, but we were raised as his followers at school. At home nobody ever discussed the subject of Soviet leaders. We were also raised as atheists at school. There was a lovely 17th century church near my school that was pulled down during the construction of a metro station. At Easter we had to stand on the road facing this church shouting, 'There is no God!' We found it funny. We were all pioneers, and our teachers and tutors involved us in these kinds of activities. I was shy at school. Once my classmate, an arrogant girl, asked me, 'Irina, what profession would you like to choose?' I said, 'Artist'. And she said, 'No, artists are different'. My classmates didn't believe that I would have enough character to become someone. I became a Komsomol member when I entered Art College. But it was just a formal membership - I wasn't involved in any activities. I enjoyed studying at the Art College much more than school. I met new friends and we had many common interests. I still lived with my grandmother. My mother and her friend Vassia lived separately. Later Juli, my brother, came to live with us. He went to the same school as I did and studied well.