

Leo Lubich With His Brothers Jacob Lubich, Aron Lubich And Sister Maria Rapoport



From left to right: Me, Leo Lubich (standing), my brother Jacob Lubich, standing beside me, my sister Maria Lubich and brother Aron Lubich. Kiev, 1930s. We were photographed before my departure to study at the Kharkov Textile Institute.

There were four children in the family: my older sister Maria, born in 1910, myself, born in 1912, and our brothers: Jacob, born in 1915, and Aron, born in 1919.

I remember our house and our street well. We lived in a five-story apartment building, number 9, Andreevskiy Spusk Street. There was a signboard which read "Tailor Lubich" hanging on our building. It also said "Entrance from the backyard" in smaller letters. We lived in a big four-room apartment in the basement. We were a wealthy family, but there were no maids. There was one dark room without windows where we children slept. There was a big dining room, our parents' bedroom, and another room with big mirrors and a cutting table where my father worked.

Our family observed Jewish traditions. We didn't eat pork and followed kosher rules at home. I can't remember any details about the Saturday celebrations, but I do remember that my father never worked on Saturdays. My mother lit candles and prayed over them on Friday and we had a festive dinner.

When I turned five or six years old my father invited a Jewish teacher, a melammed, to teach me at home. He was an old Jew who wore a big black hat and payes. We studied Hebrew and read Torah. I studied with him for about half a year. My parents spoke Russian and didn't think that Yiddish had any future or that we might need it.

At seven years of age I went to the same Russian school where my older sister Maria studied. My father sent me to the nearest school in our neighborhood. There were Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, and Jewish children in our school. We got along very well and never had any conflicts associated with nationality. We played sports together after school. When we became pioneers we began to attend clubs in the House of Pioneers. I attended a drama club where we studied recitation - we even put on a performance there. There were also sport, dancing, and technical clubs.

After finishing lower secondary school I went to work. Besides having to support my parents, I wanted to have my own money to go to the cinema or buy sweets. I went to the "Assistance" employment agency in Podol. They helped me get a job as a weaver at the weaving mill. After working for two or three years I decided to continue my education. I had an agreement with another weaver that he would work the first shift from 8 am until 3 pm so that I could take the second shift and study at the rabfak on Bolshaya Vassilkovskaya Street. Only the children of workers and peasants had a right to study there, but I had been given the status of worker by that time, having worked at the mill for a few years. I walked to the rabfak school located quite a distance from my home and after school I went to work. I studied well and was elected monitor of the group. I joined the Komsomol and took part in various activities with them. We went to parades on 1 May and on October Revolution Day and joined sports teams.

In the summer of 1933 I was invited to the military registry office where they notified me that after finishing the rabfak school I was to go serve in the army. At the rabfak school's prom, the rector of the Textile Institute told me, "Lubich, you are a good student and you need to continue your education." He offered to let me enter the Institute and get a release from service in the army. Although I wanted to continue my studies, I was patriotic and believed it would be indecent for a Soviet Komsomol member to avoid serving in the army. But when my parents heard about the doubts I was having, they told me that as the oldest son it was my job to get an education and support my family. So, I decided to go study. By that time I was no longer religious.

I entered the Textile Institute. In 1934 the government of Ukraine moved from Kharkov to Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, and with that a few of the less popular educational institutions (including mine) relocated to Kharkov. I lived in a hostel in Kharkov for a year. I was a good student, but I had some bad influences and started playing cards. We gambled every night and then had to pay back our debts when we lost. I began to work as a janitor and a laborer at the freight railway station. When my parents found out they insisted that I move home. I moved to Kiev after finishing my first year at the Textile Institute in Kharkov. In 1935 I got a transfer to the Faculty of Economics at the Kiev Institute of the Leather and Shoe Industry.

I was a sociable guy, enjoyed jokes and tricks and performed tricks at concerts at the Institute during Soviet holidays.

After finishing lower secondary school, Jacob finished a degree at construction college. He went to work as a builder in Belaya Tserkov, a small town 150 km from Kiev where he met a lovely Jewish girl named Polia and married her in the late 1930s. He and his wife visited us in Kiev several times before the war.

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