

Semen Rivkin



This is a photo of my brother Semen Rivkin. The photograph was taken in 1940 in Moscow. My elder brothers weren't admitted to the eighth grade at their school because they were the children of a private craftsman. They finished seven classes and left school for a technical school. Later they got jobs in order to gain seniority, and only after that they finished an evening school. After the end of the war our family returned to Gomel. The city was in ruins; our house was burned down in 1943. At first we lived at Semen's house. He worked as a chief engineer at the machine-tool factory named after Kirov. They placed at his disposal a room of eleven square meters, his wife and two-year-old daughter lived with him. And then we came along: me, my parents, and Aunt Mussya. When the factory administration got to know that the parents of their chief engineer came to him

and were impelled to live in one room, they gave my brother a two-room apartment: a room of 20 meters, and another of ten meters. We occupied the larger room. When my father asked who was going to live in the second room, Semen answered, 'Dad, the factory lacks living space. I can't occupy two rooms. We will all live in one large room.' My family members decided to build a house. The small room was empty until the arrival of Fridman, a metal turner of high class. He hadn't made up his mind to start working, because the factory director told him that they had nothing for lodging. Then Semen said, 'Why do you say we have no place for lodging? In my apartment there is a spare room of ten meters.' So the second room was occupied by this turner and his family. The apartment was turned into a communal apartment.