

David Levin As A Child



This photo was taken in Vitebsk in 1927, when I was three. Here you can see me, David Levin, being a child.

I was born in 1924 in Vitebsk, and when I was three or four years old, we moved to Leningrad. When I was born, my parents rented a separate apartment in Vitebsk. They called the owner as a 'shakhmeister'; I don't know why, maybe, this was Yiddish word for 'owner'? We lived just near the

Russian Orthodox Church. And I remember that I was going to the kindergarten. That's all I remember about my first years.

In 1928 father moved from Vitebsk to Leningrad, and in half a year we, I and my mother, followed him. Since that time I consider Leningrad my native city. We lived on the Gogol (today Malaya Morskaya) street. In that shared apartment, in one room, we lived for almost all our life.

Naturally, we went from Vitebsk to Leningrad by train. But what I remember exactly from my three or four years is how we arrived to Leningrad, to Vitebsky railway station.

Father rented the carrier, and we went in that cab. And what I recalled for whole my life, till today is that when you go on Gorokhovaya street, previously Dzerzhinsky street, and cross Griboedov channel [one of the main channels of the city, is called after poet and diplomat], the bridge goes straight down, so I remember this bridge very well. I recalled that feeling when suddenly I went up, and nowadays often when I go there, I recall that.

That school, where I studied at, later became the very famous one. That was school number two hundred thirty nine, mixed, both for girls and boys. It was situated on Isaac's square [one of the central city squares, where Isaac's cathedral and Mariinsky Palace are situated], on that place, where you can see that building with lions. Half of my school friends were Jewish, and half were Russians.

Nowadays my best friend Victor Isaev is my childhood friend; we were friends from the very first grade. Also there was Phroya Shlyyak, a Jew, he lives in Germany now, and also we were friends with Admiral Andrey Victorovitch Peterson. I had many friends.

Besides, I grew among the real hooligans, bandits, court boys. It was so funny to be with them. Naturally, they didn't kill or murder, but they were thieving, and I tried to stop them from doing this. But, not looking at that fact that they were hooligans in the real meaning of this word, they never touched me with a finger. Never. Nobody. I'm very surprised with it. And I must say that even though I could suffer from some anti-Semitism, but I don't remember any story.

I was keen on sports, liked our sport teacher Dmitry Sergeevitch. I loved volleyball, went to play volleyball after the school very often. And went to the football too, watched how basks [football team from Spain] played when they came. Apparently, we all days long played football in front of the school, just near Isaac's cathedral. So we had the very usual boys' hobbies.

I painted, even began to paint with oil. A boy who studied together with me, became a President of Academy Arts, I forgot his name. We sat together in one class, and met in many years. Thanks to Olga Markovna, they taught me some music, so I've been well-educated officer and intelligent.

Also I remember our literature teacher, Alevtina, and our Math teacher, Evdokia Vasilievna. I had good relationships with them and their subjects. I remember the way Evdokia Vasilievna proved the theorem: a-prim, b-prim, c-prim.

When I studied in the second grade, we had an English teacher, she was Jewish. And till today I recall her 'How do you do, children?' If those studies continued, I would know English very well. Apparently, I liked many of my teachers, and I have very good memories about our school and studies.