

Avi Dobrysh



That's me as a first-year student of the extramural department of the Tallinn Construction Institute. The picture was taken in Tallinn in 1954.

I finished seven grades of compulsory school and in 1950 I entered the Architecture and Construction College in Tallinn. I learned how to draw very well during the first year of my studies. I got an excellent mark in drawing. I decided that I could make money on that. We were needy. I started working alongside my studies. In general, I financed myself. When I was studying in the college, I worked as a draftsman in the design institute Estonproject.

In March 1953 Stalin died. I was working at Estonproject at that time. I remember everybody stood up to listen to the radio broadcast of Stalin's death. The Russians were crying. I was not; I didn't feel the sorrow. Yes, there was a man called Stalin and he died – it is a natural process. I didn't have a feeling of an irreplaceable loss. I looked at people who were crying and could not understand. Why cry if an outsider has died? When a close person dies, it is a tribulation, it touches your soul, but Stalin ... I was probably not a 'red' in my soul.

I must have recognized the Soviet regime ideologically. I read Lenin's works. I found them interesting, but still I had mixed emotions. I always remembered a good life in Estonia before war, before the Soviet regime. Our life was different and not as good during the Soviet regime. I often questioned Soviet politics.

I didn't feel anti-Semitism, neither in school nor in college, though I could see that during the Soviet regime the authorities propagated anti-Semitism. It was a state policy of the USSR.

I graduated from college in 1954. I got my mandatory job assignment in a construction company in Tallinn. That year I entered the extramural construction department of the Tallinn Polytechnic Institute. I could only study extramurally as I was supposed to work for three years under the mandatory job assignment. In a year I got rid of the job and switched to the daily department of the institute. Three more guys from college studied there with me. I kept living with Grandmother. She fed me, took care of my clothes and tried to influence me.