

Mark Golub



This is a photo of me. I am 18 months old. I am wearing a Georgian costume. We were on holiday in Kiev in 1929. I was born in Kiev on 25th April 1928. I was given the name of Mordukh at birth. I have this name written in my documents. I was supposed to go to school in 1935, but I wasn't admitted, because I hadn't yet reached the age of 8. The next year I was admitted to the 2nd grade of a Russian school. It was not far from our house. Before the war, there was a grammar school in this school. But there were too many schoolchildren and they had to study in 3 shifts. We had a

good gym and a concert hall at school. It was a model school and all the children of the 'beau monde' studied there. In our school we had a teacher for each subject from the 3rd grade on, while in other schools there was one teacher per grade up to the fifth grade. I didn't do very well in school. I did better in language courses (Russian, Ukrainian and German) than in mathematics. After finishing the 4th grade we were transferred to another school - it still exists. There were many Jewish children in my class. The majority of the teachers were Jews, too. There was no anti-Semitism at that time. Of course, I knew that I was a Jew, but it never occurred to me that I might be different from the other pupils, or that this might be a cause for abuse. The word 'zhyd' [kike] was not in wide circulation back then. I became a Young Octobrist at school and a pioneer when I was in the 4th grade. I wasn't actively involved in any activities, but I collected waste steel and waste paper with my classmates. Besides school, I attended the History Club at the Historical Museum and had a firm intention to become a historian in the future. At school we attended parades on Soviet holidays. We also celebrated Soviet holidays at home - a holiday provided a good excuse to invite guests and have a party. We visited my grandparents (my father's parents) on all traditional Jewish holidays. The whole family gathered at their place. My grandmother cooked traditional food for every holiday. At Pesach we had chicken broth with dumplings made from matzah flour, chicken, gefilte fish, baked pudding from matzah and potatoes. There was always a lot of matzah in the house. My grandmother bought chickens and took them to the shochet in Bessarabka. She baked hamantashen for Purim. When I turned 5 my grandfather started taking me to the synagogue with him. It was called the Merchants' Synagogue. The people in the synagogue were all praying, but I didn't take much interest in what was going on. I was too small when Hitler came to power and don't remember anything about it. But when I was studying in school, I knew that fascism was the main enemy of the Soviet people. This was propagated in the mass media, in literature and at the cinema. I remember the film entitled *If There is a War Tomorrow*. My friends and I watched it several times and sang the song 'If there is a war tomorrow and we have to go, we need to get ready today'. This film was made in 1939 before the non-aggression pact with Germany was signed [The interviewee refers to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.] This was a very characteristic film of that time. It described a war with Germany that would be over within 3 days. That was what we were convinced of. And that was why first days of the real war came as such a shock. We were prepared for a prompt victory. We were sure that if an enemy attacked us we would win victory within 3 days. We had military training at school. We went to a park where we dug trenches; the boys were snipers and the girls were medical nurses. We were trained to use gas masks and to shoot. There was a very serious militarization campaign going on. The Soviet-Finnish war disillusioned us to some extent. It showed that our army wasn't quite as powerful as we had imagined, and that the war might not be as victorious as we were convinced it would be. Considering all the circumstances, the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was a surprise. It suddenly turned our enemies, the fascists, into friends and allies.