

Agnessa Margolina



This is a picture of me as a 1st-year student at Kiev Leather and Shoe College. The photo was taken in Kiev in 1937. In summer 1934 I finished the 7th grade. I didn't have an opportunity to continue my studies since I had to take care of my brothers. I went to work as an accounting clerk at a shop making sheepskin coats. It was in Darnitsa, in the left bank district in Kiev. Commuting there was difficult especially in winter. I didn't have proper clothes and got cold. I worked there for three years until the father of my friend Feldman, who was the director of the Leather and Shoe Technical School at the shoe factory, offered me work at the factory. He said I could study at the school in the evening. I was eager to study and I went to work as an apprentice to a worker

preparing raw work pieces. Employees of the factory could enter school without exams and I entered the Faculty of Shoe Production. There were many Jewish employees in the factory and many Jewish students in the school. I made friends at school. I rarely met with my former schoolmates. Many of them studied in colleges. They had new friends and new interests in life. I joined the Komsomol League at the Technical School. I was a good student and a good employee. The Komsomol committee of the factory gave me a recommendation and I obtained my Komsomol membership certificate at the district Komsomol committee. I believed that since I had become a Komsomol member I had to improve my studies and work. I somehow didn't give a thought to Hitler's rise to power. I was probably not smart enough to understand what it meant. Later I heard that Hitler was exterminating Jews in Germany. My friends and I often went to the cinema where they often showed films about fascism in Germany. There was a film called Professor Mamlock. I don't remember any details, but I remember that it was about the persecution of Jews. I had some idea of what was going on. When Hitler attacked Poland we began to have military training at work. We were taught how to use gas masks, provide first aid to the wounded and take necessary measures during a chemical attack. However, I didn't think that a war could come to our country. We often got together at my colleague Ida Ginsburg's home. There were Jewish guys in this group of about 20-22 years of age. They often said that the war was inevitable and I was trying to convince them that our army was the strongest in the world and Hitler wouldn't dare to attack us. I was sure that it was true; I didn't have the slightest idea what a war was like.