

Peter Rabtsevich In The Polish School



These are Jewish schoolchildren with their teacher of Hebrew. 2nd row, from left to right are me, my brother David, our teacher of Hebrew, and my brother Aron. The photo was taken before vacations in Logishyn in 1936. I finished school in 1936 and went to study at the Jewish trade school in the town of Pinsk. Our parents rented a room for us from a Jewish family. I studied at the trade school, and my brothers, David and Aron, were studying at the Sniftarbut Jewish school (this school got its name from the owner of the school, a Jew called Sniftarbut). Jews constituted about 75% of the population in Pinsk. There were 29,000 Jews and 7,000 Christians in town. People had a peaceful life. Once members of some gangs arrived at the railway station in Pinsk. Their intention must have been to make a pogrom. The local cab drivers - there were Jewish, Russian and Polish people among them - didn't let them leave the station, and they had to retreat. The police didn't interfere. There were quite a few Jewish secondary schools in Pinsk. There were also two Jewish grammar schools: the Sniftarbut and the Chechik grammar school, named after its owner and director. In the Sniftarbut all subjects were taught in Hebrew - Polish was taught as a foreign language. In the Chechik grammar school all subjects were taught in Polish. It was convenient for Jewish students who wanted to continue their education in Polish universities, but there were special seats for Jewish students in Polish universities. Sitting separately from other students was disgraceful. Besides, it was very difficult for a Jew to enter university - very few Jews were admitted to higher educational institutions at the time. I finished trade school in 1939. I became an electrician. I couldn't find a job and began to assist my father in the orchard (growing apples, pears, plums and cherries). My father took care of the orchard paying a purely symbolic rental fee. We often went there on hot days to rest in the cool shade of fruit trees. My younger brothers, David and Aron, finished school. David became a shop assistant in our sister Esther's husband Abraham Warshavskiy's store. We were all very concerned. The Polish authorities requested assistance from the population: contributions for the purchase of ammunition for the army, especially for air defense purposes. People began to make shelters in their gardens.