

Semyon Vilenskiy With His Class



This is my class. It's the 1st form. This photo was taken in 1935 by a school photographer in Moscow. I am in the 2nd row third from left, am 7 years old here.

I was born here in 1928. I went to the Russian gymnasium across the street from our home. My sister studied in this gymnasium. Later it became a Russian school. There were very good teachers in it. I studied well and didn't have to work hard for it. I was fond of Russian literature and read a lot of Russian classical books. I became a young Octobrist, and a pioneer at school. In summer my parents usually rented a dacha [countryside cottage] near Moscow where my mother, my sister and I enjoyed the quietude, the birds singing, fresh cow milk that peasant women from a neighboring village brought, and each other's company. Many other people from Moscow also rented dachas and we socialized with them. We usually made new friends in summer. We got together to play the lotto, to party. My father joined us at weekends. He brought food with him. We rode bicycles, bathed in the river and got suntanned by the end of summer. I had many friends at school. We went to the cinema and theaters, played with a ball at the school stadium and nothing betokened the gloomy years to come. Like all other children of my age I was careless and had no premonition of the upcoming war.