

Boris Pukshansky's Brother



This photograph taken in Leningrad in 1940 shows my elder brother Mikhail. This is the story about him and about my school years.

My elder brother Mikhail also studied at the Jewish school, Sofye went to Belarussian one, and my younger brother Jacob went to the Russian school, opened instead of the Jewish one. My school was very good. I remember surname of our director - Kaplan, and the head of studies - Raikhshtein. When the school was closed, they accused Kaplan of Zionism. Kaplan taught Russian language and Russian literature, and Raikhshtein was a teacher of Yiddish and Jewish literature. All subjects at school were taught in Yiddish. German and Russian languages were taught as foreign ones. I recollect my school with great pleasure. Most of all I liked mathematics, and later I took a great interest in chess. Chess became my love for ever. At present I am writing a book about chess, and I'll tell you how it began. After the death of my grandmother and grandfather, father visited Yanovich from time to time to bow his thanks to their tombs. Sometimes he took me with him.

There we used to stay at father's sister Leye. She had got 4 children, and one of them taught me to play chess. I quickly mastered this game. In the meantime the newspaper Pionerskaya Pravda [literally, Pioneer's Truth, a newspaper for teen-age pioneers in the Soviet Union] announced a chess competition, and started publishing chess problems. Together with my friend we got the feel of solving them, therefore we began sending them our decisions. I became one of the winners. After that Pionerskaya Pravda and Zateynik magazine organized a correspondence chess match. Each team consisted of 75 persons. Our team won. I was awarded a book Life of Insects. Do not ask me what connection between insects and chess was. Perhaps they wanted chess players to

develop harmoniously and widen range of our interests. By that time I became much stronger as a chess player, therefore I began inventing my own chess problems.

I finished 7 classes of the Jewish school and it was closed. I became a pupil of the 8th class at the Russian school. While I studied at the Jewish school, my friends were mainly Jews. At the Russian school I made new friends, not only Jews. Our favorite amusement was football. We played everywhere: in the street, at school. We used every free minute for that purpose. Our ball was not perfect, we played a rag ball. Once my younger brother kicked the ball and broke glass of Stalin's portrait. Mum was invited to school. She immediately replaced the glass and begged teachers not to set the affair going. At that time such child's prank was enough to shipwreck his hopes.