

Herz Rogovoy And His School Friend Jacob Lidov



“Помнишь ли ты?”
“Как молоды мы были!”
01.09.1937*08.05.2004
Якову на память от Герца

This is I, Herz Rogovoy and my school friend Jacob Lidov. The picture was meant as a birthday present for my childhood friend Jacob Lidov. Since 1936 we had studied in the same class and shared a desk. We are still friends since school. His real name is Koffman. During war times Jacob changed his surname for Lidov. There were 30 front-line soldiers in our class, and 4 of them survived. My friend and I are two of the four remaining alive. I enlarged a small school snapshot given by our common friend. This is how Jacob and I looked liked (Jacob is on the left) at the beginning of school year, September, 1937 in Kiev. There is an inscription below: "Do your remember? How young we used to be! 01.09.1937*08.05.2004 As a keepsake to Jacob from Hertz."

I went to school at the age of seven. It was a Russian-speaking school. I cannot say that I was an outstanding pupil, but I was a pretty good one. I liked such subjects as literature, history, geography, natural studies. I always got excellent marks for those subjects. Mathematics was not my favorite.

I became oktyabrenok [Young Octobrist] in school, then pioneer [All-Union pioneer]. It stood to reason. Nobody objected to it. You could refuse, but those who did naturally became "black sheep". Even a child knew you should not do so. Moreover, in the peoples' psychology it was singled out: those who are not with us, are against us - the old slogan of the communists. Everybody understood it, even children.

In 1935 I went to another school to the 6th grade. That school grew with us. We finished the 6th grade, and they opened up the 7th etc. I sat at a desk with Jacob Koffman, and we have remained friends until now. At present we keep in touch, call each other.

In 1936 repressions started [Great Terror] and lasted until Great Patriotic War. There were a lot of children in our class, whose parents had been arrested. Probably those made about 2/3 of the class. People treated them in a normal way, nobody abandoned friends, just because their father or mother got arrested. Very often the teacher began the lesson by telling us to turn out from the

textbook the page with the picture or information about a well-known person. Once we learned at a history lesson: Blyukher, the great commander, marshal of the Soviet Union, and the next day we would have to cover his portrait with black ink. Today he is a loyal communist, a struggler for the revolution, the hero, and tomorrow he turns out to be enemy of the people, betrayer, spy, coward or other riff-raff. The best people of the country, renowned revolutionaries, commander Yakir - there were so many of them... Of course our children's minds could not comprehend it. I could acutely feel such an inconsistency.

In 1941 when I was in the 9th grade, I joined Komsomol. It was natural for me: I believed in communistic ideas and I honestly considered Komsomol to be the vanguard of the youth. I could not imagine myself not being in Komsomol. In June 1941 I finished the 9th grade. Summer holidays were to start. There were a lot of military trainings and maneuvers by Kiev. We were used to shooting and blasts. That is why when we heard the remote sounds of the blasted shells in the morning on 22 June, we did not react to it. We thought those were routine trainings. Only when we heard Molotov's speech on the radio on 12 p.m., we found out that the war was unleashed with fierce battle, and that Germany attacked USSR at 4 a.m. without declaring war.

Jacob Koffman in July 1941 went to the army as a volunteer. Jacob defended Kiev, participated in Kursk battles. He was given the rank of a sergeant and was awarded with the Order of the Great Patriotic War first degree and with the medal "For military merits". In October 1943 Jacob was heavily wounded and after staying in the hospital he was dispatched from the army for being handicapped. When he came back to Kiev, he graduated from the geological vocational school and worked for construction companies.