

Sophia Abidor



This is a picture of me as a first year student of Odessa Medical College. The photo was taken in Odessa in 1939. I went to the 1st grade of a Ukrainian secondary school in our neighborhood in 1929. My sister Zina went to the same school two years later. There were many Jewish children in my class and school. It seems to me that the majority of my schoolmates were Jews. There were also Jewish teachers, but nobody cared the least bit about nationality at that time. History and literature were my favorite subjects at school. All teachers believed I would continue to study

humanities. I became a Young Octobrist, a pioneer and a Komsomol member at school. I wasn't too fond of any public activities. I liked to read. All those pioneer and, later, Komsomol meetings were a sheer waste of time for me. At such meetings we were usually told about the scheming of the world bourgeoisie against the Soviet regime. Those meetings were dull and boring. I preferred to skip them whenever I could and read a book instead. However, I understood that I had to attend them to avoid a prejudiced opinion towards me. I read all kinds of books, but my favorite books were Russian classics. Later I began to read books by Jewish writers in Russian translation and foreign authors. We didn't have any books at home. My mother couldn't afford to spend money on books. I borrowed books from the library at school and, later, from a district town library. I studied well at school. I finished school in 1939. My father insisted that I studied at a Medical University and promised to support me. There was a great competition: ten applicants for one position. Odessa Medical University was very popular in the former USSR. Many outstanding professors lectured there, and there were many applicants from other towns or other republics eager to enter this university. There were eleven entrance exams. I passed all exams successfully and was admitted to the General Faculty of Odessa Medical University. There were quite a few Jewish students from Odessa and other towns in my group. There were also many Jewish lecturers. I had Jewish and non-Jewish friends - it didn't matter to me. I studied well at university.