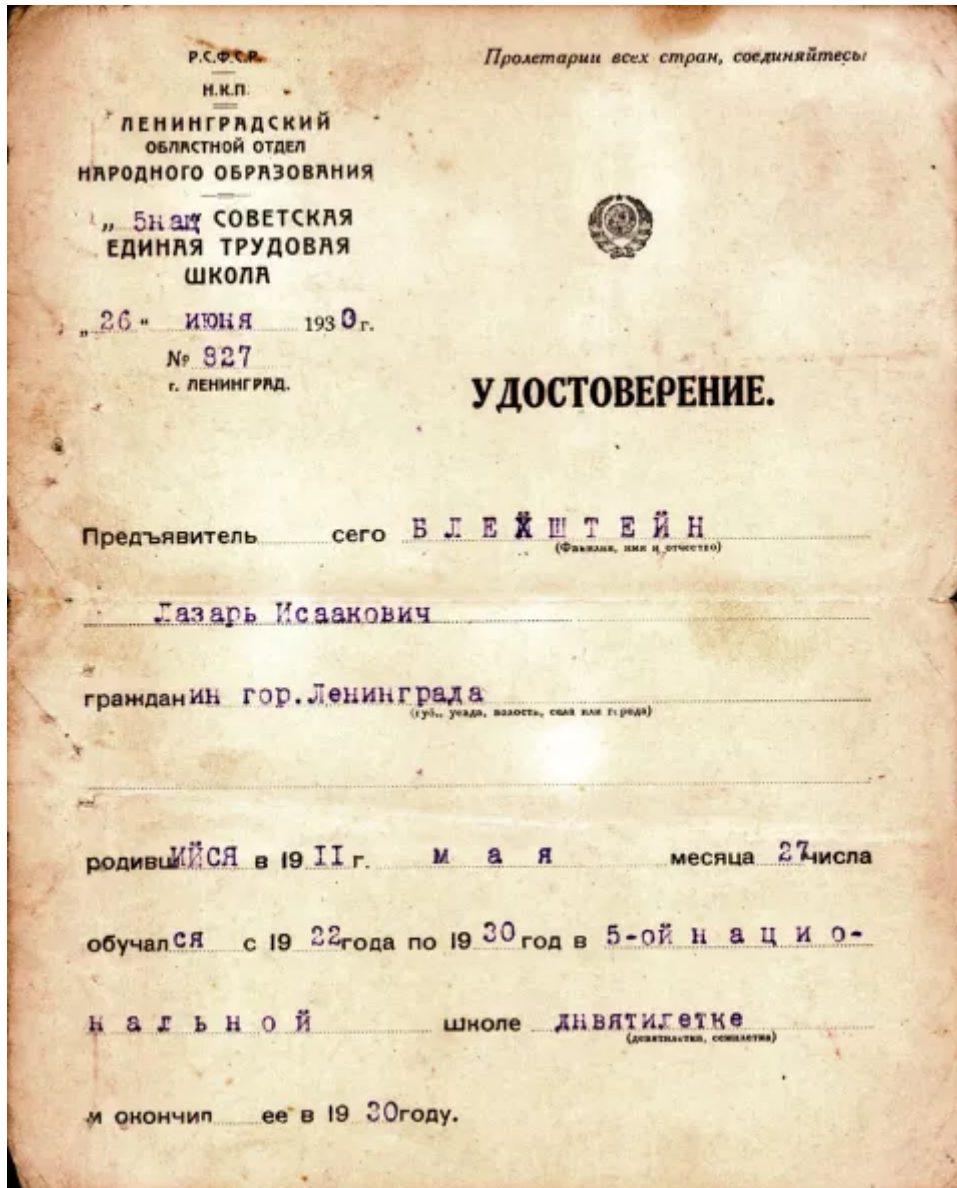


Lasar Blekhshtein's School-Leaving Certificate



Here you can see my school-leaving certificate. We celebrated the day of its receiving by a picnic (our director gave us food for it).

I studied at the National Jewish school #5. Mom sent me there. They did not teach us religion. In our class there were 8 boys and 8 girls: only Jewish children.

At school there were 10 classes (about 200 pupils). All teachers were Jewish. They taught us Yiddish among other generally accepted subjects. At our school only 2 cleaners were Russian.

At that time in the city there were 5 national schools: 2 German (Annenschule, Peterschule), Greek, Polish and Jewish.

The Jewish school was situated in the former gymnasium of Eizenshtadt in Lermontovsky prospect (close to the synagogue: our back door opened into the synagogue court yard).

I finished that school and I am very proud of it. In 1929 in Leningrad authorities initiated campaign for estimation of training quality and potential of pupils, i.e. investigated students' IQ. And our school appeared to be the 2nd in the city after Annenschule.

By the way, students from Annenschule and Peterschule were from rich families: governesses saw the children to the school doors, tutors helped them in their studies, etc. And our school was a school of beggars, we were beggars. I finished my school in 1930. It functioned 20 years and was closed after our graduation.

By the way, I started my school years on September 1, 1921 and on September 30 of the same year I got under the wheels of tram. I lost my leg and since then I walk on crutches. Therefore I missed the whole year (I spent it in hospital) and continued my studies at school only a year later.

Our school was perfect! Here I'll tell you about our director Timofey Yakovlevich Tseytlin (I do not remember his Jewish name, but I remember that it was absolutely different). He taught us social science, trained us to be good people and told us about everything.

Here imagine a fine day in May, our studies are almost over. Do you think it was possible for a teacher to arrest attention of 16 boys and girls aged 16-18? Yes! He fell into talk and had been giving a lecture for 6 hours without any break.

We were so much taken with the topic that even did not leave the classroom for toilet! He was a person of encyclopedic knowledge: he was able to speak about Middle Ages, about Indians, about China.

He also knew much about Jewish societies (at that time Israel did not exist). We listened and he spoke. He was a born orator! I bend my knee before him!

And his wife Lubov Sergeevna was a short slightly built woman. She taught us chemistry. But... we did not like chemistry: nobody of us (16 pupils) became a chemist. Most of us chose engineering.

Mark Yakovlevich Shnitsler taught us physics. I think he was not talented in teaching. Our Maths teacher Abram Efimovich was perfect, though he was a doctor by profession.

Humanitarian subjects (History, Literature) were taught very well. Our teacher of German language knew 7 languages (her name was Anna Ossipovna Pinsker).

They taught us Yiddish (we knew nothing about Hebrew) like all other subjects: German, Geography, Maths. At that time I could read Yiddish. At present I remember the alphabet, but I cannot read: I spell out (my English is much better), but I write easily!

Four times my neighbors came to me and asked me to translate letters from Russian into Yiddish. They sent my translations to America and got answers: it means that people understand my Yiddish. Yes! I can write quickly.

Mom did not help me in my studies. You see, she worked in the market. One day a teacher from our school saw her there. She bought something from her and said 'Your boy is a capable pupil and

you should not worry about him.' So nobody paid attention to my studies: neither my sisters, and brother, nor Mom.