Basia Gutnik's Uncle Yan Gutnik

My uncle Yan Gutnik. This photo was taken in Kalinin in 1940. My father's brother Yan Gutnik (1913 - 1941) graduated from the rabfak , or trade school, and gained admission to the Institute of Light Industry. He was single. Yan's co-students used to get together at our home, my maternal grandfather's place. They had disputes and discussions and discussed books they had read and performances they had attended. Sometimes they worked as a crowd at the Jewish theater, in a building which is now the Brodsky synagogue. One of Yan's friends was Russian and didn't understand a word of Yiddish. Yan and a few other young Jewish men taught him a few words and he shouted them out with everybody else, though he didn't know what they meant. We were poor, but we had a rich spiritual life. Yan went into the army in 1939, along with his co-students. Their

mothers were all missing them and crying after them, but my grandmother said 'Well, what are you crying about? There's no war. They will serve their term and come back!' But, unfortunately, the war began when it was time for him to demobilize. I believe he perished somewhere in the vicinity of Viasma. We received only one letter from him when during the evacuation. All our neighbors cried as they read his letter. We were told about it when we returned after the war. Yan perished in 1941, and we don't know where he was buried.