

## Tsylia Aguf



This is me photographed on the occasion of my admission to the Kiev Pedagogical Institute in 1937. The picture was taken in a photo shop in Kiev. In 1933 the Bolsheviks took away the house built by my grandfather. We moved to Zhytomir where my father's sister Sarah lived. After we moved we didn't celebrate any Jewish traditions. We studied in Jewish schools, and our mother was more concerned about providing for us than traditions. The only difference between Jewish and other schools at that time was the language of teaching. We studied the same subjects and this school was similar to any other Ukrainian or Russian school. Our father fell ill with encephalitis. He was paralyzed and our mother had to take care of the family. I became responsible for all the housekeeping. My sister Manya looked after our house. My mother worked as a cashier at a barber's in Zhytomir, and later she went to work at a lemonade factory. She washed bottles there. She got a very low salary for it. To help my mother provide for the family, I also went to work at the factory part time, filling bottles with lemonade. I enjoyed studying at school. I was an easy-going and sociable girl. I became a pioneer and then a Komsomol member. All children joined the Komsomol league, and I just followed the common procedure. I didn't take part in any public activities. I liked dancing and acting. I had many non-Jewish friends. We spent a lot of time together. Once they took me to the night service at a Christian church. It was a beautiful service, but I got tired of standing for such long hours. I didn't feel remorse for going to a church. It didn't even occur to me that I was doing something wrong. I was a pretty girl and played main parts in our school performances. I enjoyed acting very much. I finished school in 1937 and entered the Faculty of Philosophy at the Kiev Pedagogical Institute. I actually wanted to become an actress, but my father said once that one had to be exceptionally talented to become an actor. He didn't believe I was particularly gifted, and I couldn't do anything against his will. He had great influence on me.