

Klara Dovgalevskaya With Two Friends



This is a photo of me (on the left) with some friends. The photo was taken in Kiev during a walk in the park in 1937. I was born in 1914, in the village of Tripolye. My parents had seven children. I was the youngest. After a pogrom in which my father and my brother Aba were killed, we left Tripolye and moved to Kiev. I was sent to the Jewish orphanage. It was located in Podol, near the synagogue. The times were hard; there was a famine in Ukraine after the Revolution of 1917, so the synagogue organized an orphanage for young orphans. We were fed and taught there. We did not study religion, but we danced and sang Jewish songs. I still remember them. In the beginning I lived at the orphanage, but then my mother began to take me home every day and I went back there every morning, so the orphanage became more like a kindergarten for me. The synagogue fed the older children as well. They did not stay at the orphanage, but simply came there every day to eat. My brothers and sisters came too. I don't know how our family would have survived had it not been for the synagogue. I spent two or three years in that orphanage. I only started going to school when I was already 8 years old because I was so very weak and ill. It was hard for me to

study, so my elder sister and brothers helped me. We had a mixed class: boys and girls together. The school was Russian. The students were of different nationalities: Russians, Ukrainians, and Jews. I was friends with all of them; they all looked the same to me. But in our yard children teased me: 'Khaya is a zhyd [kike]! Khaya is a zhyd [kike]!' It took me a while to understand what they were teasing me for. Only later did I understand that I was Jewish and that this was the reason why my father and brother were killed, my mother raped, and why the whole yard teased me. I studied only for 4 years, finished elementary school and then attended a factory college. Our life was very hard financially; my mother did not work, so I could not stay at school. At the factory college we studied one day and worked one day. We were also taught such regular school subjects as mathematics, physics, geography, and drawing. Every other day we took a tram and went to the factory where we were taught bench work. I liked it, although I cannot say that my dream was to become a metalworker. Then I worked at the same knitting factory as my brother Pinya. In the 1930s I and my brothers and sisters, joined the Komsomol. We loved Soviet holidays very much. I remember that on 1st May we always came together at the Dynamo stadium, wearing sports suits and marching in demonstrations along Kreschatik Street [the main street of Kiev]. We also celebrated the October Revolution Day and New Year's Eve. At that time, we no longer celebrated any Jewish holidays, as we were all Komsomol members, and Pinya was a member of the Communist Party.