

Inmates Of The Jewish Girls' Orphanage In Kishinev



This is a group photograph of the inmates of the Jewish girls' orphanage in Kishinev. This photo was taken in the 1930s. The first on the right is Helena Babich, the patroness of the orphanage, beside her is director Tsyliya Mikhailovna and nurse Pogrebinskaya. I am the second from the right in the 1st row, my sister Sarah (Alexandra) is the 4th from the left in the 2nd row. After my father died in 1930 my mother didn't recover for a long time. However, she had three kids and she had to provide for us. We were starving and my mother had to send all three of us to an orphanage. My brother Grigoriy was sent to an orphanage for boys and my sister and I went to an orphanage for girls in Kishinev. The orphanage was established in a two-storied house. There were two bedrooms on the first floor, one for older girls and one for small kids. There was a big dining and living room on the first floor where we had meals, played and where older girls did their homework. We wore black uniform robes with white collars and had them washed once a week. We also had a shower once a week in the orphanage. Once a month we went to a public bath. In the bath our clothes were treated to protect them from lice while we were taking a bath. Once, I stayed in the bath until late and was late for dinner. The cook gave me the leftover soup: it was thick, with noodles, beans and the meat and I ate to my heart's content and remembered this soup for a long time thinking how lucky I had been. We didn't have sufficient food in the orphanage. We mainly had cooked cereals like porridge, pearl barley, millet, and at lunch we had thin soup with a slice of bread, but with no butter or oil, this was low calorie food, and we got little of it, we rarely had meat or fish - only on holidays. I remember I always dreamt of having as much food as I wanted, and the other girls felt the same. We had meals at set hours and even had drinks at the same time. We lined up to take a sip from one mug. We used to cling to the cup to drink water, but then they grabbed it from you to give it to another girl. In the afternoon we were supposed to take a nap, but we weren't allowed to go to the bedroom and had to lie down wherever we could manage.