

Makhlia Khalzova With Her Sister Itta Vershkina



This is a picture of my sister Itta Vershkina, nee Ostrover, and me, not far from our house in the village of Pistyn that we loved so much. The photo was taken in 1940. When the Soviet power was established in 1939 Itta went to work as a clerk at the fire department in Kosov. Young people were very enthusiastic when the Soviet troops came, while my father Yoino Ostrover and my mother Leya Ostrover, nee Schwarg were less excited. They were getting older and were afraid of new

developments. Shortly afterward my brother Alter was recruited to the army and my mother was so concerned that she even fell ill. I took my carpets with pictures of Lenin and Stalin to the recruitment office and they let my brother go home. They only told him to stay away from anyone who could report on him to higher military authorities. Our town became a district center [Editors note: administrative unit in the Soviet Union]. There were many young military men and there were dancing parties arranged in the evenings. I didn't go to those parties while my sister Itta liked them a lot. We lived two quiet years [from September 1939 through June 1941] with the Soviet power. There were no disturbances of Jewish life in Kosov and we went to the synagogue and celebrated holidays as before. My mother and I did the housekeeping and my father was a pensioner. Since I gave portraits of Stalin and Lenin to the military authorities our family was referred to as one of those that were loyal to the Soviet power. Besides, we didn't own any business or get involved in any social activities. Wealthier Jews lost their stores or shops that were expropriated by the state, but we didn't suffer from any suppression. We were in no hurry to even join a collective farm.