

Lilia Korolik, Asia Reshetnichenko And Tasia Markova



This is a picture of my sisters: Lilia Korolik on the left, and the twins Asia Reshetnichenko and Tasia Markova, nee Korolik behind her. The photo was taken in Kiev in 1936, when they all had measles. I was born in Kiev in 1925 and was the oldest of the children. My sister Lilia was born in 1929. She was born a weak and sickly girl. She got ill with tuberculosis when she was three years old. It was lung and kidney and osseous tuberculosis. She couldn't walk for a few years. She was confined to bed. I loved her a lot and spent lots of time with her. I read books to her when my mother went to her classes. Lilia learned to read when she was very young and was reading too much. Reading had an impact on her sight. In 1932 my mother had twins - Anna and Tamara, but we called them Asia and Tasia at home. My mother was 45 and she wanted no more children. But abortions weren't allowed at that time and my mother had no option. Our life was very poor and miserable then. I remember we kept potatoes under the grand piano - it was the only dry spot in the apartment. My mother made potato soup and some second course dish - this was our main food. Once Lilia and I took out a couple of potatoes and ate them raw while waiting for our mother. We had a big kitchen and my mother cooked on the Primus stove. We didn't have a bathroom and the family went to the sauna twice a week. We had a housemaid because my mother couldn't handle the housekeeping just by herself. The housemaid was a common Ukrainian woman. She came to Kiev in 1933, during the famine, and stayed with us. She slept on the sofa in the living room and my parents and the four of us, children, slept in our bedroom. In summer we often went to the village where Glasha - this was our nanny's name - lived. My mother spent a lot of time with us: she taught us music and French. We had a rule: we had to speak French on certain days and the one who broke this rule had to learn a poem or a fable by heart and recite it. We went for walks in the Botanical Gardens not far from our house or to the railway station. At that time it was a usual thing to go for a walk to the railway station.