

Sarra Shpitalnik



This is me at the age of four. This photo was taken in Kishinev in 1933. When I was born in 1928, my parents rented an apartment in the house across the street from where my grandmother lived on the corner of Tsyrelson Lane and Oktavian Gog Street. This house belonged to former Russian aristocrats: the Meche-Nikolaevichs. Maria Petrovna Meche-Nikolaevich liked our family, and I was her favorite. She had two good-for-nothing sons. Though I was only three years old, I remember how adults said that one was gay and the other one a card gambler. To cut a long story short, they

brought their mother to bankruptcy. Fleshel, a Jewish man, bought this house and the annex in the yard. We lived there till I turned seven. I was a rather capricious and naughty child. I gave my mother a hard time and she sent me to various children's institutions. I went to a Jewish kindergarten for a year: for some reason it was called a 'Hebrew' kindergarten. All I learned there was counting to four. There was no Hebrew there. They taught us music. Once I conducted a noise orchestra where the children played various wooden trinkets on the stage of a club. I had a lovely marquisette dress on, which was pinned. Well, I gesticulated so hard that it got unpinned and fell off me leaving me in my panties in front of everyone. They drew the curtain, but I was so distressed about all the shame, particularly in front of the boys whom I liked: Boria Fleshel, our landlord's son and his friend, Syoma Leiderman.