

Berta Mazo And Her Sister Serafima



This photograph was taken in Leningrad in 1937. Here you can see my sister Serafima and me near the hospital in Sovetskaya Street. It was Raisa Bleksmit (a friend of mine) who took the photo.

My sister Serafima Mazo was born in Malaya Vishera in 1927. When we moved to Leningrad, I was a pupil of the 5th form. It happened in 1928. Grandmother and grandfather remained in Malaya Vishera, and after grandmother's death in 1929 grandfather moved to our place. He died before the war and was buried at the Preobrazhensky cemetery. We lived in Leningrad in a large two-room apartment until we left for evacuation (in 1941).

War burst out when my elder daughter was about 5 months old. We left almost everything and managed to escape before Germans occupied Tosno. We went to evacuation with my sister (she was 13 at that time), my baby daughter and my Daddy.

We went from Tosno in a heated goods van. [A heated goods van was a freight car adapted for transportation of people.] There were two-tiered plank beds in the van. Emotional shock resulted in disappearance of my breast milk, therefore it was necessary to take it from special canteens on our way, warm it and give to my daughter. We arrived in Perm. Initially we had to go to Chelyabinsk with my factory coworkers, but we went to Perm, because our neighbor and her family had moved there earlier and wrote us that it was very good to live there. At first we could not find her there, but then I met her near the railway station by chance. She took us to her place for a while. Not to lose touch with my husband, we decided that he would write us to Perm (to be called for).

At the special canteen I received milk, porridge, kissels, etc. It was enough to feed both my daughter and my sister.

Later I became a school teacher. I taught drawing. At the school lunchroom I used to take meals (they had very good products: different sausages, second courses, etc.). I brought meals home and we ate it. At that school I worked till spring of 1942, but then we had to leave for Sverdlovsk. It happened because my husband was transferred from Izhorsky plant [a large diameter pipes plant] to Uralmash [a heavy machine production facility]. He visited us in Perm on his way to Sverdlovsk, but he could not take us with him at that moment. So we moved to Sverdlovsk when he settled in the new place. His apartment was very small, but later we received a new room in the attic. At that time all attics were equipped for habitation. Our room was about 16 square meters large and we lived there five together.

Members of our family started their way back home (to Leningrad) in 1948. Serafima went first. She settled at my aunt Liya in Belinsky Street. She entered the Leningrad College of Foreign Languages, which was situated in Smolny [Smolny is a complex of buildings in St. Petersburg used as a residence of the city administration]. I remember that at that time we sent her potatoes from Sverdlovsk. Daddy was the next one to leave for Leningrad. He found out that our apartment was occupied by some people, but he managed to evict one room from its unlawful possessor. So we returned to Leningrad to that room. My husband remained in Sverdlovsk for some time, but at last they called him back to Leningrad.