

## Frieda Rudometova



This is me, Frieda Rudometova. This photo was taken in Zelenodolsk in 1943 on the occasion of my wedding. My husband sent this photo to his parents and sisters in Kharkov, so that they could have an idea of the appearance of his wife.

I finished my 7th form in 1935. I could continue my studies, but I knew I had to go to work to support my mother. I worked as a courier and then went to the school in the Central Committee. I completed my secondary education. When they asked me what profession I wanted to study I almost pronounced that I wanted to be a cook. I was always hungry and my strongest desire was to eat my fill, but I was ashamed to say it and said that I wanted to be a telephone operator. I finished a course of few months and began to work as a telephone operator in the communications department of the central committee. These were the happiest years in my life. I knew all party leaders they were great people and they treated me, a poor Jewish girl so well giving me an opportunity to study. I received food coupons, garment and shoe coupons. I gained some weight, grew prettier and made many friends. My close friend Lenchka, the daughter of a frontier colonel, and I often went to walk on the Dnieper slopes where there was a brass orchestra playing. I loved dancing and often went to the dancing ground. We believed in communist ideas and credibility of everything happening in our great country.

In 1940 I went to work as a telephone operator at the shipyard and repair shop 'Leninskaya Kuznia'. On 22 June 1941 the Great Patriotic War began. Kiev was bombed on the very first day. It was a complete surprise for me. In early July 1941 the shipyard where I was working began to prepare for evacuation: its equipment was shipped to Zelenodolsk Tatar ASSR by train. The management and engineering staff also went by this train, but there was no organized evacuation of workers or such common employees as I was. Basically, nobody ever mentioned that Jews were to evacuate in the first turn. I continued going to work, helping to load the equipment and being on duty at the

telephone station of the plant. In middle August, before the last train with employees was to depart, my boss, a Jew, said to me: 'If you want to leave the town, run home to pick your documents and come back - the train is leaving soon'. I rushed home. I only had time to grab my passport, my Komsomol membership card and a change of underwear and clothing. I ran back to the railway station and boarded the train. It was a freight train and we slept on plank beds.

In about 3 weeks we arrived at the point of destination: Zelenodolsk town, 2000 kilometers from home. Zelenodolsk was a small town on the steep bank of the Volga in about 40 km from Kazan, the capital of Tataria. I was accommodated in a dormitory where thanks to my boss' arrangements, I could have a little 6-square meter room for myself, and went to work as a telephone operator. There was a bed, a table and chair in my room where I stayed till 1943. However hard years these were I recall them with warmth. Firstly, this was my youth. Secondly, through all these years the Soviet people were united with their common trouble. People were kind to one another and treated me well. We worked 3 shifts, and at pressing moments I went to work as a worker and I did it believing that it was my duty to work where required. I also had a big workload at my place receiving telephone messages from the center, making reports of work completed and connecting bosses with the Kremlin since our plant worked for the front. Of course, life was hard. I had many friends and there were Jews among them we often went to the club and cinema and dancing.

On 2 May 1943 my friend and I went to dance at the plywood factory club. A tall slim sailor invited me to a dance. We met: his name was Pyotr Rudometov. We dated few months and he proposed to me on 6 November 1943. We got married and celebrated the wedding in the dormitory.