

## Molka Mirskaya



This is me, Molka Mirskaya. The picture was taken in Kishinev in 1953. It is written overleaf: 'As a keepsake to my sis Raya'. I gave the same picture to my adopted sister Raya, who got married and left our house.

I finished seven grades of school. I was a good student. I was keen on literature and was an avid reader. I went to the library every other day. I was glued to books and 'gulped them up.' I read while walking, in a tram. They knew me and loved me in the library. My parents advised me to find a job after I had finished seven grades, as it was hard for them to keep me and my little sister. I talked about it in the library. The head of the library offered me a job there. First I was taught how to distribute books on shelves, hand out books, work with catalogues and soon I became a competent librarian. I finished evening school while I was working. The head of the library recommended me to enter a librarians' school, located in the town of Soroki, not far from Kishinev. I passed the entrance exams successfully and I was enrolled for the second year of the extramural department. I worked in my library, and still read books in bouts. I took exams twice a year. After obtaining a diploma, I was appointed the senior librarian.

I had many friends, but I was particularly close with Ella, my cousin. I remember how we were getting over Stalin's death in the year of 1953. When his death was announced, thousands of Kishinev people rushed to his monument, depicting Stalin in a military coat with the stretched out hand, which was located by the Patria cinema on the central city square. There was a long line of people, who'd been waiting there for hours to bring flowers to the monument. We were also in the line, sobbing. There was mourning in our library. When at the 20th Communist Party Congress

Khrushchev dispelled the myths behind Stalin's personality cult, it was another blow, as our idol was crushed. We had worked for many hours in the library. We had to look through every book. If we came across the mention of Stalin's name or his picture, we were supposed to mar those books by crossing out his name and tearing out his picture.

I kept in touch with my school friend Lusya Baum. She studied at the railway school, and invited me for a New Year's party in 1957. There were a lot of boys in her company. There were few girls in that school. My mother made a new dress for me to celebrate the New Year. As always, she chose the fabric and the style. I asked her to make a detachable dress that was in fashion. But she didn't listen. She sewed the way she found appropriate, being frugal and taking into account the eternal need of the Jews to remake and reuse things. And now she remade a dress by adding beautiful frilling at the bottom, making me the best-dressed girl there. It was 'bring your own party,' so everybody had to take a dish. My mother made potato patties, which everybody enjoyed. That was a Jewish company, and there I met a lad whom I liked. In spite of the fact that my boyfriend was in the army at the time, we started seeing each other. I had to listen to my mother's stories about my mother's and father's love for each other, about how my mother waited for my dad for four years. They disapproved of my precipitancy, but my heart could not be forced.