

Asta Pekker With Her Mother, Selena Shwartzman-Pekker.



Me, Asta Pekker, in my early childhood, with my mother, Selena Shwartzman-Pekker. The picture was taken in Berlin around 1930.

My mother was born in Warsaw in 1908. I don't know whether she got any Jewish education, but most likely, she didn't. It may have been high school. Then she finished Stanislavskiy theatrical studio at the Moscow Art Theater. She was an actress in this studio before her marriage. In 1925 my grandfather received an assignment in Berlin and he took his family there: my grandmother, my mother and my future father Grigoriy Pekker, violoncellist. In Berlin they lived for almost nine years and that was one of the brightest and most peaceful periods in the life of our family. My grandfather was working; my future father was finishing the Berlin Conservatory, my mother and grandmother were enjoying life, reading a lot. My mother didn't work. By the way, they spoke German at home, therefore, this language became my mother tongue.

I went to school in Moscow in 1936, and my second form was in Kiev. We actually ran away to Kiev from Moscow in 1937. With the beginning of intensive repressions people started avoiding as the ones who had been living abroad for a long time. We could go to where we were not known. Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchov, the future leader of the Soviet Union, but at that time a big admirer of my Mama, suggested that our family moved to Kiev, where he was also transferred at that time. We gratefully accepted this invitation. Papa became a senior lecturer at the Kiev Conservatory, one of the youngest, and grandfather Pyotr and grandmother Lisa stayed in Moscow. They said in our family that only by miracle the grandfather avoided repressions of 1937.

A week before the war my grandfather came to Kiev from Moscow. It was him who took me to Moscow on 24 June 1941, as far from the war as possible, as it seemed to him. That was the end of my happy - the happiest childhood, with only brightness and love in it, where I never heard anyone raising his voice at somebody else or saying an angry word. The war started changing everything in our life.