

Ludmila Pavlovskaya



This is my 5th birthday. This is a ceramic figure of a cat in my hands. I was born in Kiev on 7 April 1936 when my mother was 31 and my father was 37 years old. I don't know where my parents lived before I was born, but after my birth they were living in a 5-story building in 5, Proreznaya street in the center of Kiev. It was a communal apartment with many rooms and many tenants. We lived in a small room. There was a common kitchen where all women of this apartment got together in the evening cooking dinner for their families. There were lines to the bathroom and toilet in the morning. My mother went to work before I turned 1 year old. I went to the day nursery and then to the kindergarten. My friends were children in the kindergarten. I don't know their

nationality. My mother took me to the kindergarten before 8 o'clock in the morning. I stayed there a whole day and came home in the evening. We were raised patriots in the kindergarten. We were told that the Soviet children had the happiest childhood in the world thanks to grandfather Lenin and grandfather Stalin. The first thing I saw entering the kindergarten in the morning was a big portrait of Lenin and another big portrait of Stalin in the lobby. We learned poems glorifying our Communist Party and its leaders by heart and sang patriotic songs. We were told about the sufferings of children in capitalist countries and about a happy life of the Soviet children. I heard this every day since I was 3 years old and took it for granted for a long time since then never giving it another thought. We also danced and listened to what our tutor read to us. When the weather was warm we stayed outside playing with a ball and "seek-and-hide". In summer the kindergarten spent time in the country house in the outskirts of Kiev. My parents didn't celebrate any Jewish holidays. They didn't celebrate Soviet holidays either, but not because they were against them, but because they could hardly cope with everyday expenses and just couldn't afford any celebrations. We have always had little money. I can't remember even my parent's birthday celebrations in my family. We had guests on some of my birthdays. When I turned five my mother said that we were going to a photo shop. This happened the first time in my life. The photographer gave me a plaster cat and said that it would look like a real cat in the picture.