

Vera Burdenko And Her Sister Lilia Korolik



This is a picture of my sister Lilia Korolik and me. The photo was taken in Kiev in 1932. I was born in Kiev in 1925 and was the oldest of the children. My sister Lilia was born in 1929. She was born a weak and sickly girl. She got ill with tuberculosis when she was three years old. It was lung and kidney and osseous tuberculosis. She couldn't walk for a few years. She was confined to bed. I loved her a lot and spent lots of time with her. I read books to her when my mother went to her classes. Lilia learned to read when she was very young and was reading too much. Reading had an impact on her sight. In 1932 my mother had twins - Anna and Tamara, but we called them Asia and

Tasia at home. My mother was 45 and she wanted no more children. But abortions weren't allowed at that time and my mother had no option. Our life was very poor and miserable then. I remember we kept potatoes under the grand piano - it was the only dry spot in the apartment. My mother made potato soup and some second course dish - this was our main food. Once Lilia and I took out a couple of potatoes and ate them raw while waiting for our mother. I started school in 1933. It was an ordinary Russian secondary school. There were children of many nationalities, including Jewish children, who studied there. There was no issue of nationality then - we were all Soviet children and we were all equal. I was a poor pupil. I mostly got grade '3' - out of the '5' grade system. I took no interest in mathematics or physics and these subjects were very difficult. However, I read a lot and knew Russian literature well.