

Rachel Gitelis With Her Former Schoolmates



I with my former schoolmates. I am the first one on the right in the lower row. The photo was taken on 7th December 1985 in Odessa. There were several Jewish schools in Odessa before the war. In 1929 my sister, my brother and I went to the Jewish lower secondary school. I remember a big gym, and I also recall concerts where I sang Jewish songs. We had a very good singing teacher. We called him 'Tra-la-la'. We studied Yiddish language and literature, German and Russian, mathematics, history and many other subjects. We didn't have any special Jewish subjects. [Editor's note: In Jewish schools in the USSR the students were taught the same subjects as in other schools, but the language of instruction was Yiddish.] We studied in Yiddish and I still have a very good conduct of Yiddish. I had many friends of various nationalities. During my summer vacation after the 8th form I took up jobs at the port as an accounting clerk to help my parents. I had many friends at school, but none of us was a pioneer or a Komsomol member. It wasn't mandatory at that time, and we didn't find it necessary. I kept in touch with my schoolmates for a long time. Many of them moved to other countries and some of them have already died. There were nine of us including myself. There are only three of us left in Odessa now: Mirah, Kinera and I. We call each other and talk about the past.