

Leonid Karlinsky's Mother Bertha Tomchinskaya And Her Colleague



Members of the Party Committee at the garment factory in Kharkov. My mother, Bertha Tomchinskaya, is seated in the center. The District Party Committee Officer, Ivan Skliaro, is beside her (left). My mother and the other two girls are wearing watches that they received from the district party committee. My mother was the 6th or 7th child in her family. The only education she received before the Revolution was two years at the Jewish primary school. That was all, because she had to help her mother and older sister about the house. The Revolution opened bright prospects for my mother. She was eager to study, and went to Kharkov, where her older sister Etia was already living. In Kharkov, my mother studied at the rabfak, but not for long, because she wasn't quite a success at school. She went to work as a seamstress at the garment factory. Later, she became a Komsomol member and subsequently, a party member. In 1929 she became Secretary of the Party Committee of the factory and met with Minister Postyshev. We even had a photo of Mama posed with him. Mama destroyed this photograph after Postyshev was arrested. In Leningrad, my father received a room in the hostel for officers, and Mama joined him there in the summer of 1930. My mother was living in Kharkov when my father was at Volhovstroy, and they met during my father's vacation. In Leningrad we lived in a room at the officers' barracks. My father's salary was not enough to support the family, so my mother also had to work. We had a housemaid, and Mama made her go to a school for young working people.