

Henrich Kurizkes And His Schoolmates



This is my class in Dolmatovo on the Ural. We were photographed after finishing school, when we received our certificates. I am first on the right in the front row. Sitting in middle row is our teacher, whose last name was Bunin; I don't remember his first name. On my left is Kira Tarasova from Moscow; we shared a desk. These are all I remember. I studied in this school just for one year and I didn't keep in touch with the others. This photo was taken in Dolmatovo, Ural, in 1942. In June 1941 I finished 10th grade at the secondary school. I went to work as a pioneer leader in a pioneer camp during the summer. The camp was located about 15 kilometers from Tallinn. I was to start on 15th June. We had just settled down, when on Sunday night of 22nd June 1941 we heard the roar of the artillery cannonade. It never occurred to us that it was a war. We thought it was another military training exercise. Then at noon, on 22nd June, we heard the Molotov speech on the radio, and he said that Hitler's armies had attacked the USSR. We returned to Tallinn where evacuation began and my parents decided to evacuate. Thank God, they didn't delay. My mother and father packed some belongings and we headed to the railway station. My father worked in the military supply store, and was to take care of transportation of its stock. My parents decided to go on separately rather than wait for one another. There were freight trains at the freight station in Tallinn that moved on when they were full. We evacuated on 3rd July 1941. After our train crossed the bridge over the Narva River, the bridge was destroyed. We were told that all Estonians were to be evacuated to Ulianovsk where the government of Estonia had been evacuated. We traveled for about three weeks. We reached Yelanskaya station between Sverdlovsk and Cheliabinsk. The station was ready to receive people. Horse-drawn wagons from nearby kolkhozes were waiting at the station. We were taken to the local school to be distributed to kolkhozes. We were sent to a kolkhoz 30 kilometers from the district town of Dolmatovo in Kirov region, about 1000 kilometers north-west of Moscow. Mama and I went to work in the kolkhoz. It was August and I was to go to school in September and we returned to Dolmatovo. Mama went to work as an accountant in the kolkhoz supplying cabbage, carrots and potatoes to the pipe factory in Kamenets-Uralskiy. During the war this factory manufactured cannon guns. We rented a room in a wooden hut. I was in the

10th grade at school. Most of my classmates were evacuated from Moscow, mainly they were children of politicians and about half of them were Jews. I did well at school. I even did better than those children from Moscow, which was amazing. In June 1942 I finished 10th grade and received the school certificate. In the summer I worked in haymaking in the kolkhoz, and in September 1942 I was recruited to the army.