

Agnessa Margolina



This is me in a Ukrainian folk costume. The photo was taken after our school dance group performed at a concert on 1st May in Kiev in 1933. I liked literature at school. We didn't have books at home and I borrowed some from the school library. I also liked mathematics. I studied well at school. I was a sociable girl and had many friends. I didn't chose my friends according to their nationality, but somehow most of my friends happened to be Jewish. I liked singing and joined the school choir when I was in the 2nd grade. We learned songs praising the Party and Stalin, in which children thanked them for our happy childhood. These songs called Lenin and Stalin 'Grannies'. We sincerely believed in all this. When I was in the 4th grade I went to a dance club. We danced Russian, Ukrainian, Moldavian and Polish folk dances. I became a pioneer in the 4th grade. I was very excited about it. I was afraid they wouldn't admit me since I wasn't among the best in our

studies. However, we were all admitted. I remember the ceremony. We were lined up in the schoolyard and the senior pioneer tutor recited the oath of young Leninists that we repeated after her. Then Komsomol members tied red neckties on us and gave each of us a book. I got a 'Pioneer Hero' book about a pioneer that saved kolkhoz crops from fire. When I became a pioneer I began to conduct anti-religious propaganda at home. At school we were told that we had to teach our retrograde parents that there was no God and that all about him was a fantasy. My father came home late from work and I waited for him on purpose to explain to him how wrong he was. My father got angry and argued with me, but since then he stopped praying at home or he did it when I didn't see. Now with regret and shame I can say that we, pioneers, were taught to be informers. Our idol was Pavlik Morozov. Perhaps, my father was just afraid that I would tell someone at school about his religiosity and he would have problems at work. We didn't celebrate Jewish holidays at home any more. We celebrated Soviet holidays at school. On 1st May and 7th November [October Revolution Day] schoolchildren and the school administration went to a parade in the morning and then came back to school. We prepared a concert to which we invited our parents and relatives. We tried to perform as best as we could.