

Michael Kofman



This is a picture of my husband Michael Kofman when he was a railroad officer. This photo is my memorabilia of my husband, except for my daughter, of course. He came from a working-class Jewish family in Kremenchug. His parents worked at the tobacco factory there. His older brother, a Komsomol member, died in an accident at a construction site in 1920. One of his sisters was a prosecutor and the other one worked at the tobacco factory. I only met them after my husband

died. Their children still correspond with me - we are in-laws and a family. My husband got a room in a communal apartment in Kiev. There were three other families in this apartment. They were all nice people. I worked at the Department of Marxism-Leninism in my former institute. I was an instructor and explained the meaning and main idea of Marxism-Leninism. [Editor's note: All educational institutions in the fSU had departments teaching and researching on Marx, Lenin and their followers.] I also continued my studies. My daughter, Asia, was born in 1937. Before she turned 1, I sent her to a nursery school. Later I found a baby sitter. She was an old woman from a dispossessed family. She was a very nice lady but absolutely ignorant. My husband served in the Railroad Regiment #6 in Kiev. Later the regiment was transferred to Zhmerinka, a small town and railway joint [200 km from Kiev]. I stayed in Kiev to finish my studies. The commissar of the regiment offered me to become head of the women's council, the political organization for officers' wives. I told him that I wouldn't mind doing so but that I had to continue my studies. He said that Stalin invited officers' wives to a meeting and that it would be good for me to go, especially because I was politically well-educated. But I had other priorities - to study was my main goal - and refused to go to the meeting. Another officer's wife went there. Stalin received them nicely, and she even brought a record player back, which was a gift from Stalin. Michael got tired of living alone and began to ask me to continue my studies by correspondence and come join him. I agreed. Asia and I moved to Zhmerinka at the beginning of 1941. We settled down in a communal apartment at the military camp. There were many tenants of various nationalities, and we all got along very well. My husband's mother came from Kremenchug to live with us. We realized that the war was inevitable and that German troops were close to the border, but we couldn't believe in the worst to happen. My husband and I said to one another that we would just pretend nothing bad was going to happen. In the morning of 22nd June 1941 I went out to buy milk. I saw people running around. I returned home and heard Molotov speaking on the radio pronouncing, 'We are at war'. My husband had left me a note telling me to leave for the East. I went into evacuation and lived in Novosibirsk with my daughter. One day in February 1942 I came home and sat down for dinner when all of a sudden the thought that Michael might have perished struck me. Shortly afterwards I got the notification of my husband's death. Later I got to know that he had taken part in the defense of Kiev. Stalin had issued an order 'to stand up for Kiev'. So many people died in this struggle!