

Marina Shoihet's Mother Anna Shoihet



This is my mother Anna Shoihet . The photo was taken in Odessa in 1920 . My mother, born in 1900, was her parents' first child. She was the only girl in the family, and she had four brothers. Her parents wanted their children to have an education. My grandfather thought that cheder didn't give a good education, so they hired teachers for my mother. She had teachers coming to their house to teach her Russian literature, geography, history and German. She studied like this until 1915. My mother entered the Burchinskiy private school in 1917 (this was an ordinary school for girls - they were from different families and of various nationalities). I would like to read a few lines, related to the Civil War, from my mother's diary. 'This is a hard time, a time of the persecution of the Jewish people and of gangs. Polish soldiers were shooting at us and we were hiding in cellars. Once mamma was baking bread in the oven. During the bombing she ran out of the cellar to go to

the apartment to take out the bread. She put her life at risk. But it was scary to be starving. The Volynets gang killed 700 Jews in one day - for some reason they were taken for Bolsheviks. The gang came to Gaisin, got all men together and locked them in the butcher's store. My father was there, too - such was the order. The intellectuals of Gaisin - the doctors, the mayor and priests - collected some money to rescue the people. We found out later that the bandits wanted to pour kerosene onto this butcher's store and burn it down. The money rescued the people. Once at school during classes the Jewish girls were told to go home, because the situation in the town was troublesome. Imagine our feelings when we were leaving and the Russian girls stayed and continued their studies. Once schoolboys invited our girls to the ball. I was so excited to go there. I dressed up and curled my hair, my mother bought me thin stockings and beautiful shoes. But then papa came home and didn't allow me to go there. He was afraid that there might be aggression against Jewish girls. I cried so bitterly, I thought I would never forgive him. We were afraid of going to the theatre because of murderous assaults at night. People earned their living selling things, traveling on railcar roofs to Kiev and Odessa. Winters were freezing. Fania and Bella, my mother's sisters, were having a difficult life, as my grandfather had died and they had no support.' My mother said that the young people had great expectations from the Revolution. They hoped that the new authorities would treat Jews better and put an end to all their troubles. One of the main slogans of the communists was the equality and brotherhood of all nations and people. Jews firmly believed in this and had hopes for a better life. My grandfather and grandmother were far from politics and they didn't care much about these events. My mother told me that when she met my father he was a communist and she was very proud of it, as this was a modern thing at the time.