

Sima Shvarts With Her Cousins



This is me as a technical college student, with my cousins. Standing is Boris Kamenkovich. The photo was taken in 1931 in Kiev. After finishing the 7-year school I entered the cooperative technical college. I studied at the department for library studies for three years. At that time we never thought of people's nationalities. At our technical college there were Jewish students and students of other nationalities. But this question never worried us. I only remember we had a Ukrainian student who always spoke Ukrainian, so all the teachers always told him to speak Russian. All teaching in our college was done in Russian. When I went to college, there was a military unit right across the street from our college. We went to dance at each other's clubs: we girls went to dance at theirs, and they came to dance at ours. This is how I met my future husband. At that time we lived in another place. The husband of my mother's sister Rakhil was a high-ranking party worker. At that time there were many private houses. So, this man told us that there were several flats owned by somebody called Parkhomovsky in Zhilyanskaya Street. And Rakhil and her husband had no flat in Kiev. So, he went to Parkhomovsky, intimidated him with something

and said that if he didn't give him the flats, they would be confiscated from him. So, Parkhomovsky gave him two flats - their family stayed in one, and my mother and I, in the other one. They had two sons, Boris and Mark Kamenkovich. They were younger than I but we were good friends. We remained friends for life. Before the war Boris (who danced very well) had been taken into a famous dancing band and spent the whole war in it. They went to every front and performed there. After the war the band stayed in Moscow. Boris came to Kiev after the war. He became a very famous man in Kiev's theaters - he was the chief ballet master of the Opera Theater and of the Ukrainian Drama Theater. He was married to a stage director, famous in her circles, Irina Molostova. Everybody treated him nicely in the theater. Last year, when he celebrated his 80th birthday, a special celebration was organized in the theater in his honor - many Ukrainian workers of culture were invited; his son came from Moscow (he works there in a theater, too). Unfortunately, Irina Molostova died several years ago. When my cousin Boris introduced me to his friends he always said, 'This is my cousin Sima - an iron lady'. Boris died very recently, and I was left absolutely alone. His brother Mark lives in Germany.