

Fira Shwartz's Family



From left to right, sitting are: my cousin Naum Borodianskiy, his father, my maternal uncle, Yankel Borodianskiy, and Yankel's grandson Edik. Standing are Yankel's daughter Beba, her husband Leonid and their daughter Galina; Yankel's wife Diphia; my other uncle Samuel's wife Rosa, I and Samuel's daughter Bella Borodianskaya. The photo was taken in Kiev on 9th May 1945 when Yankel and his family came here on a visit. I was 5 years old when the war began. My father was released from service in the army because he was a railroad employee. He also received a railroad carriage at his disposal for the evacuation of his family. We all went to evacuation in this carriage at the beginning of July 1941: my mother's brother Samuel, his wife and daughter Bella, my father's fellow worker, his wife and two children, and our family. Uncle Samuel and his family got off the train at Buzuluk station - his acquaintances were living there. We got off at Magnitogorsk, Cheliabinsk region [2,500 km from Kiev]. My father was recruited to the front at the beginning of 1942. A few months later we received the notification of his death. My mother died of pneumonia at the beginning of 1943. At the beginning of January 1943 Uncle Samuel came to pick me up and take me to Buzuluk. His family became mine. In September 1944 we returned to Kiev. My uncle's apartment was occupied by a 'poltzai' [expression used for former fascist menials]. We stayed with one of his acquaintances. My uncle returned to his former job at the tailor shop. He soon managed to get back his apartment, and we moved in there. It was a two-bedroom apartment in a two-storied wooden building in the center of Kiev. It used to be a communal apartment, but later it was refurbished into a two-bedroom apartment. There was gas heating and running cold water. We had a kitchen that had served as a corridor before; it was long and narrow. In Kiev I studied in the 2nd grade of a Russian secondary school. I became a Young Octobrist and later a pioneer. I loved dancing and begged my uncle to send me to a ballet school, but one had to pay for it, and he didn't have money to pay for my studies. My uncle didn't adopt me. He was my guardian so I received monthly allowances for my father, who had perished at the front. My uncle treated me very kindly and supported me with everything I needed. I was a sociable girl and made friends with almost all

my classmates. The teachers and pupils were sympathetic to me. There were quite a few schoolchildren that had lost one parent to the war, but there weren't many that had lost both parents. I had free meals at the school canteen and received clothing and stationery every now and then. Half the pupils in my class were Jewish. There were also Jews among our teachers. I never really faced anti-Semitism in my whole life. Only once did some boys shout 'zhydovka' [kike] at me on my way home from school. I was taken aback but pretended that I hadn't heard them.