

Sofia Furman And Inna Nikitina



This photograph shows little girls: me and my playmate and cousin Inna Nikitina.

The photo was taken in 1937 in Leningrad.

We left for evacuation in July by the last train, on our way Germans destroyed the train by bombing at some station. I remember my mum getting over the rails.

My mum took care of me (at that time I was 6 years old), my little brother, who was born on December 20, 1939 and also my mum took a daughter of her sister Zinaida (Zlata) with her, because Zinaida worked at a secret factory and they had not permitted her to leave Leningrad.

So Zinaida entrusted my mum with her daughter, who was 5 months older than me. Her name was Inna Nikitina. So my mum with three children left Leningrad by freight train. The process of our departure was frightful - it was engraved in my memory. Probably, we better remember terrible moments of our life.

I remember how we got into the car through windows, there were a lot of people, the station was overcrowded, and soldiers stood between plank beds and lifted us over through windows. Daddy forwarded some luggage to us, but it was lost somewhere.

I still keep his last letter which he sent us from the frontline in which he wrote that he was worried about us, because we had left without belongings and without warm clothes. We had only one suitcase with us, where we found nothing at all. So we appeared in Gorky region hungry and undressed, and we had to get settled somehow.

We came to relatives of father's adjutant to Vad village of Gorky region. At first mother worked in the collective farm, doing temp work, and then a military hospital evacuated from Ukraine appeared in Vad. And my mum went there for work.

At first she was a nurse (she had no special medical education), later she was taken to operating-room (my mother was very sociable and clever woman).

An old professor (I do not remember his surname) was very nice to her and took care of her. He knew that she had three little children, who suffered from hunger.

At the hospital they gave her some food, and she did her best to bring it to us, children. And that professor saw her to be hungry and shared his ration with her (and so did his wife).

I remember that mother brought home used bandages from bandaging room. He gave it to her, advised to boil thoroughly. Mum used them to make clothes. He also tried to give her a glass or a spoon when the opportunity occurred.

Some time later the hospital left for the place nearer to front, and my mum had no opportunity to follow them because of her children. By that time my sister (Inna Nikitina), who was in evacuation together with us, died.

It happened that we all (three of us) got ill with measles, and she did not recover, because her stomach was out of order. My brother and me had eruptive stage - I remember, and Inna had not, even her temperature was normal. But when I woke up one morning (we slept embracing one another), I found her dead. We were good friends.

In evacuation, my mum received letters from front line from my daddy - the last letter came in August 1942. I keep it as a family relic, because it is the last piece of news from my father.

It was written in pencil on a small sheet of paper. Having written that letter, he got lost, and we did not receive any more letters from him and knew nothing about him. Time passed and we got to know that he perished.

Zlata Shukhman (we called her aunt Zina), who sent her daughter Inna in evacuation with us (where she died), arrived in Gorky region (they permitted her to leave Leningrad, when the siege was already raised) and buried her daughter. Up to the last day she cried over her loss.

All her life she cried and did not marry. Each year she visited her daughter's grave. When she became incapable of doing it, aunt Zlata brought some soil from the grave of Inna to Leningrad and buried it in common grave, where aunt Ghita was already buried - at an ordinary cemetery, where there were Jewish zones. Later I buried there aunt Zlata (Zina) and my mum too.