

Yelizaveta Zatkovetskaya With Co-Students



Parade in Odessa on 1 may 1936. I, Yelizaveta Zatkovetskaya, the fourth from the right, with my co-students. We are wearing the uniforms of sanitary volunteers. At that time significant attention was paid to military training, and civil defense in particular, in higher educational institutions. I took an active part in them, when I studied in the Pedagogical College. We were trained to become medical nurses to provide medical first aid in various emergency situations. We are marching along Deribassovskaya Street, the central street in Odessa, wearing the uniforms of medical attendants provided to us on this occasion.

In 1932 I finished 7-year school. Two of my friends also wanted to become teachers and convinced me to go to the Pedagogical College in Kiev. I was eager to see a big town, live and study in it. Besides, I had never seen a train before. Everything seemed interesting to me, and I was not afraid of anything. There were rabfak schools in colleges - faculties preparing workers for colleges. The girls and I submitted our documents to this school. There were interviews and exams, and I was the only one of the three of us who was admitted. The girls left home and I stayed in Kiev. I became a student of the Jewish Faculty of Kiev Pedagogical College. This faculty trained teachers of the Jewish literature and language for Jewish schools. There were many Jewish schools in Ukraine at that time. We studied in Yiddish. I lived in a hostel. There were huge rooms. There were 16 tenants in my room. We got along well and had a lot of fun together. Then the period of famine began. Our stipends of 24 rubles were only enough to buy tea and sugar plums. So we had sugarplums with boiled water. Once I missed two days of classes looking for some work to do for money in Kiev. The dean asked me why I missed my classes. He started telling me that I should continue my studies in college for whatever it cost me, that I was a born teacher and had to study regardless any problems. I wasn't going to quit the college.

I also became a Komsomol member, when I was the first-year student and took an active part in public activities. Again I was responsible for helping other students with their studies. We were to study four years, but there was a need in teachers, and they reduced our course to three years. After the second year of studies this Jewish Faculty moved to Odessa to be farther from the capital. We didn't understand then that it was a beginning of a slow attack on the Jewish culture and education. I lived in a hostel in Odessa. We celebrated all Soviet holidays, went to parades and festivals, but I also remembered the Jewish traditions. Being a Komsomol member, I couldn't openly

celebrate holidays or go to the synagogue, but I tried to observe traditions quietly. I tried to do no hard work on Saturday and fasted on Yom Kippur without mentioning it to anyone. Of course, following the kashrut was out of the question since we were always hungry and ate whatever we could get.