

Emilia Kotliar With Children Of The Pioneer Camp



This photo was taken in the pioneer camp Artek in the Crimea in 1939.

I am standing in the second row the first from the left, on a background of the building in which we lived . We were photographed by a photographer of the pioneer camp and he gave us these photographs for free.

I went to school in 1932. I went to a preparatory "zero" class. I finished this zero and 3 primary forms in this district school and then my mother sent me to the 4th form at the preparatory department of Central Music School at Moscow Conservatory.

They also got general education in this school. It was an amazing and unique school, a cradle of talented and gifted children. There were many Jews. Everywhere. It was some sort of a 'Jewish Zoo'.

There were 18 children in my class, but only 12 attended classes regularly. I would like to say that this music school added a lot to my spiritual education, even though I didn't feel quite comfortable there since I was sort of backward.

I often went to the Bolshoy Theater and to concerts at the conservatory, we were given free tickets. Besides, I studied with talented children and enjoyed talking to them.

There were no conflicts in our class and children behaved themselves. They just didn't have time for fooling around. In the morning we had music classes and studied theory and at 2 our general classes began. Therefore, there was a good atmosphere in class and we had nice teachers who were selected by special requirements.

In 1939 my school sent me to the best and biggest pioneer camp 'Artek' in the Crimea [1200 km south of Moscow] on the shore of the Black Sea. I liked this camp very much. It was a model camp and lots of funds were allocated in it.

There was good food and we had beautiful uniforms, there ere interesting children and at the end of our term we had a party around a big fire. There was a Kabardinian boy in the camp and he was a symbol of Artek. Kabardinians are backward mountainous people.

Even now only few of them have education and it was symbolic that their boy came to this wonderful camp. We even sang song about him in Artek. During holidays he rode a horse and it was beautiful. We also arranged amateur concerts and sang songs.

There was a piano in the camp. We sang pioneer and other songs. Some children sang, some danced and it was nice and joyful. I sat at the seashore gathering seashells. I brought home a suitcase full of seashells.

I didn't join Komsomol. Here is what happened. It's not that I was some hero or something. I was sickly and at the time when my classmates joined Komsomol I was ill. Nobody asked me about it or mentioned it afterward and I wasn't quite eager to touch upon this subject.

I was an active pioneer at my previous school. I was very interested in pioneer movement and believed it was something interesting. Once I went to a pioneer meeting. So I came there and listened. One speaks looking into his notes, then another one does the same - how dull.

So by the time I returned home I stopped being an active pioneer. Something broke up in me. I wasn't interested in public movements since then.

My mother believed in communist slogans and tried to convert me to her views, but she failed. I was passive and somewhat deferred. Maybe it was because I was often ill. Besides, it was something not for me.

She started a few times when I was an adult: 'Why don't you join the Party? Life would be easier for you. You have an antisocial position.' But she understood that if somebody didn't want something, then it didn't make sense to force this person. So it all went past me.