

Pessya Sorkina, Her Brother And Cousin Sister



This photograph shows my brother, my cousin sister and me in 1929 in Ostashkov.

My maternal grandparents knew Russian. And of course they spoke Yiddish. They lived in Riga, there my Mom got married, and there I was born. By the beginning of the war all our relatives appeared (some of them came earlier) in Russia. We settled near Ostashkov, at the railway station Penno. [Penno is a settlement near the Volga River]. I went to school there. I remember a saw-mill situated nearby. We also often visited Polotsk [an ancient city in Vitebsk region of Belarus].

My grandmothers and grandfathers were religious people, of course. I guess at that time most people were religious. We lived at my paternal grandfather in Ostashkov for a long time. There was a synagogue. In day-to-day life they used to wear ordinary clothes, but at the synagogue they certainly put on tallit, dressed in accordance with the rules. I do not remember if grandmother attended the synagogue. And at Penno railway station there was no synagogue, my paternal grandparents were the only Jews there. But they used to go to Ostashkov to visit synagogue, because my grandfather and father were religious.

My brother and I were at home, we did not attend kindergartens. Mom took care of us. When we lived in Penno, a teacher came to teach us at home. Later we together with my brother lived at our grandmother and grandfather in Ostashkov, and Mom and Daddy remained in Penno.

In Ostashkov grandmother and grandfather also rented a house (like we did in Penno). The house had an attic, where we lived together with my brother. In our room there were a table and two beds. And Mom and Daddy lived in Penno, they used to visit us. I remember that they usually brought presents for us: sweets, cookies. We knew that the train arrived once a day. Parents had to go from the railway station to our place by a cab (about three kilometers). We heard the patter of hoofs and understood that they arrived! They brought us presents! I remember that we shared the sweets with my brother. I usually hid my portion under my pillow and he ate everything

immediately and worried at me to give him my sweets. At that time cookies and sweets were shaped in a very interesting way. I remember cookies with faces of twofaced Janus: one side was smiling and the other one crying. But you see, all this happened million years ago...

We came to Ostashkov to study at school and started from the 3rd form. By the way in our class I was the shortest and the youngest. And the rest pupils were older and much taller than me. I told you already that we started our school studies in Peno: a teacher came to our place to teach us, because there was no school there. I remember that we studied some foreign language (German or French: English was not in fashion).

I guess we arrived in Ostashkov in 1920. I remember that I finished 9 classes in 1929. I was fifteen years old when I finished my school, because I started from the 3rd form. My brother finished school the same year though he was three years younger than me.

So, I spent my childhood in Ostashkov, I went to school there. It was an ordinary school, not Jewish. But there were a lot of Jews. At that time I paid no special attention to nationality of the people around me. The school was divided into two steps: three or four classes of primary school and later classes of the so called real school.