

Emilia Leibman Kushnir And School Friends.



This photo shows me, Emilia Kushnir (maiden name - Leibman) (left, with my chin in resting in my hand) with three school friends. I have no information about these friends. The photo was taken in Kiev in 1938.

My childhood was one typical of all Soviet children - kindergarten, school and war.

I went to school in 1931. It was a regular Russian school. It replaced our former Jewish school at 5, Vladimirskaia Street (one of the central streets of Kiev), near our house. Until 1935, there was a Jewish school next to us, then it was closed, and its director became director of our school for some time. I don't know why that school was closed. You see, we were all internationalists; we did not care who was Russian, Jewish or Ukrainian. Our school was mixed - boys and girls studied together. There were Jewish children in our class, but no one cared. There was, however, a Russian family in our house. People were forbidden to celebrate New Year's or decorate New Year trees (In the Soviet Union, people never celebrated Christmas, but rather New Year's on January 1, hence people had "New Year trees" instead of "Christmas trees"). I don't remember what year it was when Postyshev allowed people to celebrate the New Year. (Editor's note: Pavel Postyshev, 1887-1939, was a Soviet Communist Party activist). So, this family invited me to celebrate either New Year or Christmas with them. And the rest of our neighbors were surprised that they would invite me, a Jew.

My best friends were Russians. We still have very good relationships with each other. I had a good time at school. I was a Young Pioneer, then a Komsomol member. I was a Pioneer Leader, taking care of younger children. We organized all kinds of activities, had an amateur theater, sang, danced, etc.. Life was bubbling.

Even though my friends and I were not interested in politics, we certainly knew about Hitler and "Crystal Night." There was information on it in the press. We went to watch movies like "Professor Mamlok" and "Oppenheim Family" Nobody paid any special attention to this at school.