

Pupils And Teachers Of The Novotroitsk School



This photograph was taken in 1945 in Novotroitsk of Chkalov (Orenburg at present) region, where our family stayed in evacuation. It shows pupils of our form and our teachers. The photograph was taken in spring (at the end of the school year). I do not remember who took it.

I'd like to tell you about the time of evacuation. We ran away from Riga on June 27th, 1941. By that moment the city was already bombed, it was terrifying. All our relatives gathered together in my grandfather's large apartment, there we slept side by side in the large internal corridor. One day my father looked through the window and saw people running somewhere. He understood that it is impossible to waste time any more and we rushed to the railway station. In the streets people stood near their houses. They looked at us in bewilderment 'Jews, where are you running? Today is Friday, Sabbath! We will leave also, but after Sabbath!' But alas! Nobody of them managed to leave. Our train was the last one. All of them were lost.

In evacuation we stayed in a small sovkhos in Chkalov (Orenburg at present) region, which was situated 110 kilometers far from the railway. I worked at the cattle-breeding farm, I had to assist cows during the act of delivery. Fortunately the cows managed to do it without me! There was only a four-year school. In 1942 my father was mobilized. He found himself in the building detachment in Novotroitsk city (500 kilometers far from the place, where we stayed). At first he built cesspools, but soon they took into account his first profession (a footwear cutter) and sent him to a studio to work as a shoemaker for army needs. Father imparted his anxiety that his daughters had no place to study, to his chief. After much effort his chief obtained for father an authorization to take us to him. So, we arrived and settled in the corner of a large barrack partitioned off by a curtain. In the barrack there lived 60 Red army men. There we went to school: I went to the 9th form and my sister to the 5th one. It was there where I received the school-leaving certificate. My sister finished 6 classes.

Our family was lucky: despite of all deprivations of the war time, we were all together. We knew nothing about the rest of our relatives.

We returned to our native Riga in October 1945. We found city to change little. The synagogue was burned down. The same happened with the department store, where my father's furniture shop was situated. Population of Riga changed terribly: none of the Jews survived. All our relatives were lost. We know nothing about their death or about their burial places.

While for citizens of the Soviet Union the war burst out on June 22nd, 1941 (it was the day - boundary between peaceful life and war nightmare), for Latvian inhabitants life started changing a year earlier.

In June 1940 Soviet army occupied Latvia. At midday Riga inhabitants poured out into the streets and saw tanks decorated with ribbons, flowers, etc.

Every evening in all Riga districts they started showing Soviet films about happy life of Soviet people. Right in the streets Red Army men explained everyone (who wanted to listen them) how happy Soviet people were. Soon family members of Soviet officers came to Riga. Population of Riga increased, i.e. families of officers were settled in large apartments of Riga citizens. Wives of Soviet officers behaved unusually for Riga: they wore night-dresses instead of evening ones and cooked food in chamber-pots. I do not blame them: they simply never saw this sort of things earlier. Soon we heard about nationalization of houses and shops. They started with large and rich ones. My aunt Sonya's shop was nationalized.