

Bella Rogovaya



This is my mother Bella Rogovaya. This is her passport photograph. The picture was taken in Kiev, in March 1941.

In 1912 my parents got married in Kiev. In 1922, when NEP began, my father working as a salesman in the store, gradually became the owner of the store. He bought a good apartment at Bolshaya Podvalnaya street, in the center of Kiev. Unfortunately NEP period was of short duration. When the soviet regime decided to do away with private entrepreneurship and transfer to planned economy private entrepreneurs, so-called nepamans ['NEPist, people dealing with NEP' in Russian] at that time were suffocated by taxes. Those taxes could be changed 3-4 annually. Hardly had one tax been paid, when another was levied, exceeding the preceding one 2 or 3 times as much. Smart

people dropped everything and escaped abroad. Unfortunately my father did not turn out to be sagacious. He was arrested as an offender of tax laws. He went through a trial and was sentenced to 3 years in GULAG. After the trial my father was sent to the camps in Solikamsk [Russia, about 2000 km from Kiev]. Even after he was released, he was not entitled to return home, he had to be exiled for a while.

Mother did not work before father's exile. When my mother and I were left on our own, she found a job in some sort of workshop. I do not know what her job was like. The most important that she was paid. Of course we lived from hand to mouth. The most jovial event for me was when mother took me to the market, which was located close to our house, and bought me a big rice patty. It was a real feast! We were starving. But my mother strove to support me. It is the most delighted recollection from those times, but there are others. I remember there was a tram line near our house. The trams were remade from horse chaises. There were no doors, and the steps were along entire train. I remember that there were very many homeless children. At that time streets started being asphalted. There were large cauldrons, where asphalt and pitch were melted. The melted mass was ladled and rolled manually with the rollers. In the evenings when the workers left, vagrants were warming in the cauldrons.

In 1938 father returned from exile. Parents lodged in private house on the left bank of Dnieper river. Now it is the recreational area of the Kievites-Hydropark, back in those times that district was called Predmostnaya Slobodka ['outskirts' in Russian]. Father found a job to sell newspapers and magazines in a kiosk.

During the WWII my parents were evacuated in Voronezh oblast [Russia]. They were very indigent in the evacuation. They sold everything they had, even the wedding rings, which were sacred to them. All - clothes, linen was sold and exchanged for bread. In 1946 my parents came back to Kiev from evacuation. They did not have a place to stay. First they found a poky apartment for rent, and then bought it from the landlords. It was a tiny room, without conveniences, with no water and toilet. They had a hard life. They were indigent. My mother passed away in 1976. She was buried at the Jewish lot of the city cemetery. It was important for her to be at the Jewish lot. I reserved a burial place for me close to my mother.