

Mina Smolianskaya With Her Family



Sitting from left to right: my husband Wolf Ratiner, my sister Rulia's older son Naum and I, Mina Smolianskaya. Standing: my brother Joseph and my sister Donia. Photo made in Odessa in 1939 when Donia was visiting Odessa.

My cousin Adela, my uncle Shyka's daughter, offered me to move in with her in 1937. She had two rooms. I met my first husband there. He was an electrician and came once to change fuse. His name was Wolf Ratiner. He was called Volodia that was a more customary Russian name. We got acquainted and began to see each other. Volodia was born in 1915. His father's name was Ershl and his mother's name was Sarah. Volodia's mother died in 1930 and his father married another woman, she was a housewife like my husband's deceased mother. Volodia's father was a warden at the synagogue in Odessa. Volodia was a younger son. He had two brothers: Haim and Fishel. His brothers were married and had children. His father moved to his new wife and Volodia had a room at his disposal. His parents were religious, they observed all traditions and celebrated holidays, but Volodia and I were atheists. We got married in 1934. I was 20 and my husband was 19 years old.

I was very happy to be living in the room of my own: to have a bed and a cupboard and be the mistress of my own home. I couldn't cook at all and I was learning from other tenants since we had a room in a communal apartment. My primus stove was on a windowsill in the hallway, as there was not enough space for it in the common kitchen. We worked hard, but we also had leisure time that we spent going dancing, celebrating Soviet holidays, getting together with friends. We had friends of different nationalities, but this was a matter of no significance for us. However difficult was our life we were happy. We had a hope for a better life, sang Soviet songs and went to the cinema. We didn't have children, though, for some reason.

I remember how we heard about beginning of the war at 11 am on Sunday, 22 June 1941. My husband and I were going to the market to buy me a sewing machine when all of a sudden we heard an announcement that Hitler attacked our country. We went out and there were crowds of people standing in lines to buy essential commodities.

My husband was summoned to the army. At the beginning of July he was already sent to the front. In August 1941 I received the only letter from him. I had no information about him whatsoever. I don't even know where his grave is. Much later an acquaintance of mine that was in the same

regiment with Volodia told me that Volodia was killed near Kiev back in August 1941.