

Bertha Trachtenbroit With Her Classmates



I with my classmates. From left to right, sitting: Rachel Torgova, Mina Dalevich, Lara Ziskina. Standing, from left to right: I, Polia Dunaevskaya, and Mina Toitman. The photo was taken in Odessa in June, 1939 on the occasion of our finishing the 7th form.

I went to a Ukrainian secondary school. I enjoyed studying and have very pleasant memories of the years I spent at school. I liked Ukrainian language and literature classes best of all. I became a pioneer and then a Komsomol (17) member at school. I was never really active socially and I tried to participate in the pioneer and Komsomol activities only formally. I preferred to stay at home and read books.

I had many friends of various nationalities. I can't remember one single demonstration of anti-Semitism at school. My best friend was Rachel Torgova, a Jewish girl. We were sharing the same desk from the 1st till the 9th form. Rachel was a very talented girl. She was especially good at mathematics. Rachel's mother was sick, bed-ridden, so it was she who visited me more often. We studied together and walked a lot on the sea-side. During the war she was in evacuation in Semipalatinsk with her mother and sister. Her father perished at the front. After they returned from evacuation Rachel had to support her ill mother and she had to go to work. She finished an accounting school and worked as an accountant. Her younger sister Fenia got married and left Odessa. Rachel never got married. In 1995 she moved to the US with her sister's family. She lives in San Francisco now. We phone each other regularly.