

Rachil Meitina



This is me, five or six years old. The photograph was taken in my children's room Petrograd in 1923 or 24. I have my toys and dolls around me. This picture was taken by Nikolai Uspenski, my mother friend's husband. I was born in Petrograd in 1918. My parents received a very nice apartment in a very beautiful pre-revolutionary building in the center of Petrograd. There were six rooms in the apartment. We used only three of them and our housemaid lived in another room. Two rooms were locked. There was a toilet near the kitchen and another one next to the bedroom. There was a wood stoked stove and also a Primus stove used for cooking. There were beautiful stoves for heating the rooms. Our janitor Alyosha brought wood for stoking the stoves. There was running water in the apartment. I had many toys. My father loved me a lot and always bought me toys. I remember my father saying that I had 24 dolls. The other three rooms in our apartment were called 'cold rooms', since they were not heated in order to save wood. My parents dressed me in warm clothes and we went for a stroll there. My parents had housemaids. When I was small I had a nanny. Her name was Kamilla and she was a Chukhon woman. Another Chukhon woman brought us milk. My father was very cheerful and witty. He was the heart and soul of all gatherings. He was very sociable and easy-going. He was very intelligent and well read. It was amazing considering that he actually only had elementary education. He wasn't strict with the children. When we lived in Petrograd he and I were called 'Papa, buy' as a joke, since I was always asking him to buy a toy. He never turned me down.