

Izolda Rubinshtein



This is a picture of me. I was photographed on my 5th birthday in Kiev in 1925. I was born in Kiev in 1920. I was called Izolda after my mother's father, Israel. I was the only child. I lived in Kiev the first three years of my life. I have no memories of this period. In 1923 my father was offered a job in Kharkov. We spoke Russian in the family. My parents were atheists. Or, to be more precise, my father was a convinced atheist. He didn't observe any Jewish traditions, and we didn't celebrate any Jewish holidays. My mother tried to observe some Jewish traditions. She didn't go to the

synagogue, but she fasted on Yom Kippur. When we managed to get some matzah on Pesach my mother only ate matzah. But she had bread for me and my father for Pesach. I wasn't raised Jewish. My parents believed religiosity to be a vestige of the past. They didn't teach me Yiddish for the same reason. They weren't party members, but we always celebrated Soviet holidays in our family: 1st May and 7th November [October Revolution Day]. My mother made a festive dinner, and we had guests. They were mainly my father's colleagues. We also had birthday parties. I started Russian secondary school in 1927. My father took me to school on 1st September. He didn't give me any pre-school education. He thought I would get bored at school if I learned to read and write before school. There were two first classes at school: one for more intelligent children, who could write and read already, and one for those who started from zero. I happened to be in the class for less intelligent children. There were a few handicapped children in this class. My teacher didn't like me from the start. She was our teacher for four years, and I came to hating school. In the 2nd grade my parents arranged for me to go to a private dancing school. My teacher wrote an irate letter to my parents telling them that they weren't raising their daughter properly. I hated her for that. The school I went to was for the children of party officials. The children of commanders Yakir and Kossior studied at this school.