

Maria Reidman And Her Classmates



This is a picture of me and my classmates in the 3rd grade of secondary school in Olevsk in 1931. I am the second on the left in the last row.

I have always been loved by my family and relatives. I learned to read when I was small. I took classes from a teacher of the Russian language, who was a Jew. I wasn't even 6 yet when Mama took me to the Ukrainian school in Olevsk. She had to convince them to accept me and she did. I was accepted because I could read and write well. There were 75 children in the 1st grade because there was only one school in Olevsk. I was told to go home because I was too young for school. I behaved so badly at home that Mama went back to the school to ask them to admit me to the 2nd grade. They did.

I was an ordinary Soviet child. My sister and I became Young Octobrists and pioneers because everyone else did. We took part in all activities at school and celebrated Soviet holidays. It wasn't politics for us. It was more like entertainment and a day off. We arranged concerts and performances, played volleyball and went to the banks of the river with friends. When we were senior pupils we sometimes went to the cinema or theater. I had friends, but I don't know of what nationality. It didn't matter at all at the time. I don't remember any national segregation.

As long as my grandfather was alive the family strictly observed all religious rules. Cooking for Saturdays had to be done on Fridays, and the meals had to be prepared according to tradition because my grandfather was very religious. Our family followed the kashrut, separated dairy and meat products and the dishes used for them. We made cholent, fruit stew and beans. The number of dishes was based on what we could afford. There had to be chicken broth with golden rings of fat; very rich and delicious. But for the beginning challah and pies had to be baked. My grandmother was very good at making challah. We also boiled milk with chicory. The pot with milk was in the oven for a night, and in the morning, when they took it out, it looked like hot chocolate. After my grandfather died my mother said she wasn't going to make cholent any more. She said to

us, 'Go to your grandmother, she'll make it!' Since then our family hardly observed traditions any more.