

Vera Dreezo



I am photographed on my birthday. Kiev, 1932.

My father married my mother in 1928. My mother said they didn't have a traditional wedding, just a civil ceremony in a registry office. Shortly afterward my father became director of a trade center.

In 1929 my father received a room in a communal apartment with five other tenants in the center of Kiev. I was born in this room on 18 November 1929. In 1937 my younger sister Zoya was born. I didn't go to a nursery school or kindergarten. My mother became a housewife when I was born. My father hired me a nanny to help mother with the housework. Her name was Varia and she came from a Ukrainian village. At the beginning she slept in the mezzanine closet in the bathroom. There was a ladder to climb there and I used to climb this ladder visiting her there. I liked it there. She had an icon and some other little things there.

There was a big double bed in our room, some low table by an opposite wall and my sister's bed. There was a coach with a high back upholstered with black artificial leather where I slept. There was an oval table beside it. There was a partial to separate a corner for my mother's brother Meyer. There was a small stove. The window of our room faced a backyard where there was a shed and garbage containers.

The most terrible thing about our apartment were huge red rats. They were there before and after the war. We had to stamp our feet to scare away all rats before coming into the hallway. When we returned to this room after the war there were even more rats there.

My parents liked going to the cinema, theaters and football matches. They were theater goers and went to theaters with their friends. I often went to the theater for young spectators. We had many books in Russian by classical and modern writers. My parents were very fond of reading. We were an ordinary Soviet family. A family of a Soviet employee. My parents were convinced atheists and we didn't celebrate any religious holidays.