

Berta Mazo, Her Daughter And Their Neighbors



This photograph was taken in Leningrad in 1960s. You can see our neighbors and friends in our apartment.

When we moved to Leningrad, I was a pupil of the 5th form. It happened in 1928. Grandmother and grandfather remained in Malaya Vishera, and after grandmother's death in 1929 grandfather moved to our place. He died before the war and was buried at the Preobrazhensky cemetery. We lived in Leningrad in a large two-room apartment until we left for evacuation (in 1941). In one room we lived four together with our parents and my sister, and the other room was occupied by my aunt Anna Yakovlevna (you remember that she was not married).

In Leningrad I studied at a very good school near the October concert hall. The school was rather interesting. Our teacher of physical culture was Ivan Edmundovich Kokh. He also taught fencing at the College of Physical Culture named after Lesgaft, fencing was his profession. He was a remarkable teacher. I also remember our teacher of literature, she always created a friendly atmosphere in the class. At school I had a friend (we are still friends) Raisa Lukoshkova, nee Bleksmit. In our class there were several Jews. I remember Sonya Kamenkovich: she often invited us to her place, she played piano, and we sang. By the way, our singing-master was also very good. Later she married Alexey Antonov, a chief engineer at the Space Equipment Corporation. Now they live in Moscow and we keep in touch.

Besides my school studies, I was engaged in music lessons: a teacher came to our place. Later my sister started studying piano with Klara Efimovna Stolyar. My sister was talented and quickly left me behind, though she was younger than me. So I gave it up. My friends and I spent free time skating in the Tavrichesky garden [a big garden in the center of St. Petersburg] or preparing for school parties: we usually put different performances on the stage (once I recited Christ Has Arisen there!). Together with my parents we used to go to Sestroretsk for summer vacation (later I started coming there with children). Once when I was a pupil of the 7th form, I was in a pioneer camp. It

was situated near Luga [a suburb of St. Petersburg]. There was a large lake and a small part of it was enclosed for little children. As for us, we used to get out of it and swim to the opposite bank of the lake (it was great!). Our PT teacher swam together with us. On the opposite side of the lake there was a tower, all children used it to jump down into the water. I was very much afraid of diving and never did it, though children tried to persuade me. A friend of mine was very good in diving. At that camp I was some sort of a pioneer leader.

Living in Leningrad, we continued celebrating all Jewish holidays. For Pesach we always bought matzot and did not eat bread (by the way at present we also try to observe this tradition). I always visited synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. My favorite holiday was Simchat Torah. It is the last day of Torah readings: Jews carry Torah scrolls and dance everywhere, even in the streets. I consider it to be the most cheerful holiday. Inna, a daughter of my cousin finished a choreographic school and used to dance at Simhat Torah. At present she works at LENFILM [a film studio in St. Petersburg]. And her elder sister Natalia works at the Conservatory. They are children of Lasar Efimovich, who was a lawyer. He was a very interesting and clever person. His wife's name was Marina Stepanovna Kuindzhi. And Solomon Efimovich was a pharmacist. Some time they lived in Sestroretsk and worked there. Alexander Efimovich (whom I loved very much!) graduated from the Polytechnical College, mechanical faculty. And Grigory Efimovich was lost during the war.

I finished my school and entered the Polytechnical College, faculty of industrial transport. At the College we often arranged dances, and I liked to dance very much. I also remember that when we were students of the 1st course, they taught us to march. Those studies were only for girls and other students called us Death Battalion (as a joke). In summer we used to go for practical studies. Once we (about 15 students) went to Magnitogorsk, there at a metal works we were engaged in time-keeping. We also went to Zaporozhye [in Ukraine], there we did the same, moving by steam locomotives wigwag.