

Irene Shein And Her Mother Evgeniya Shein



This is my mother Evgeniya Shein and I. The photo was taken when I went to see my mother in exile in Tomsk oblast, Bakhchar district, Bakhchar, 1955.

During the war, we were in exile. Nothing changed for us when the victory came on the 9th of May 1945. Men were sentenced for a certain term. Father was sentenced to six years of Gulag, without trial, and in 1947 his term was over. He was released from the Gulag camp and went to Estonia. In 1948 there was a decree of the Soviet government to exempt from exile those who were exiled being minors. I was also given an exemption. Only mother stayed in Siberia. She was on permanent exile and could only hope for a miracle.

I got my first passport in Tashkent. We didn't tell even our closest friends about our past, our time in exile. We understood that it would be safer for us. My bosom friend told me many years later that she had guessed what kind of past I had, but asked me no questions. We kept writing to Mother, but we didn't send the letters directly to her, but to some of the acquaintances, so as not to attract attention.

In 1955 I went to see Mother. She lived in the district center Bakhchar, 250 kilometers away. I went there by plane. There was an old lady next to me who was constantly telling me how scared she was. I had to go to the regional prosecution office and get the permit to visit my mother. I remember entering through the thick metallic doors of that office. Suddenly I was frightened - I was not sure whether they would let me out again.

In the end, I was permitted to stay with Mother. She felt unwell, but tried not to show it. I went to see the commandant, who remembered me working there as a girl and carrying heavy bales of mail from Bakhchar. I said that Mother was alone, sick, and asked him to release her before her term was over. Mother was to go through medical examination and in 1956 she was declared as disabled and released from exile. Mother came to us in Tashkent. She lived with us and worked in a kindergarten.