

Roza Levenberg And Her Mother Mariam Berdichevskaya Levenberg



This is a studio portrait of my mother, Mariam Berdichevskaya Levenberg, and me, Roza Levenberg, when I was about three years old . I was born in Uman (formerly in Kiev region, now ? Cherkassy Region) on March 21, 1920. My father was an accountant and my mother was a housewife. We lived in Dvortsovaya street in two rented rooms. Mamma was often ill, she had a weak heart, so we had a housemaid, a Ukrainian girl. I remember she once took me to the

Orthodox Church near our house. When mamma found out she told her off and forbade her to take me to church. At home we celebrated Jewish holidays ? we always had matzo for Pesach. Father didn't go to the synagogue, though. I can say that my parents celebrated holidays out of habit and tradition, but they were not religious. We moved to Kiev in 1925. While we were in Stalingrad, where we had escaped to after the war broke out in 1941, my mother fell seriously ill with breast cancer. She had surgery and stayed in hospital for a whole month. We had to flee Stalingrad and had harrowing experiences, but we finally arrived in Frunze, the capital of Kirgizia, where our relatives were living in evacuation. In 1943 mamma insisted that I go to Kzyl-Orda, where my University had been transferred. I realized much later on that she was very ill and didn't want me there when she died. I got to Kzyl-Orda on November 7. There was a celebration for the liberation of Kiev. We danced and enjoyed ourselves. As for me, I danced a little and then, all of a sudden, I felt unwell. I didn't know what was the matter ? but, I learned later that at that very moment, my mother was dying,