

Agnessa Margolina



This is me, one year old. The photo was taken in Sumy in 1921. I was born in Sumy on 17th November 1920. At birth I was named Gnesia and this is the name written in my documents. When I went to school everybody began to call me Agnessa, a Russian name [common name]. My family spoke Yiddish at home, I said my first words in Yiddish as well. I can vaguely remember my mother. When I was a bit over three years old she died at childbirth. This happened on 6th April 1924. The baby was stillborn. They were both buried in the Jewish cemetery in Sumy. I stayed in our neighbor's home during the funeral and thus cannot say anything about the funeral itself. My father's older sister Sima came to Sumy to take us to Kiev. I was taken to Cherna, my father's mother. She lived in a big four-storied building on Kontraktovaya Square in Podol, an old district of

Kiev. My grandmother lived in a room in a crowded communal apartment on the fourth floor and Aunt Rosa and her family lived on the second floor of this building. My father didn't live with us. Nobody told me where he lived and I still don't know where he lived all this time. I lived with my grandmother for a whole year without seeing my father. Nobody told me that my mother had died and I kept crying asking them to take me to my mother. A year passed and then my father's sister Nenia took me to my father, who lived in Brovary, in the suburbs of Kiev. Nenia told me that I would have a new mother. That way I found out that my father had remarried. His second wife's name was Rasia. I don't remember her maiden name. Rasia was much younger than my father. She was born in 1902. Later I got to know that my grandmother Cherna, who was Rasia's mother's distant relative, arranged for them to meet.