

Yevgenia Kozak With Her Friend Sonia



This is me with my friend Sonia. I don't remember her surname. I know that in the middle 1970s she moved to Israel, during the Great Patriotic War she was in the ghetto. We were photographed in 1946 on the occasion of meeting after the Great Patriotic War. I was born on 29 December 1922. A few days before the Great Patriotic War began I finished the 8th form. Mama wanted to send me to my aunts in Odessa in summer - I was eager to see the sea, but this was not to be. On 22 June 1941 at noon our neighbors came to our home to listen to the radio - we bought it shortly before the war. Molotov announced that the Great Patriotic War began. On 22 July the first bombs fell on Bershad. The next day mama, papa, my brother and sister and I left Bershad. Our trip took a month before we arrived in Ossetia in Northern Caucasus. The train stopped near Ordzhonikidze, Azerbaijan, and we were sent to a kolkhoz, in a village near Ordzhonikidze. We were given a warm welcome there. We were accommodated in a small room with a kitchen. A family from Kharkiv resided in the next-door room. Mama, my brother and I went to work in the field and my father went to work as a janitor in the kolkhoz granary. We received food products for work and in winter the kolkhoz provided wood for heating. The local residents gave us winter clothes and we managed through the winter. In summer 1942 fascists approached the Northern Caucasus and we had to move on. The kolkhoz gave us a bull-driven wagon where we loaded our miserable belongings. We bid farewell to the locals and moved on walking behind the wagon. We reached Makhachkala [today capital of Dagestan republic within Russian Federation] and from there we crossed the Caspian Sea with thousands of other escapees. We arrived in Uzbekistan and were accommodated near Andijon. Life was very hard. Mama and I went to work at the factory manufacturing cotton ropes. Mama and I were workers. We received workers' cards, but we didn't get sufficient food and were starving. We lived in a little room in a clay house. Its roof leaked when it rained and we had to sleep in wet beds. Actually we slept on some grass on the floor. However, we didn't complain. This

was a common situation. I suffered from malaria terribly. I had attacks, felt cold, fever and couldn't wait to leave Uzbekistan. In March 1944 we heard that Bershad was liberated and decided to go there immediately. I wrote my friend in Bershad and she sent us a permit to come home. We didn't even wait till our documents were processed. We paid a railroad man and caught a train to Ukraine. Our trip lasted long and we changed trains, but our hearts couldn't wait till we got home. We arrived in Bershad in May 1944. The first postwar years were very hard. Father went around the neighboring villages fixing clothes, making coats and doing whatever job he could managed. Mama baked bread and I sold it at the market. However hard life was, mama was happy to move back into our house. However hard life was, we continued to observe Jewish traditions. My parents went to an old synagogue (the new one had been removed) but that one was all right. On Saturday father didn't work and mama tried to cook something special: latkes, kugel, even there was nothing else, but flour that she had. Father always brought matzah from the synagogue on holidays, or sometimes we made it in the Russian stove. We fasted on Yom Kippur and I still keep fasting nowadays. On Chanukkah mama made buckwheat pancakes. My children also know this holiday - they always got a few coins for sweets on this day.