

Tsyliya Spivak With Her Mother Nehama Rozhavskaya, Cousin Larisa Troyanskaya And Work Colleagues



This is a photo of me photographed with my mother (she is sitting) in Tehinka village of Kherson region where I started work in 1952. Beside my mother is her sister Sarah's daughter Larisa. Landlady Maria is sitting and my colleague teachers are standing.

In 1949 I finished 10 grades with a good certificate. I could go to any higher educational institution like Kiev University, for example, considering its high prestige, but I had to start work to earn money as soon as possible and this made me go to Chernigov 2-year Pedagogical College. Actually, I was fond of literature and wanted to become a teacher since childhood. I studied well. Firstly, I liked it, and secondly, I was stimulated to receive a stipend for advanced students [Editor's note: students who had all excellent grades in the institutions of higher education were entitled to receive the so-called "Lenin's stipend," which was somewhat more than the regular one]. It was very important for our poor family. In 1951 there was a job assignment distribution. I was prepared to go anywhere since my mother was going to follow me anyway. I chose Zagoryanovka village near Kherson hoping to be able to often go to Kherson. When I came to the regional department of education its chairman looked at me (and I was a thin short girl) and said: 'I don't think it's worth for you, girl, to go to Zagoryanovka. It's not the place a young girl would like to be at. I will send you to Tehinka. There is big construction there. They need teachers with diplomas and this place is better than Zagoryanovka'. So I went to Tehinka. They welcomed me warmly and showed me the school. I rented a room from nice Ukrainian people: Marusia and Kolia who liked me, too. The department of education paid my rental fees and gave me money for wood and kerosene. So I was a desirable tenant. Three weeks later my mother joined me. She lived with me ever since.

There was a kolkhoz named after Kalinin in Tehinka. It was a poor kolkhoz. Its members were paid with food coupons for work. Since I had a regular salary I also became a desirable fiancée. Young people proposed marriage to me, but my mother and I declined them joking about it. Teaching was easy for me. I taught in the 5th, 7th and 8th grades. The 8th grade was the first year of higher

secondary school. They were the children who wanted to have a complete secondary education. They listened to me with attention and I was eager to inspire love to the Russian literature in them. As for the 5th grade those children didn't bother to listen to me. Why did they need Russian? They were noisy and caused problems. Once I lost my temper and pushed one of those hooligans. I forced him out of his desk and pushed him out of the classroom. They began to respect me then: 'Hey, she can fight!' and were quiet at my lessons. After working for a year I got a transfer to Daryevka, a neighboring village. I didn't mind since Daryevka was even bigger than Tehinka and there were more comforts there. I spent a few more weeks in Tehinka and met a Jewish girl. Her name was Fira Spivak. She had her job assignment in this village. I supported her since I was well aware how hard it was for a girl from a town to live in the village. Her brother Naum Spivak came from Kherson to visit his sister and so I met my future husband. Naum began to visit me in Daryevka. He courted me very nicely.