

Grigoriy Stel'makh With His Sisters Raisa Stel'makh And Shurah Novitskaya



From left to right: my sisters Raisa and Shurah and I, Grigoriy Stel'makh. This photo was taken to be sent to my father in Berlin, Germany, where he was working in the Military Administration. My mother took this photo in Vasil'kov in 1947 where we lived after the war before we moved to Germany where my father was on service.

In 1943 Kiev was liberated and six of us: my mother, my two sisters and I, my grandmother and my mother's sister Frania went home from Shantala, where we was in evacuation. We arrived in Kiev in winter. I was struck to see the destitution and ruins in Kiev. There were other tenants in our apartment. Our neighbors took our furniture, carpets, and the piano and crystal crockery. We didn't have a place to live and we went to my mother's aunt Dvoira Brodskaya. Life was hard. There was little food and I had to stand in long lines for bread sold by coupons. I also remember delicacies: American canned meat and egg powder that my father sent us occasionally. I went to school in 1946 and we wrote on newspaper sheet margins since there were no notebooks or textbooks. We lived so until 1947.

My father went to the front in 1941. In 1945 he reached Berlin. After the victory he was assigned to the Soviet Military Administration of the town. In 1947 he came to take us to Berlin. We were taken to a wonderful apartment of 8 rooms. I don't know what position my father had, but we had a nice life. We had a housemaid and food supplies. We had many clothes. We went to and from school by car. The school had a nice pioneer camp on the Baltic Sea. We had our hair cut short and had forelocks and Germans recognized us immediately. They were patient about our fooling around. They didn't complain and were afraid of our administration. We were up to mischief and became insolent.

In 1949 my father was arrested by KGB. He was accused by article 58, item 10: anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda and was sentenced to 10 years in jail. We knew that we had a long and hard life without our father ahead of us. In early March 1949 we arrived in Kiev. There was no place

to live and our wanderings began. We stayed with aunt Frania in Kiev or went to Dvoira in Vasilkov. I went to school in Kiev. I don't know whether they knew about my father at school, but they never showed it. I told everybody that my father was on service in Germany. I didn't become a pioneer in Germany for some misconduct. In Kiev I lied that I was a pioneer. I didn't take part in public activities and tried to not attract attention to my personality. I didn't apply for Komsomol membership at school. I was afraid of having to indicate where my father was in the application form and they would not admit me and would know that my father was an 'enemy of the people'. We had a hard life. My mother worked as a shop assistant for some time, but she was mainly selling what we had from Germany: crystal, crockery, fabrics and underwear. She took these to special stores and this was what our family was living on for some time.