

Fira Usatinskaya With Her Friends



This is a picture of me (third on the left) and my group of friends. We were photographed next to the lion statue at the Museum of Ukrainian Art (with a portrait of Molotov) in Kiev in November 1948.

I was in evacuation in Sosedkovo, Nizhniy Tagil region with my family during World War II. In September 1943 I passed my exams for the 10th grade at school and entered the Faculty of Economics at the Mining College in Nizhniy Tagil. At the end of 1943 Makeevka was liberated from the Germans and we began to pack to go home.

I was a secretary at the town military registry office where I worked until summer when I went to Kiev to enter a college. I just wanted to study. I stayed with my mother's distant relatives. I hadn't known them before, but my mother wrote to them and they invited me to stay with them. I went to a few colleges, but they refused to accept my application since I didn't have my certificate of secondary education and my examination record book wasn't valid. I sent a request to Nizhniy Tagil and they sent me my documents. I was accepted for the 2nd year at the Faculty of Economics of the College of Light Industry. I also received a room in the hostel with five other girls.

I finished my studies in 1949. I had a nice group of friends in the hostel. We celebrated holidays and went to the cinema, museums and parks on the slopes of the Dnieper River together. We also went to theaters that had also returned from evacuation. We like going to parades on 1st May and 7th November. After the parades we went for a walk in the city. There were many Jewish students at college, but there were also students of various other nationalities in our group. I was involved in

Komsomol activities and was a member of the Komsomol committee of the college. I took part in Komsomol meetings where we discussed issues associated with our studies and in amateur art activities. I organized contests and concerts. I met my future husband at the college. However international my views were I wished to marry a Jewish man, although I didn't observe any Jewish traditions at the time.

I graduated from college in 1949 and got a job assignment to a leather plant in Nikolaev [regional town, about 400 km from Kiev]. I specialized in economical leather production.