

Molka Dorfman With Her Friends



This is my mother Molka Dorfman with actors from Chernovtsy Drama Theater at the parade for the 30th anniversary of October Revolution Day. The photo was taken in Chernovtsy in 1947. My mother was one of the founders of a Zionist organization [Revisionist Zionism] in Bessarabia. She took part in congresses and meetings. She held the position of a commissar of the Jewish National Fund. This fund collected money for buying land in Palestine [Israel] and planting trees. On 7th July 1940 my parents and uncles, as well as many other people were arrested on charges of anti-Soviet behavior and Zionism. Shortly before the Great Patriotic War, in late May 1941, eleven months after they had been arrested, I received a statement from a special meeting of the NKVD about preventive punishment of particularly dangerous 'enemies' of the Soviet power. My parents were sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment and deprived of their right to correspond with their families. My mother was sentenced on the charges of being a Zionist and bourgeois chauvinist and my father was sentenced for being a capitalist. My father was sent to Karaganda camp [on the Gulag], in Kazakhstan and my mother was sent to Solikamsk camp in the Ural. I wasn't allowed to visit my father and never saw him again. He died in 1942, but we only got to know this after we received his rehabilitation papers some time after 1956. I was allowed to see my mother before her departure to Solikamsk. She looked exhausted, but she didn't lose her spirits. We promised each other to keep in touch. My mother was released from Solikamsk camp in 1947 before the end of her term. She returned to Kishinev. She remained a convinced Zionist. She communicated with other Jews who shared her ideas. My mother met writers, historians and actors of Jewish theaters. There was a stamp in my mother's passport forbidding her to reside in 24 bigger towns. She had a so-called 'passport 24' and Kishinev was included on that list. My mother couldn't obtain a residential permit for a long time, so we decided that she would 'lose' her old passport and buy a new one that cost a lot of money. We did so and she obtained a permit. We lived together. My mother remained free until 1949 when our neighbors reported on us, stating that there were frequent Jewish gatherings in our apartment. After the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was dismissed all Jewish activists, including my mother, were arrested. This period was called 'campaign against cosmopolitans', though my mother was by no means a cosmopolitan. She was more likely a chauvinist. Some officers came to search our house at night, but they didn't find

anything. My mother was ordered to pack her warm clothes and go with them in a black car. We understood that she was going to prison. She was accused of Zionism and chauvinism. She was sent into exile in Long Bridge camp in Krasnoyarsk region, Siberia, for eight years. I wasn't allowed to see her before her departure and she wasn't allowed to have a lawyer. My mother had many friends in the camp. She made friends easily. She was too old to do hard work and was therefore given minor chores: sewing and darning clothes, knitting and housekeeping. She rarely wrote to me.