

Maya Kaganskaya



This is a picture of me, taken on my 12th birthday in Kiev in 1938. I was an active pioneer and took part in many activities. I attended all kinds of clubs: choir, drama club and played checkers. I also studied to play the piano at a state music school. We studied music, literature and solfeggio at school. I can't say I was fond of studying music. I preferred taking part in various events at school: I recited poems, sang songs at school concerts and took part in parades and subbotniks. I wrote poems and attended a literature club with the Jewish newspaper 'Zai Grei' - 'Be ready!' [the motto of pioneers]. I wrote poems in Russian and Yiddish. In 1938 our school merged with Jewish school #17, and in 1939 it became a Russian school. The only change incorporated was switching to Russian as the language of teaching. In 1941 my classmates joined the Komsomol; I had to wait until I reached the age of 16. After I finished the 9th grade the war began. By that time my mother and I lived in another apartment in a house in Malopodvalnaya Street that the cooperative

company of my mother's brother Moshe had built. A few of the best pupils and I were invited to the prom in our school on 20th June. After the prom we went for a walk in the town. On the next day we went to the railway station with a friend of ours that was leaving for Kovel [a town near the border with Poland] where her sister and her sister's husband lived. It turned out that all trains going in Western direction were cancelled. On our way back we noticed the scarlet sunset. The sky was like on fire. In the morning of 22nd June my mother and I heard some distant bursting sound, but we ignored IT. At about 9 o'clock I went to my music class in Podol. When I was on my way I heard the sound of sirens and I stayed a few minutes in an entrance to a house thinking that this was a training alarm requiring people to stay inside. For some reason the tram to Podol didn't commute. People waiting at a stop discussed what the reason might be. I walked on. One house in Podol was ruined by a bomb, but there was still no word about the war. I attended my class and then went to see a friend of mine who lived in Podol. It was early afternoon. A bright and sunny morning turned into a dull and gloomy afternoon. I met my friend walking with her friends. They told me about Molotov's speech and about the war. We didn't feel scared since we were kids and couldn't imagine what a war was like.