

Rachel Persitz With Her Sister Genia Persitz And Her Cousins



From left to right: my sister Genia Persitz, my cousin Zina Strugach, I and my cousins Zina and Sonia. The photo was taken in Kiev before the departure of my cousins to Israel in the 1970s. Sonia, Zina and Basia were the daughters of my Aunt Rohl. Zina and Basia were single, and Sonia was married and had a son. When Aunt Zlata and her son were leaving for Israel Genia condemned them and didn't even say good-bye to them. When our cousins Sonia, Basia and Zina were leaving for Israel Genia met them in a park in Kiev. She was afraid that she could be seen by somebody and that they would report her to the party organization, because this might mean that she sympathized with them and supported them. At that time, one could be fired or expelled from the Party for that. My sister was afraid that she might be suspected of not being faithful to the ideals of communism. [In the 1960s] I tried to convince my sister to move to Israel, but she was a party member and a convinced communist. She was against emigration and believed that there could be nothing better than our communist motherland. Genia was a very active communist and secretary of the party organization. She dedicated her life to meetings, parades and so on. We celebrated Soviet holidays and went to parades. We have always been atheists. But, in the memory of our parents, we tried to remember Jewish holidays. I recall how, after the war, we stood in line to buy matzah at some private bakery. We kept observing Jewish traditions whenever we had the opportunity. We did it secretly. If somebody from Genia's party unit or my school had found out, we would have been fired or arrested. We couldn't celebrate Sabbath, because it was a working day at school. We've always fasted on Yom Kippur, remembering our relatives.