

Elka Roizman With Her Classmates



This is a picture of me, standing on the left, as a pupil of the 8th grade at the Russian secondary school in Yedintsy and my classmates. We were photographed on 1st September 1946, the beginning of the academic year. The director of the school, who wears a military shirt, is sitting in the center. In March 1944 we were liberated by the Soviet army. I remember the first Soviet tank entering the village. The Romanians had left a day before. We were so happy and couldn't stop crying and kissing the Soviet soldiers that got out of the tank. I remember a young soldier who gave my brother and me a piece of bread. We went back home, but what we saw in the village when we returned was even more horrific than what we had faced in the ghetto. Children who had finished three classes before the war went to the 6th grade. I was too old to go to the 4th or 5th grade. I had taught my brother to read and write in Yiddish and Moldavian in the ghetto and he could go to the 3rd grade after the war. We went to a Russian secondary school even though we didn't know Russian. There was a Russian and a Moldavian school in Yedintsy. Most of the Jewish children went to the Russian school because Russian was the state language. My classmates were children of militaries from the frontier military unit based in Yedintsy. We didn't know one single Russian letter or word, and our teachers didn't know Moldavian. We didn't understand most of what they told us, but we tried hard and slowly learned Russian. It took me about a year to improve my Russian. I wanted to continue my education. My mother's sister Riva lived in Chernovtsy where I could go to a higher secondary school. In 1948 life began to change in Chernovtsy. The Jewish school and Jewish theater were closed and Jewish writers, actors, musicians, diplomats and scientists were persecuted. They were declared to be cosmopolitans. They were fired and sent into exile and many of them were physically tortured. It was hidden fascism of the Soviet regime, but we only realized that much later.