

Frieda Stoyanovskaya



This is a photo of me taken in Kiev in 1960. I was born in the town of Borispol in the vicinity of Kiev in 1907. My name is a mystery to me. I don't know who I was named after. My first memories are of my parents - young and beautiful, and most importantly, calm and smiling. Joy and kindness were predominant in the atmosphere of our home. I don't remember my father or mother angry, agitated or sad, until 1919, the year of the Denikin pogrom that changed our whole life. In October 1919 military units of the White Army that was in opposition to the Bolshevik order came to Borispol. Those units looked more like gangs, involved in robberies and murders, although there were quite a few tsarist officers in them. At first they executed Bolsheviks and then started beating and murdering Jewish people and burning their houses. This pogrom happened at the same time as the Simchat Torah holiday. Almost the entire Jewish population was in the synagogue, and that's where the slaughter started. All those who couldn't run away were killed there. My grandfather

Zalman perished there, as well as his younger son and my uncle Shaya. My daddy and mamma with my two-year-old brother Semyon were hiding in the house of some villagers that they knew. My sister Ida and I ran to our teacher. She was Polish and she had been teaching us for a year before these events. She lived in the yard of the parish school and she kept us in some cellar for several days. When it got colder she took us to her house. She had two daughters. We knew nothing about our daddy and mamma. My favorite holiday has always been Pesach. Pesach is associated with our housemaid Galia. She was a Ukrainian girl. She came to help my mother about the house. Later, in the 1930s, she lived in my family and helped me a lot. So, before Pesach, mamma and Galia cleaned and washed everything. They cleaned up all corners in the house. They took all Passover dishes from the attic: special dishes and special jugs. I also remember an amazing Passover tablecloth. There was also a tablecloth on the first and second seder with seven dishes (and their contents) marked on it. A kiara of its kind, as I learned later. Matzah was ground into flour, and mamma and Galia made delicious little pies stuffed with prunes from it. I remember daddy saying a special blessing, filling a wineglass with wine and opening the door for someone. At first I thought it was for Messiah but later I found out it was for the prophet Elijah. I remember this was the most festive holiday. Now my own life and the life of my family before the pogrom seem rosy to me. And always, when something terrible or unpleasant was happening to me, I thought that my happiness had stayed there. I only remember love and it seems to me that Jewish and other people were living on friendly terms in Borispol until that horrible day. I don't think I ever heard the word 'zhyd' [kike] before 1919. This may be wrong, but psychologically my life was divided into two periods. And since then I have tried to slip away from my Jewish identity, either consciously or subconsciously. However, I could never escape.