

Velvl Muchnik



My older brother Velvl Muchnik, sent this photo home to Bershad during his service in the army in Leningrad, late 1930s.

My brothers Ehil and Velvl went to the Jewish school and this was where I went. This school was built as a Jewish gymnasium for girls by a wealthy Jewish woman before the revolution of 1917. The construction was completed after the revolution and became a Jewish school. In 1934, when I went to school, my brother Velvl had finished the 7th form and went to continue his studies in Donetsk since there was nowhere else to study in Bershad. He entered a factory vocational school.

After finishing his vocational school my older brother returned to Bershad. He worked at the cap factory and later he went to work at a plant in Odessa. From there he went to the army. Velvl served in the military regiment of Leningrad and studied in the artillery school in Leningrad. We were concerned about the Finnish war, hoping that Velvl would not be sent there, fortunately, their military unit was not involved in combat action. In early 1941 Velvl was demobilized. He stayed at home two weeks. Before his departure to Odessa my brother asked me what kind of present I would like him to bring me from there. I had a sweet tooth and asked him to bring me all kinds of sweets from Odessa that we did not have in Bershad. Soon we received a parcel. My brother kept his word and spent a bigger part of his salary to buy presents for me. My younger brother Ehil studied in the machine building school in Odessa. He studied well and stayed in the school hostel. There, in Odessa, were my brothers, when WWII began.

Our family got to know that the Great Patriotic War began from the Molotov speech that the whole country listened to on 22 June 1941 at noon. On that same day the recruitment began. Mama was sobbing. She knew that her sons would be taken to the army and she would not see them. This was true - we never saw my brothers again. We know that Velvl perished during the defense of Odessa, but we know even less about Ehil - he disappeared during the retreat in 1941. We got this information after the war.