

Chaya Sakhartova At The Age Of Eight



This picture was taken in N. Dreitzer's photo-studio in Roslavl in 1929 on the occasion of my eighth birthday. I am wearing my new and the only bought dress.

My parents had three children of their own: Divora, Milya and Chaya, that is me, born in 1921. Mother had two adopted children as well. One of her sisters died of galloping consumption and her daughter Sonya, who was several months old at the time, was left alone. And my mother's other sister simply gave my mother her son, Vladimir, to bring up. I can't remember why it happened. Thus my parents had five children.

At first we didn't live well financially. We rented an apartment from a priest's family. Though he had passed away by then, his wife lived there with their three daughters. They lived very poorly. At first they occupied the whole house and our family rented an outhouse in the yard. I remember very well both the house and the sour cherry tree, under which later I sat and prepared for my entrance exams for university. Later, in 1929, the state moved us to a big house at a different address, where we occupied a large three-room apartment. After that, I cannot tell which year it was, some army officers were sent to live there with their families. The Sychyov family was the first one to live with us; the head of the family was of some low rank, maybe a lieutenant. He arrived with his wife and child, so we had to squeeze together and give them one room. This military man tried to educate me. For example, when I read a book called 'The Honeymoon,' he came up to me, took the book and told me that it was too early for me to read such things. I was about ten. The funniest thing is that I can't even vaguely remember the plot of the book, I think it was some romantic novel.