

Berta Mazo And Her Fellow-Students



This photograph shows my fellow-students and I in Magnitogorsk during our practical studies. It happened in 1937.

I finished my school and entered the Polytechnical College, faculty of industrial transport. At the College we often arranged dances, and I liked to dance very much. I also remember that when we were students of the 1st course, they taught us to march. Those studies were only for girls and other students called us Death Battalion (as a joke). In summer we used to go for practical studies. Once we (about 15 students) went to Magnitogorsk, there at a metal works we were engaged in time-keeping. We also went to Zaporozhye [in Ukraine], there we did the same, moving by steam locomotives wigwag.

I got acquainted with my husband Mikhail Borukhzon at our College (he was 2 years older than me). He was born in 1914 in Ukraine (in Varnavitsi shtetl). Later his parents together with him moved to Vinnitsa [a town in Ukraine]. His father's name was Akiva, and I do not remember his mother's name. In Vinnitsa he finished a Jewish technical school, where he studied Yiddish. He knew Yiddish very well and considered it to be his mother tongue. We got married after graduation from the College, in 1939. I worked at the PROMTRANSPROEKT institution [a designing organization for transport industry]. In 1940 my Mom died. Our elder daughter Mara was born in 1941. In summer of 1941 we rented dacha near Tosno [a suburb of St. Petersburg]. At that time Daddy worked in Tosno, and my husband worked in Kolpino. War burst out when my elder daughter was about 5 months old. We left almost everything and managed to escape before Germans occupied Tosno. We went to evacuation with my sister (she was 13 at that time), my baby daughter and my Daddy.

While we were in evacuation, a family from a destroyed house lived in our apartment in Leningrad. Almost no furniture remained in it. Later a husband of the woman died, and she remained alone in one of our rooms. Of course, it grieved me to see the changed city after our return: I saw a lot of destroyed houses. I know not much about the destiny of my college friends: some of them left, some of them remained in Leningrad. Victor Zhuk, for example, survived during the blockade of

Leningrad, and his mother died.

So among my relatives only aunt Rachel was killed because of her nationality. Among my husband's relatives we lost his parents and his sister (her name was Rachel, too). They lived in a small town Shpikov [in Ukraine]. In the beginning of the war they were ready to leave, but Germans got them off the train. It happened probably in 1942. We got to know about it only in Sverdlovsk: we received a letter. I read it and hid: I was afraid to show it to my husband. Later he found it by chance and cursed me out for my silence. Several years later we (together with my children) visited cemetery in Shpikov: there we found common graves and a monument. In Shpikov my husband's cousin lived with her family and we often visited her in summer before the war burst out.