

Esphir Kalantyrskaya's Cousin Polia Persova



This is Polia Persova, the daughter of my father and Sopha in Kiev in 1938. She perished in the Babiy Yar.

In Kiev my father rented an apartment in Podol, a Jewish neighborhood. We lived in Konstantinovskaya street, not far from my grandparents. In 1922 Sophia gave birth to a boy - Efim and in 1924 her daughter Polia was born. Manya, the youngest, was born in 1933. We lived in a small two-room apartment.

In 1941 we understood that we had to evacuate. At the end of August we, factory employees, went to dig up trenches near Kiev - Germans troops were coming nearer. One day I stayed at home because I was not feeling well. I didn't want to go without Clara whose husband was in the army. Grisha obtained a permit for Clara and her child to go with plant. He came back and I told him that I didn't want to go without Sopha, Polia and Manya. My brother got angry with me telling me that the plant couldn't take all of us, but he went back to the plant to obtain another permission. He was only allowed to take Manya, the youngest. I remember myself crying when I was saying "good-bye" to Sopha and Polia. Sopha was saying that they would also go to the evacuation, but I knew they wouldn't. She had no money for that.

We heard about shootings of Jews in the Babiy Yar in Kiev, but we still had hope that Sopha and Polia managed to evacuate. Grisha sent several requests for information to the evacuation center in Buguruslan, but their answer was that Sopha and Polia Persov were not among the evacuated.

We returned to Kiev and all our suspicions about their fate turned out to be correct. Our Ukrainian neighbors told us that all Jewish population of our neighborhood, including Sopha and Polia, went to the Babiy Yar on 29 September 1941. In few days the postman brought us "death notification" about Fima's death. So, there was only Manya, my stepsister, left. I have always felt like a mother towards her and felt responsible for her life.