

Shlima Goldstein With Her Mother Polia Gersh And Sister Alexandra Kravchenko



My mother Polia Gersh with her two daughters: I am on the left, on the right is my sister Sarah (Russian name: Alexandra). This photo was taken in the orphanage garden, when my mother came to see my sister and me in the late 1930s in Kishinev. After my father died in 1930 my mother didn't recover for a long time. However, she had three kids and she had to provide for us. My grandmother worked hard selling buns and rolls, and doing her daily work, but she couldn't provide for all of us. My father's relatives incited my aunt, Sima, to tell us that it was my mother's fault that my father had died because she hadn't taken good care of him. She said that they weren't going to

support us and that their kin ended with my father's death. Only rarely did they allow my mother and us to go visit them. We were starving and my mother had to send all three of us to an orphanage. My brother Grigoriy was sent to an orphanage for boys and my sister and I went to an orphanage for girls in Kishinev. The orphanage was established in a two-storied house. There were two bedrooms on the first floor, one for older girls and one for small kids. There was a big dining and living room on the first floor where we had meals, played and where older girls did their homework. We wore black uniform robes with white collars and had them washed once a week. We also had a shower once a week in the orphanage. Once a month we went to a public bath. In the bath our clothes were treated to protect them from lice while we were taking a bath. Once, I stayed in the bath until late and was late for dinner. The cook gave me the leftover soup: it was thick, with noodles, beans and the meat and I ate to my heart's content and remembered this soup for a long time thinking how lucky I had been. We observed Jewish traditions in the orphanage. On Friday we went to the synagogue. The older girls stood at the entrance with big mugs where parishioners dropped money for the orphanage and we stood beside them. In the evening the older girls lit candles in the orphanage and we celebrated Sabbath. We also celebrated Jewish holidays in the orphanage. On Chanukkah we had potato pancakes, doughnuts with jam and were given little gifts. If only they had given us more pancakes and doughnuts - I could never have enough food. On Purim we had costumes made for us: paper collars and masks, and we sang merry songs about Purim, had fun playing with rattles and ate hamantashen.