

Liya Epshteyn And Her School Friend Ludmila Savostina



This is me (to the right) and my school friend Ludmila Savostina. The picture was taken in Tallinn before our graduation from school in Spring 1948. After the war there were no Jewish schools in Tallinn. There were Russian and Estonian schools. Before the war I went to an Estonian lyceum. Since I went to Russian school in Ural, I went to Russian compulsory school in Tallinn. There were new subjects in school: history of the KPSS, history of the Soviet Union. I joined the Komsomol at school. We had mandatory events: subbotniks, pioneer and Komsomol meetings. We did not think over it, there was no brainwashing in connection with the latter. We knew that we were supposed to do that. My father wanted me to become a doctor. He talked me into entering the Medical department of Tartu University when I finished school. I was always afraid of blood and the mere thought of it made me sick. Father persistently said that it was a trifle and I would get use to that. When I finished school, I firmly told my father that I would never become a doctor. I understood, if I stayed in Tallinn, Father would keep convincing me to study medicine. I had penchants for languages and I decided to enter the Philology Department. As a philologist I remember Yuri Lotman, who could not find a job in his native Leningrad. Not only Lotman benefited by accepting an offer from Tartu University, but the university as well. Tartu University offered job to a lot of people like Lotman, both mathematicians and physicians and other intellectual people. Of course, I ought to go to Tartu. Having felt no anti-Semitism in our postwar Tallinn and having forgotten about my nationality, I went to Leningrad University. It was a protest against father's plans of making a doctor out of me. Of courses, I did not pass entrance exams in Leningrad. From there I left for Riga, where mother's sister Sarah Auguston and her son Isai were living. I passed exams in Riga Teachers' Training Institute, Philological Department. I was specialized in Russian language and philology. I lived with aunt Sarah. I did not feel anti-Semitism, when I was a student. Both teachers and students treated me loyally. My friends were Russians, Letts.