

Matilda Levi With Her Mother Rashel Behar



This is a picture of me and my mother Rashel Behar. It was taken in 1937. We had already moved to Sofia. We lived in my native town, Karnobat, first. I started school there. But I graduated from junior high school in Sofia. We moved, when I was in the second grade.

I started studying in the junior high school in 1931. My first friends were from the junior high school's first grade. We had a teacher for every single subject. I became very keen on literature because I had a very good teacher: Mrs. Todorova. She was a war widow, she had two sons and she helped them graduate as a lawyer and an engineer only with her teacher's salary. She held firmly to Bulgarian and to orthography; I knew the old orthography perfectly. We had spoken before in the Eastern Bulgarian dialect, but at that time we started speaking in Western Bulgarian. In fact, Eastern Bulgarian is the correct Bulgarian.

We were taught in Bulgarian both in elementary school and high school. The geography and biology teachers were good and all the teachers' staff was good. I didn't like gymnastics. We were two 'anti-sport' girls in my class; the other girl had excellent marks in all subjects and was in the first position. I had excellent marks in all the subjects but I had a four in gymnastics, so I was in the second position. I couldn't do well in gymnastics, that's all. I was plump and slow and that spoiled my marks. Sometimes in the mornings my father used to test me, 'What have you got today? Tell me the lesson immediately!' I told him the lesson and he said, 'Come on, you're going to have a four and that's all.' I went to school and thought, 'Fine, a good mark.' I was examined and received a six. So I said to him, 'You always underestimate me. Look what marks I receive at school.' There was a library in Karnobat I had read all the books. I liked reading. My father read, and my mother read romance novels.

I graduated from junior high school in Sofia. When I was in the second grade, we moved to Sofia. Instead of sending me to Sofia on my own, my father found a job here so the whole family moved.

We: my mother, my father and I, came to live in this apartment in 1932.