

Liza Lukinskaya



This is me by the gate of the military barrack by our house in Siauliai. The picture was taken by my father in 1929, when I entered the training course in lyceum in Siauliai.

There was a Jewish school by the synagogue and my brother and I went there. I went to that elementary school for two years. Subjects were taught in Yiddish. There were several Jewish schools and lyceums in Siauliai. When I grew up a little bit, Father made arrangements for my brother and me to be transferred to the Jewish lyceum. Here I started studying a language that was new to me: Hebrew. It was a prestigious institution. Father had to spend a lot of money on my tuition. I don't remember the precise amount.

The lyceum wasn't far from home. My brother's friend lived close by. His parents owned a cab and they usually gave us a lift with their son. Once, in winter time, when it was frosty, the three of us came to the lyceum, but my brother and I weren't let in. It turned out that Father left on a trip and didn't manage to make the payment. My brother and I had to walk back home across the town. When Father came back, he was furious. I had never seen him in such a frenzy. He went to the lyceum right away and took our documents. The headmaster of the lyceum understood his fault and tried to correct the situation. He came to my father with his apologies, but Father wasn't willing to listen. He hired teachers for us, who came home and crammed us for the Lithuanian lyceum. In summer 1929 my brother and I entered it rather easily. He went to the boys' and I went to the girls' lyceum.

When I became a student of the Lithuanian girls' lyceum I was mostly in a female environment. I was the only Jew in my grade. Actually, another Jewish girl joined our grade two years before my graduation. I was friends with Lithuanian girls: Polina Uskaite, Gribaite, Lukasheite. We were friends for ages. My classmates, both Lithuanian and Russian, treated me very well and paid no attention to my nationality. There was only one teacher, Vishinskine, who was an ardent anti-Semite. Even during the classes that had nothing to do with ethnicity she blamed Jews for all kinds of trouble. I was very active and sociable. The girls liked me. My friends and I went for walks in the park. We gave each other hugs. Sometimes we went to cafes to eat ice-cream, watched movies. There were two movie houses in Siauliai at that time. There was the Lithuanian Drama Theater. I liked to watch performances there. I liked everything, connected with the theater and the stage. My dream was to become a ballet-dancer. I loved amateur performances. I danced on the school stage, played the grand piano and accompanied singers on the piano. I felt like fish in the water.

In the last but one grade we had a Judaic class. Less than ten students out of the entire lyceum attended that class. When I was a junior student I was a member of the Lithuanian scout organization Ptichki. I never joined the scouts for senior students. When I was a senior student, I started seeing boys. I went out with a Lithuanian boy, Eduardas Kudritskas. It even seemed to me that I fell in love with him. At home I even started bringing up the subject of marrying him. Then my parents said that they would marry me off only to a Jew.