

Tili Solomon In Her School Uniform



This is me in my school uniform when I was 11. The picture was taken in 1942. I was probably going to the Jewish school by now. As I lived on Socola Street, I went to a Romanian school, the Marzescu School; I studied there for two years, until 1940. Then several Jewish schools were founded because all the Jewish children were kicked out from the public schools. So, whether we wanted it or not, we had to go on. I attended the third and fourth grades at the Stern School on Palat Street. There was a shortage of teachers. For instance, one of my teachers in the third elementary grade was a chemist, Miss Blumenfeld. I started the fifth grade at the ORT school on Sfântul Lazar Street. Half of the day was for learning a trade and the other half was theory. All the teachers were Jewish. There I learnt a little Hebrew and a little Yiddish, both speaking and writing,

but it didn't really stick with me. Yiddish and Hebrew were taught in those schools regularly. The ORT school had a tailoring and an underwear workshop. I was with the latter. I wasn't an outstanding student and couldn't say whether there were teachers that I preferred and teachers that I disliked. I remember I once wrote a composition with my sister's help when I was in elementary school. We were supposed to describe a cat or something like that; and I slipped a certain word. Anyway, that particular word got me a ten or a 'very good': I think this is what they used. Still, it wasn't my own doing, but my sister's. Another time, in an anatomy class, we were told to draw a heart and describe it. I got a ten or a 'very good' again because I really liked that subject. I studied Hebrew at the ORT school. In that period my father was no longer with us, having been sent to forced labor, and my mother was sick. Taking care of two children on her own wasn't easy; she didn't supervise me enough, so I got a failing final grade in Hebrew. I was supposed to get a prize for handiwork: they gave separate prizes for each subject. Because of my failing grade in Hebrew, when they called out the prizes, they said, 'Herscu Tili, prize for handiwork', but, in fact, they didn't give me anything: neither the diploma, nor that little piece of fabric which was given to us in recognition of our merit. I cried all the way from school to our house. My eyes were swollen. 'What happened?' they asked me at home. 'My friend Molca got a prize for handiwork and I didn't!' My problem wasn't that I hadn't got the prize, but that she had gotten it and I hadn't. I had to take private lessons. There was this young lady who taught Hebrew, a very nice young woman who did pro bono work for our school. I think she emigrated to Israel right after the war. She worked without compensation to help the Jewish community. My mother went to see her with tears in her eyes; she told her about my situation and that I wanted to continue my education. The lady recommended to us a girl who was two or three years older than me and I took some lessons with her that summer. I was able to pass my exam and enter the next grade. However, the fact that I didn't get that prize is something I'll always remember.