

Tamara Koblik And Her Friend Yeva Schwartzman



This is me, and my friend Yeva Schwartzman. This photo was taken in Rybnitsa in 1953. Yeva and I had similar clothes made for us. I am wearing a green dress in this picture and Yeva had exactly the same dress.

I finished the 7th form, when Senia Uchitel, my stepfather's younger son, returned to Rybnitsa. He was to get married in autumn. I didn't have a dress to wear at his wedding and I decided: 'I shall enter a medical school, receive my first stipend and have a new dress made for me'. [students of higher educational institutions and vocational schools received monthly stipends in the USSR]. Of course, this was a very 'reasonable' idea!

When I picked my documents from the school, our teacher of mathematics came to see my mama: 'Tamara is very good at mathematics, the best of all in her class, don't do this', but I was so eager to go to the medical school that mama decided to leave things as they were. I entered the medical school, but later I cried for three years, because my classmates went to the eighth form. I said they would finish school and enter colleges, and I will be a medical nurse for the rest of my life and would be taking out the night pots. However, I liked studying there and was good at practical trainings, but still, I felt hurt - why did I have to be a medical nurse? I cried a lot. Mama and my stepfather could not afford to support me. My stepfather retired, mama received 250-300 rubles in old currency [Tamara means the monetary reform in 1961, denomination of the ruble in the USSR].

At school I made friends with Yeva Tsatsa. Yeva and her family were in the ghetto in Rybnitsa during the war. Her father was an invalid, and her mother was making some wadded robes. While I had some kind of a coat before the war, but Yeva wore a 'fufaika' jacket [a dark cotton wool wadded jacket]. They were very poor. However, during our third year at school Yeva and I

managed to get some new clothes for the stipend that we received. Yeva's surname now is Swartzman, she lives in Israel. We are still friends with her.

Was hysterical, when Stalin died in 1953. Of course, I thought of Stalin like the majority of our people at that time. Our father! Soldiers went into attacks with his name, and we won! In our family we didn't know anything about what was happening in 1937. My relatives were craftspeople, far from politics. I believed that what had happened to my father was a tragic mistake. On that day I was walking to school tear-stained, when I bumped into Yeva's mother. She got so concerned about me. She came to our school and called Yeva: 'What happened to Tamara?' Yeva said: 'Stalin died'. But I need to confess - there was something else that upset me so. According to the Jewish calendar, I was born on the eve of Purim. One time the Purim occurred on 6 March and since then the family had celebrated my birthday on 6 March. Stalin died on 5 March, and this day was announced as the day of the mourning in the country. And I started crying on the early morning of 6 March: 'I am so miserable, I will never again have a birthday, and the mourning will never end in my life, terrible, it's a nightmare!' Mama showed me my birth-certificate which stated that I was born on 10 February. Since 1953 I've celebrated my birthday on 10 February.

I finished my school with honors. Yeva and I received job assignments in Teleneshty and went there.