

Mera Shulman



This photograph was taken in winter of 1952 in Tukums, situated 70 km far from Riga. I do not remember who took the photo, most probably it was one of my colleagues. I'd like to tell you about the way I got there.

I entered the Riga University in 1947. I studied there for 2 years at chemical department. Then I became pregnant and allergic to smells unavoidable in chemical laboratories. I changed the College and continued my studies at the Agricultural Academy (technological faculty for food-processing), which graduated engineers. I was admitted to the 3rd course. After graduating I was sent to Tallinn [Estonia]. I left my little son in Riga with my parents. In Tallinn I took up a post of technologist at sausage workshop. I lived there 4 months and then handed in an application requesting to send me back to Latvia for work, so that I could be closer to my son and my parents. Besides I underlined that I knew Lettish and had no idea about Estonian. They complied with my request and sent me to Tukums (70 kilometers from Riga).

I worked there as a master at butchery for two years and a half. They gave me personal transport: telega [telega is a four-wheel carriage] with a horse. I left the service in 1954, when my husband graduated from College in Leningrad. I took my son away from my parents and we moved to my husband to Leningrad. I got a job at the Electrosila Factory [Leningrad Corporation for construction of electric machines - one of the largest USSR factories in this sphere] together with my husband. I was set to do not very interesting work, because my speciality was not adequate for the job. I held that position during 10 years. And after that to my great surprise and surprise of all my relatives, I entered the Leningrad Northwest Correspondence Polytechnical College. While studying I did not interrupt my work and graduated from the College in 1968.

During all my life I came across manifestations of Anti-Semitism, which came not from authorities or official persons, but from the so called 'private persons'. I also confronted different problems regarding national question: in Tukums I replaced master of the workshop, who was Latvian - representative of the local population. It caused a certain discontent, and not because I was Jewish, but most probably because I was not Latvian.

Here is another case: my daughter Lubov failed to enter where she wanted. You see, she dreamed to study at the Philological faculty of the Pedagogical College named after Hertsen. We went to the College entrance commission together with her. A benevolent woman from that commission asked to show Lubov's passport. When she saw 'a Jewess' in the column 'Nationality', she said 'Do not wreck nerves of your girl [8](#)! Give her documents to the faculty of primary school education. The number of enrollees is less there and they are not so strict with THIS.' So we followed her advice and Lubov entered the College from first.