

Anna Eva Gaspar's Graduation Group Photo In The Jewish Middle School



This is a group photo of my fourth form in the Jewish middle school. Only our form master is in it, it seems the others [teachers] weren't willing to be in it. I'm in the back row, I remember I had to stand on a bench, I'm fourth from the right. I think I couldn't recognize any of my classmates. I got the list of names not too long ago, but I don't remember the names anymore. The picture was taken by a photographer, we had to pay for it.

I attended the Jewish school, my grandfather demanded this. He took me first to the school. He came to Varad and took me to school. I finished there the four grades of the elementary and middle school, there wasn't Jewish high school for girls. We wrote in copybooks, and like today, we had written tests, examinations and moreover they introduced the middle school graduation. For example I graduated from the middle school, and I had to sit an entrance examination to the fifth grade when I finished the elementary school. I tell you straight, I was a quite good pupil. I got a diploma every year until I finished the middle school. I was a good pupil, a conscientious one, I learnt the lessons even it wasn't necessary. I couldn't go to the school without reading and learning the lesson.

But it was pretty hard to us to speak in Romanian. For example, the boards from the street were in Romanian. Even in the corridor of the Jewish school was an inscription: 'Vorbiti numai romaneste!' ['Speak only in Romanian!'] But of course we didn't speak in Romanian... The teachers were obliged to speak in Romanian. Our history teacher was auntie Ida, she spoke bad Romanian and she always planted a guard at the door. The guard's mission was to notice if somebody came on the corridor. 'Tell me, son, if somebody comes!' and then she related the history. We listened her open-mouthed. But if it was necessary to spoke in Romanian, she took the book and she read out the lesson from the book. But when she was in a good mood, we used to ask her: 'Auntie Ida, would you relate?' And then she related. She loved Napoleon. She related about almost everything, she was an older woman and it seemed that the principal didn't want to dismiss her, although she spoke bad Romanian. She was a really brilliant woman. Poor auntie Ida. But we had to learn the

lesson in Romanian. We learnt nothing in Hungarian.

Then we learnt French, Latin and German. We began to learn French from the third grade, German from the fifth grade and Latin from the first grade. They pointed up very much the Latin language then, it was a very important subject. In the Jewish school we learnt Hebrew at religion classes, but I don't remember anything. I didn't learn the Hebrew language. I remember, our religion teacher was called Leichmann and he was angry all the time because we didn't want to learn. We learned how to pray, the Hebrew letters and Jewish history. We had class with poor Leichmann almost every day.

I didn't feel anti-Semitism in the Jewish school, although we had Romanian teachers also. We didn't feel anti-Semitism there. On the other hand, terribly hurt my feelings what happened when I got in the Orsolya. The Orsolya was a Hungarian Catholic order. There were many girls from Bucharest, and I didn't understand how the girls from Bucharest ended up in Varad. But I never found out. I was 15 and I went together with my girlfriend. We sat down in the classroom where we could. We were four in a desk, a blond girl sat near me. On the first day Klotilda Mater came in - she was the headmistress - and she asked us where we came from, from which school, what marks we had in the school, with what mark we passed the entrance examination and other such kind of things. So she questioned us. When she asked me, I answered that I finished 'Gimnaziul Evreiesc' [Jewish middle school] - this happened in the Romanian era [before 1940] - and the girl who sat near me, (her name was Ionescu) got up. She got up from beside me and she moved from there. This reaction was like a slap in the face for me. This was the first slap in the face what I got. Later we got acquainted with the classmates, among others with her also, and she apologized for her reaction. She thought that the Jews are like the blacks or aboriginals, who knew what was in her mind. We were 35 girls in the class, and 12 girls were Jewish. They never let us felt that we were Jewish.