

Revekka Blumberg With Her Mother Hana-Leya Levin



This is my mother Hana-Leya Levin and I. This photo was taken in Riga in 1957. When I turned 15, I had to quit my studies at the 8th grade at school and go to work to earn my living. Mama was very ill then and could not provide for both of us. It was hard to get any employment for me. I was 15, and labor code allowed going to work at the age of 16. The garment factory was the only place I could be employed. Young workers were in demand there. It took two to three months to learn working at the production line and it was easy. I remember they made men's shirts. After I learned this I went to the 8th grade in the evening school. I was the youngest in my class. I did well at school. After finishing the 10th grade I went to the Riga extramural textile affiliate of Moscow College. What I actually wanted was to go to the Philological Department at university to study English or psychology, but all of my adult acquaintances were telling me these were professions with uncertain perspectives that were not going to provide for a living. They were looking at things from practical perspectives. They were telling me that I had to get a practical profession, which could support and provide food in the future, and that this was the only right approach to choosing a profession. Therefore, I went to the textile college. I had academic leaves to take exams and worked the rest of the time. Mama did not always behave adequately, and those were hard times for me, when I witnessed that. It was additional emotional stress for me. It was not that I was ashamed that she was my mother, but it was painful to watch her condition. It took me some time to realize that Mama was ill. This was the result of deportation and life in exile. Mama did not die in exile, she survived physically, but she was broken down spiritually, and her life was wasted. Mama was not resentful, but inside she could not accept the Soviet regime, the system that broke her life. She lived her life in fear, and this fear that was inside her developed into sickness, phobia. However, Mama did not realize she was severely ill. Living in the USSR, we somehow ignored any indisposition until the pain became unbearable, and as for mental problems, people were not used

to paying any attention, whatsoever. Only after Mama moved to Israel in 1970, since this was the dream of her life, she had medical examinations and treatment.