

Ruth Laane With Her Students



This is me, a teacher of Russian literature and language in an Estonian general education school, with my students. I worked one year at school, and I was a class tutor in this class. Unfortunately, I don't remember any of them. This photo was taken in Tallinn in 1962. In 1956 I finished school. I wanted to go to Tartu and study in the famous university, but I didn't. My grandfather, grandmother and Haja-Dusha were old people in poor condition, and I couldn't imagine leaving them on their own. I entered the Faculty of Russian philology at the Tallinn Teacher's Training College. I got a job appointment and went to work as a teacher of Russian literature and language at a general education school in Tallinn. One year later I was offered a position of lecturer in our college and I accepted the offer. This job was more difficult, but I enjoyed it more than working at school. I would have had no problems working in college if I had joined the Party, since, from our management standpoint, I had two big shortcomings: I wasn't a party member and I was Jewish. Therefore, I was unprotected. In college I was offered to join the Party. The party secretary of our faculty approached me and told me that since I was working with the new generation, I should join the Party. I replied that I couldn't. I could not raise my hand voting 'for' at party meetings, if I disagreed. It is true, I could not do it. And since it was quite frequent that I disagreed, I could not possibly join the Party. This was the last time I had this offer. However, this refusal had no impact on my work, and I enjoyed working at college. I liked working with students. I also had other responsibilities. I was bound to be involved in scientific research and I didn't have much time for that. Our managers were decent people. Actually, there were disagreements, but they had nothing to do with my national origin or views. Also, I could not speak out what I thought in class, but I didn't mention what I disagreed about either. It was always possible to balance on a safe side. My only confrontation with the Soviet reality occurred in the early 1960s, when my College offered me a job of a teacher of Russian in Africa for two to three years. At that time the Soviet Union promoted Russian language studies in developing countries. I went through all instances in college well and was recommended as a knowledgeable and skilled teacher, but then I was to be confirmed at the district party committee where I was told that I did not suit the job requirements, and if I wanted to work abroad, my application form was to be ideally clean. What was wrong with my

application form? As it happens, I wrote that I had relatives abroad. Well, I might have omitted this item in the form, but we corresponded with them and the KGB would have known about it. Therefore, it was better to be transparent. I did not go to Africa, and my mother was happy about it.