

Nina Polubelova



This is me as a fourth grade student of Riga Compulsory School. The picture was taken at a school matinee on 7th November 1947 in Riga. Upon our return from evacuation we hoped for a better life. When we returned to Riga, my father came home, too. He had been demobilized from the army. He started working as a driver. My mother worked in a pharmacy. I went to the third grade of a Russian school. It used to be a Lettish school before the war and the teachers spoke poor Russian. Half of the children in my class were from Latvia, and half the newcomers from the USSR. It was of no importance for us. Maybe it would be harder for adults to get along, but the children were more flexible. All of us were pioneers, and then Komsomol members. In other words, we were

Soviet children. Though, people let me feel that I was a Jew. Teachers treated me well, anti-Semitism was displayed among children, but I never felt it coming from Lettish children. Offensive words were spoken by children who came to Latvia from the USSR. After school Aunt Irina gave me music classes. She had taken lessons with a singing tutor and she taught me everything she knew. I always sang during school holidays. When I studied at school, I found out that there was a people's conservatoire in Riga, where gifted young people were admitted. Unlike in ordinary conservatoire here no diplomas were given, but the classes were taught by the professors from real conservatoires. I found out about the entrance exams. When I saw the members of the board, renowned singers and professors from the conservatoire, I lost my voice from fear. I was asked to sing, but I couldn't produce a sound. I turned back and left. Then Irina scolded me, and I didn't make any more attempts.