

Rachel Randvee And Her Sister Riva Kozlovski



This photograph shows my elder sister, Riva Kozlovski, nee Tsivian, and myself. It was taken in Tallinn in 1934. I was born in 1929. I was named Rachel in honor of my grandmother Rohel-Leah who wasn't alive any more then. In my education my parents tried to correct their former mistakes. When I was two a governess was employed for me. Her name was Karoline Kins; she was from a Germanized Estonian family. She spoke German with me, and my parents also tried to address me in German. In those days many Estonian and Jewish families would send their children to be educated in Germany, and my parents wanted me to be able to speak German freely. They spoke Yiddish to my sister and to each other, and Estonian to the servant. Russian wasn't used in our

family. When I was four I was enrolled in a Jewish kindergarten. From my first day there I heard Ivrit being spoken. The songs we sang there were also in Ivrit. When I was six and went to the Jewish school I could speak and understand Ivrit quite well. In the school there were two first grades. One of them had Yiddish as the language of instruction, and the other one Ivrit. It was up to the parents to make a choice. I learned in Ivrit. Our class was very united. There were three sets of twins in it: two pairs of girls and a pair of boys. Those boys remained here during the war and were killed just like many of my other classmates. Riva started learning the piano when she was little, she had a talent for music, and she was taught by Tallinn's best music teachers. They thought that Riva could grow up to become an excellent pianist. In order to do that Riva had to spend hours practicing, but she was an outgoing, cheerful, expressive person. She wanted to do sports and spend time with her friends. However, we had a strict and asserting father, at times he simply forced Riva to the instrument. And when her friends came to visit her she played the piano and all of them sang wonderful songs in Yiddish and Ivrit. I can still remember some of those beautiful songs. While Riva was still in high school she started studying at a conservatory. She graduated from high school in 1936. That was the tenth graduating class of the Tallinn Jewish School. The graduation ceremony was held in the school gym, which was decorated in an unusual way. Tablecloths, window curtains, and everything else were white and blue just like the flag of Israel. Many of my sister's classmates were leaving right after graduation and going to Palestine to build up Israel. Riva really wanted to go, too, but my father didn't let her. He believed that she had to finish her conservatory studies first and then decide whether she wanted to go to Palestine.