

Simon Rapoport



This is me on my birthday when I turned six. The photo was taken in Tallinn in 1930. My elder sister Polina was born in 1912. Then my brother Samuel was born in 1917. I was the youngest, born in 1924. I was named Simon at birth. Before attending school, I was fluent in three languages - Russian, English and Estonian. I was taught English by my governess Mrs. Saiks. She had been in our house since I was a baby. First, she was a baby-sitter, then a governess. Mrs. Saiks spoke only English with me. When I started talking, I spoke two languages. Mrs. Saiks and her husband were fugitives from Soviet Russia. Before the Revolution of 1917 they were the owners of gold mines in

Siberia. After the revolution all of that was nationalized by the Soviet regime and the Saiks spouses had to flee to Estonia, from where they hoped to escape to England. Her husband taught English in a lyceum and Mrs. Saiks became a governess. All my pre-school education is connected with her. As I mentioned before, my father died in 1930 and Mother, being on her own, took over father's business. She was constantly being busy and could not pay me enough attention. My governess mostly took care of my upbringing. Mrs. Saiks taught me to go in for sports. She gave me my first ball. When I went to school, Mrs. Saiks was hired by another family. The three of us went to the Jewish lyceum. The building of that lyceum is still there. At present the premises of the Estonian Jewish community are there. When the lyceum was founded, most of the children knew neither Ivrit, nor Yiddish, so the subjects were taught in Russian and Ivrit was one of the subjects. Gradually more subjects were taught in Yiddish. My elder sister Polina studied in that lyceum in the period when subjects were taught in Russian. When my brother Samuel was studying there, subjects were taught in Russian only at the elementary school.