

Faina Sandler



This is a photo of me when I was in the 10th grade. It was taken in Chernovtsy in 1952. I went to the 4th grade of the Russian school for girls in 1945. There were two schools for boys and two for girls. There were 30 girls in my class. We didn't have enough textbooks and used some Ukrainian textbooks. It was difficult at first because I didn't know Ukrainian. But I picked it up soon and managed. There were many Jewish children at school. There was also a Jewish school, but it was too far away from our home. During the campaign against 'cosmopolitans' [8](#) it was closed, and the girls from this school came to our class. My Russian classmate told me recently that she learned all Jewish traditions from another classmate from that Jewish school. There was no anti-Semitism at school or elsewhere. Chernovtsy had always been a very tolerant town. Yiddish was heard in the

streets. Peasants or janitors could speak Yiddish, German and Romanian. I became a Komsomol member in the 10th grade. I have never been involved in politics or social activities. I didn't like meetings or social activities and avoided them as much as I could. In the 10th grade my teacher told me that I wouldn't receive a medal or be able to enter university if I didn't become a Komsomol member. I gave in and submitted my application to the Komsomol. I faced anti-Semitism at school for the first time. It didn't come from my classmates, but from their parents. The parents of two girls in our class worked at the NKVD. They were spoiled girls and didn't study well. The mother of one of them came to school and screamed that Jewish girls had the highest grades in the Russian language when her daughter only had a '2' or '3'. She was asking whether it was possible that Jewish girls knew Russian better than a Russian girl. Then I understood what anti-Semitism meant. I had excellent marks in all subjects, and nobody doubted that I was going to receive a gold medal. I passed all 12 final exams with the highest grades, but got a '4' in composition. When I demanded that they showed this composition to me they said that I made no mistakes, but got a lower grade for my handwriting. It was ridiculous. I finished school in 1952 and received a silver medal.