

# Ruth Strazh And Her Younger Sister Sofia Popova



This is me and my younger sister Sofia. This photo was taken at our home in Tallinn on Pesach in 1932. I was born in Tartu in 1925. My younger sister Sofia was born in Valga in 1929. Mama delivered her at home, and my father and a midwife attended to her. My sister's Jewish name is Soreh, and in her documents she had the name of Sofia. In the family we spoke Yiddish, German and Estonian. Mama also spoke fluent Russian. My sister and I already spoke three languages, when we were children. My sister and I had a nurse, but my mama's family spent a lot of time with

us. My grandmother and grandfather lived quite nearby, and my sister and I often visited them. We probably spent as much time with our grandparents as we did at home. My grandmother and grandfather loved us dearly, and my childhood memories are closely attached to them. Mama's brothers also spent a lot of time with us. I also loved them dearly. I never addressed them with 'Aunt' or 'Uncle', but just by their first names. In 1931 my parents decided to move to Tallinn. I don't know why they decided to do so. Besides medical practice, my father took to business in Tallinn. He bought a fabric store. He didn't work in this store, but he checked reports and took part in major decision making process. Mama took care of the house and the children. My father wanted us to learn languages and sent us to the Hebrew gymnasium in Tallinn. We studied all subjects in Hebrew while we didn't speak Hebrew at home. In summer our parents rented a villa at the seashore in Pirita. Our grandmother and grandfather stayed with us there, and Mama and Papa visited us at weekends. Mikhelson, our teacher at the gymnasium, also spent vacations in this town. He was Jewish and his wife was Estonian, but she spoke better Hebrew than any Jewish person. One should listen to her! She made gefilte fish and forshmak from herring on Sabbath. My father talked to Mikhelson about teaching me Hebrew. We went to the beach where we spent three to four hours speaking Hebrew. We didn't read or write, just lay in the sun and bathed, but we never spoke a word in other languages. Before the start of the academic year I spoke as fluent Hebrew as was my Yiddish. I had no problems with Hebrew at school.