

Etta Ferdmann



That's me in the first year of my studies at the Teachers' Training Institute. The picture was taken in Tallinn in 1955.

I finished school in 1955. I was not willing to leave Tallinn to go study anywhere, not even at the famous Tartu University. Moreover, I was an only child in the family. After school I entered the history and philology department of Tallinn Teachers' Training Institute. I easily passed the entrance exams and was admitted. My nationality was not an obstacle as there was no state anti-Semitism in Estonia, of course it was the politics of the Soviet Union since key posts were taken by Estonians, but still they did not share the politics.

I was not a member of the Komsomol at school. I found all kinds of pretext not to join this organization. I hated the Soviet regime and all kind of party activity, even when I was a child. I was the only one in the university, who was not a Komsomol member. A Jew called Vcherashnyaya was the curator of our group. Once she called me and said that I should join the Komsomol as I was the only one in my group who had not done so. She was sincere with me. She said I should not be singled out in the group, especially being a Jew. Judging by my age I did not have to stay in the Komsomol for long. Thus, I thought I could bear it. So, I joined the Komsomol. Then, when I was working, I was talked into entering the party, but I flatly refused it. I was very happy for not giving up, without having to prevaricate.

There were a lot of Jews in my group. In general, there were a lot of Jews in Estonian institution of higher education. There were not only Jews from Estonia, but from all parts of the Soviet Union. It was very hard for the Jews to enter an institute in other republics, so they came to us. Here there was one selection criterion: knowledge demonstrated during entrance exams.