

Rozalia Akselrod



I, Rozalia Akselrod, a second-year student of the Kharkov Foreign Language Institute. The photo was taken in 1938.

In 1937 I finished school and entered the Foreign Languages Institute. Now I believe it was my mistake. I should have become a lawyer or a doctor according to my abilities. When I was already working I often spoke in court as a public advocate. It was a custom at the time. And I did very well. But languages, they are not my field of interest. Anyway, I passed exams easily and entered the French department. Just like at school, I joined the Komsomol committee of the Institute and sang at the institute's club.

We did not have many Jews at my department. Besides me, there was only one more girl, a very gifted student, Mira Kaplan. But at other departments there were many Jews. I don't know the reason. I guess it was a mere flow of things and coincidences and no ethnic tensions.

Repressions continued. They did not touch upon my family. At the institute Komsomol meetings became very frequent. We often condemned 'the enemies of people,' that is, our co-students. It was scary. Sometimes such meetings lasted up to 2 or 3am. The best students were expelled from the Komsomol and from the institute. Then the KGB arrested them. We did not even suspect that what we heard about their fault was lies. We believed everything we were told and voted unanimously for their expulsion. This is the greatest tragedy in life. Today, when I begin to sum up my whole life, I realize that every time I raised a hand at such a meeting I committed my heaviest sins.