

Sarah Rutkauskene



This is I, the student of Jewish lyceum. The picture was made in Ukraine in 1931.

I was born on 10 October 1916. My maiden name is Klug. I was given a double name Sarah Polya.

I started studies early. When I was five, mother told father to hire a coach for me. Father hired a private teacher for me. She taught me the rudiments of Jewish literary - alphabet and reading. I had been taught at home for two years and then father took me in cheder. I know that only boys went there. I still cannot get how father could convince the teacher for me to study there. The fact was that I was the only girl in the class of ten boys. Our teacher was disabled and he wore special shoes because of his valgoid legs, but he was a great expert in Jewish studies. I sat at a desk

separately from the boys. I did very well and was quick to learn. I had studied there for three years and by the age of three was very fluent in Ivrit. When I went to the synagogue, everybody was surprised to see the girl reading prayers in Hebrew. My father took special pride in me. He often bought newspapers in Ivrit, took them home and enjoyed my reading them.

When I turned 10, father took me to Ukrmerge, where I entered Jewish lyceum. Subjects were taught in Yiddish, and I had to learn a lot of new things. At first lived with my grandparents 'Jasinskiys', who had moved to Ukrmerge a long time ago. In about two years my parents sold their house and moved to Ukrmerge. It was the time for my younger siblings to study so they decided to be closer to children. Grandparents were elderly and got irritated with children's noise and rattle, so in about two years they moved out.

I loved studying. It was easy for me. I had a lot of friends among my classmates. We marked Jewish holidays in lyceum, staged performances, where I took an active part. I sang well, often took part in amateur concerts.

As compared to Jelva Ukrmerge was a bigger town with the population of 12 thousand people, most of whom were Jews. There was a Jewish theatre, different organizations, in general the life became very interesting. The youth took part in different youth Zionist organizations. Beitar was the most active. The organization was rather bellicose and I did not take part in that movement. I entered Hashomer Hatzair - "young guard", which called for buyout of Jewish lands and revive Jewish state in a peaceful way. My younger brother Leibl and sister Yanina also entered lyceum. Though, my parents paid minimum fee for us - 30 litas per month, it was rather large amount for our family. I had studied there for five years and decided that I was adult and it was the time for me to help my parents.

In 1936 when I finished the fifth grade, I was employed and did not come back to the studies. My parents did not mind it. First, they needed some material support, and also I was very literate for that time as compared with other girls as they studied for 2-3 years. I was employed as a sales assistant in the grocery store. The owner of the store was a Jew, whose name I do not remember. He treated me very well as I was honest and skilled. At that time I kept attending the classes at Hashomer Hatzair and was getting more and more carried away with the ideas of revival of the Jewish state. I had new friends with whom I spent time. We went to the Jewish theater, walked in the park, discussed our future. Three years had past and I found out that there was a Jewish kibbutz in Kaunas, where the youth was getting ready for repatriation. I wanted to try a new life and I found life in kibbutz romantic. In summer 1936 I asked for permission from parents, who could not say no to me, and left for Kaunas.