

Sarah Rutkauskene With Her Jewish Friends



I am to the right with my Jewish friends, whom I visited in Jelva in 1936. My good friend Mariam is sitting in the center. In 1938 she left for Palestine with her family. Unfortunately there is no trace of her. In the center is our friend Gaima Shtok, to the left from her is her brother Isaac and his friend Girsh. All of them died in occupied Lithuanian on the first days of war.

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

When I turned 10, father took me to Ukrmerge, where I entered Jewish lyceum. 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.

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.

Kibbutz people lived in one house in Kaunas suburb. I was welcomed in their team. I housed in the room with another girl and shortly after that they found a job for me. I was for the Jewish dentist as a governess for his child. The family was very rich. The daughter went to the Jewish lyceum and I was supposed to take her to to/from lyceum, do homework with her, go for a walk, to the library. I did not do anything as those things were taken care of the servant. I was paid very well for those times- 150 litas per month. I practically did not spend the money as I had meals in the house of the doctor. In accordance with kibbutz laws the earned money was to be given to the leader. He allocated the money in line with the needs of all people from kibbutz and the decision of the general meeting. Part of the money was spent on food. There were two people in kibbutz who cooked the food for everybody. All purchases were to be approved by the board of kibbutz. Besides, when the money was distributed, the salary of the member was not taken into account, just his needs. For two years they bought me the boots only once because I could not get to work without them. I was concerned with that. I wanted to have a private life, to be fashionably dressed, buy presents for my parents and siblings. I could not spend all my life there. Besides, I did not have money to help out my parents. I even was supposed to get the permission and ask for money for the rare trips home. Within this time many people from kibbutz left for Palestine, but I did not have enough money for that. In 1938 I found another job and left kibbutz.