

Sima Libman With Her Sister And Parents



In this photograph, I'm with my parents Sofia and Elhanon Rogovski and my younger sister Leah Ulanovski. The photograph was taken on my 16th birthday: 29th March 1940 in Tallinn.

My parents didn't discuss the family's financial matters in front me, but I think our economic situation began to improve from the mid-1930s. In 1938, we moved into a new comfortable apartment. It had central heating, an electric stove, and parquet flooring in every room. There were three rooms: a dining room, a bedroom, and a nursery. In the process of construction, the owner altered the apartment layout at my parents' request, discarding the servant's room and part of the kitchen to make space for my father's study. We already had a servant at that time, but she came in the morning, helped my mother around the kitchen, and then left in the afternoon. We didn't spend our summers in the country any more, but went to local resorts instead. We spent the summers of 1938 and 1939 in Haapsalu where my mother took mud-bath treatment for her legs, and in 1940 we went to Parnu.

We received a telephone call from my father who sounded very anxious. 'Come at once! We are being turned out of our apartment.' We returned to Tallinn immediately and learned that Soviet troops had entered Estonia and our house would be occupied by the families of Soviet officers. We had three days to vacate our apartment. In panic, my parents searched for another apartment and found what we had always had before: a three-room apartment in a wooden building with stove heating. However, soon we were told that three rooms was too much space for us and a young couple was accommodated in one of the rooms. The man wore a civil suit, but the woman rarely came out of the room, which surprised my mother a lot. My father continued working. Our Jewish gymnasium was renamed 'Secondary School #13.' I was in my last year of school and intended to go on to study at the medical department of the University of Tartu. Classes which were taught in Yiddish and Ivrit were combined. The classes were taught only in Yiddish as Ivrit was outlawed. The Byalik Society and other Jewish organizations were closed.