

Rosa Sheyn



This is my mother, Rosa Sheyn, nee Kaplan, when she was a student of the Dentistry Department of Tartu University. The photo was taken in Tartu in 1920.

My maternal grandparents had five children. Their only son, Sakhne, was born in 1898. He was mostly called by his Russian name Sasha. My mother Rosa, Jewish name Reizl, was born in 1900. Her sister Maryasha was born in 1901. She was called Masha in the family and I am going to call her that as well. Revekka was born in 1903 and the youngest, Raya, was born in 1905.

The children went to a German lyceum where tuition fees had to be paid. In 1914 World War I began and my grandparents decided to send their elder daughters –my mom and Masha – to Yaroslavl, where some of our distant relatives lived. Both of them went to a Russian lyceum there. They spent a year there and came back to Aluksne.

Then my mother went to study in Riga, to the specialized lyceum, where students were trained to enter Medical University. Upon graduation my mother entered the Dentistry Department of Tartu University. There was no admission quota for Jewish students in Estonia, existing all over tsarist Russia, including Latvia.

First, Mother got by with Russian, which she had improved in Yaroslav, and German. Then she also learned Estonian. Tuition was required for education. Grandfather worked and could cover it.

Within a few years, when Mother's younger sister entered university, Grandfather got severely ill and couldn't work any longer. Mother started giving private lessons and paid for her sister's studies. Besides, Mother had finished the university already and worked as a dentist, so she sent

some money to Masha. Mother and Masha were always very close and my mother treated her younger sister as if she was her own daughter.