

Regina Grinberg At The High School Graduation Ball



Here I am in high school. This photo was taken at the graduation ball at the end of each high school year in Shumen. The year is 1942. I made my first Bulgarian friends while in high school, and my world started to widen. I loved mathematics and the teacher who taught it, my class teacher Kutsarova. School holidays were also new and exciting. We wore white collars and laid wreaths at the monuments of patriotic Bulgarians in Shumen. Bulgarian Revival figures were very much admired in Shumen, and we often sung patriotic songs, listened to speeches and attended poem recitations relating to Bulgarian history and culture. During the time I was in junior high school I did not notice any anti-Semitic attitudes towards me. All of my teachers were very kind to me, and my Jewish origins did not influence my grades in any way. Even my high school teacher in physical

education, who was a Brannik member, asked me to demonstrate the exercises to the other students because I did them so well. In high school I always sat in the first row because I was short and thin. Right in front of me there was a poster aimed against Jews, but I did not think it was aimed at me. I did not feel different, unwanted or isolated until a close friend of mine started telling the whole class that Jews were bad people. I objected right away, responding that there were good and bad Bulgarians and good and bad Jewish people. "No" she said, "all Jews are bad. You are the only exception. That does not refer to you." I blushed and could not sleep for a couple of nights. Then this same friend of mine went to study in Germany, where she saw the true face of fascism. Disgusted, she came back to Bulgaria. Later, when she was already working, she apologized to me on a number of occasions and thanked me for not spreading the word about her opinions. In 1942 I graduated from high school and wanted to study abroad, but I was not allowed to travel. I was only permitted to study economics in Varna, but I chose not to. By accident, and much to my good fortune, I met a dental mechanic who offered me work in his laboratory and paid me quite well. At first my father was not happy that I had become a worker, but later he and others started admiring me for finding the job.