

Regina Grinberg With Classmates At The Entrance Of The Jewish School



This photo depicts the entrance of the Jewish school in Shumen in the 1930s. I am standing with folded hands in one of the uppermost rows, near the girl with the sailor's suit. Sailor suits were very popular at that time. The timeframe is somewhere between 1932 and 1934. I am dressed in a light blouse and skirt-pants. My mother often made me wear a fringe, and also dressed me in loose sports clothes. I still like that sports style and feel best in pants. The Jewish school was private,

supported by the Jewish municipality. We did not study on Saturday because of the Jewish holiday or on Sunday because of the Bulgarian one. We were ten students in a class. We studied mostly three languages ? Ivrit, Bulgarian and French. Our teachers in Bulgarian class prepared us very well, and I did not have difficulties when I went to junior high school. My Bulgarian teacher was called Katya. Jewish women, whose names I cannot recall, taught us Ivrit. Later they left for Palestine. Our teacher in French was Adon [?Mr.? in Ivrit] Behar, who was paid not by the Jewish municipality, but by the Alliance Francaise. I was always an excellent student, and I always did my homework and knew all the lessons. My mother taught me up to work hard and be independent. Every morning I got up and prepared my breakfast. My mother never prepared my breakfast for me, nor did she fuss around me while I was getting ready for school. She thought that I should take care of these things by myself. Indeed, she never shouted at us or told us what to do. That is the best thing I can remember about my childhood. My mother thought that I should develop by myself and show what I can do. She also felt that I should get what I want by myself and achieve my goals on my own. Upon graduating from the Jewish school, I was thrust into a Bulgarian junior high school, and I suddenly found myself in a class with 40 students. The shock was enormous. When I started going to the Bulgarian school I also began going to the Orthodox church because of Mrs. Kutsarova, our class teacher. She did not like me much and made me go to the Orthodox church. Can you imagine that? On Friday evenings I went to the synagogue ? I even hummed the prayer because I knew all the melodies by heart. Then on Sundays I was made to go to the Orthodox church with the whole class. When I told Mrs. Kutsarova that I had also gone to the synagogue, she said, ?I cannot excuse you, you must come with the whole class.? ?But I am a Jew" I said, ?I go to the synagogue.? ?It doesn?t matter" she said, ?you must come with the whole class.? I did not dare to oppose her because her daughter was a friend of mine. She was a very nice girl who studied medicine. Later, around my 13th birthday, when I went to high school, I fell under the influence of a particular group of girls ? socialists. Together we became partisans, and I was totally cut off from the church.