

A Teacher Of Religion At The Hebrew Gymnasium



This photograph was taken in Riga in 1940. It shows our teacher of religion from the Jewish Hebrew school. I do not remember exactly who took the photograph, I suppose it was our school photographer.

After finishing school I entered Hebrew gymnasium.

This gymnasium suggested very extensive program. In the beginning of school year it was necessary to bring an application form from parents where they indicated, what language they wanted their child to study. In the next form they added one language more, and so forth. After five years of education they graduated young people knowing five languages. From the very beginning I chose Latin, because I was going to become a doctor. The gymnasium practiced co-education (boys and girls studied together, but in classes they sat in different rows). In 1940 in Latvia Soviet power was established [occupation of the Baltic Republics]. Hebrew was immediately declared hostile and Zionistic language, and our Hebrew gymnasium was turned into Yiddish school. A lot of my schoolmates left for other schools, but I did not, because I did not want to part with my favorite teachers. Unfortunately, it was my bitter mistake: soon the best teachers were fired; both children and adults were spied on. We took cover in the cloakroom to talk in Hebrew: it was absolutely forbidden. The school lost its former prestige.

Both at school and in gymnasium they taught us bases of Judaism. But religion was not among the main subjects. It was rather a tribute to Tradition. I remember well our teacher of religion from the fifth form, but unfortunately my memory did not keep his name. I know for sure that he perished during the war.