

Henrich Kurizkes



In this photo, I am 15. It was taken in Tallinn in 1939. When I was six I went to the private Russian gymnasium. After I studied for four years in the Russian school, Estonian authorities issued an order directing all non-Estonian children to study either in their own language, or in an Estonian school. So I had to quit my Russian school and my parents sent me to a private English college. It was expensive, but they wanted to give me a good education. We wore uniforms at school: gray suits and light colored shirts. They were made by individual orders. There were no poor children in our college. There were also many Jewish children in college. We never faced any anti-Semitic demonstrations from our Estonian schoolmates. Jewish children were well respected at school. Our tutor always told Jewish children about the forthcoming Jewish holiday and we were allowed to stay away from school on this day. All of my school friends were Jewish. Of course, some of my friends were Estonian. We used to play football with Estonian boys, our neighbors. However, we never

visited them at home. My real close friends were Jewish. I don't know how it happened to be this way. All I can say is that my parents never put any pressure on me in this respect. This was my choice. This was the way it happened to be. I was a member of the Jewish organization for young people, Hashomer Hatzair: "The Young Watchman." We had meetings every week. We were told about the history of the Jewish people, and we also had quizzes, tests and various games. We always had a good time there. Besides, from 1937, every Saturday night, all Jewish children who didn't go to the Jewish school, visited Doctor Aba Gomer, the Rabbi of Tallinn, and he taught us Jewish history and traditions.