

Lea Beraha With Friends In Dupnitsa



The picture was taken in the town of Dupnitsa in the early 1940s, during the internment. I'm the one sitting, first from right. The others are people from my circle of friends. They used to work as porters, they did excavation work, etc. They were all members of the UYW. We all believed in the communist ideals. In the 1st grade of the Jewish junior high school I became a member of Hashomer Hatzair. Hashomer Hatzair aimed at the establishment of socialism in Israel. It was a 'progressive' organization with a strong national aspect. I organized a very big company there. We often visited the Aura community center on Opalchenska and Klementina Streets, which was regularly attended by Jews and 'progressive' Bulgarians. Mois Autiel noticed us there. We didn't know then that he was the UYW responsible for our sector. Mois was making propaganda for this organization, which was different from Hashomer Hatzair but which had the same goal, the

establishment of the socialist order. Our class was divided into two groups, 15 people each, both supporters of the UYW. Anyway, only two or three people - including me - were selected to become UYW members. Mois was the person in charge of our group. I became a member of the UYW on 5th May 1942, right after I finished the 3rd grade of the Jewish junior high school. My future husband, Leon Beraha, was redirected to our group as a more experienced UYW member. At the age of 15 I carried out my first action with him, and at 16 we decided to be a couple. For three or four years we were only holding hands. In Iuchbunar there was a conspiracy, a traitor within our organization and a lot of members were imprisoned. My future husband was also arrested. He simulated that he was an imbecile, he was released as an underdeveloped person and was acquitted for lack of evidence. His second arrest was a more serious one. In fascist times [in the late 1930s - early 1940s] he worked as an electrician. At that time the newspapers wrote about the Totleben conspiracy. The gang of Totleben bandits was raging, etc. My husband and his brother electrified a hospital. In an outhouse behind that hospital they hid two outlaws. Actually the conspiracy was called this way because the hospital was on Totleben Street in Sofia. During a police action a shooting started. Anyway, the authorities never proved that it was my husband who had shot. Yet, all this resulted in his internment to the forced labor camp in Dupnitsa. They dug trenches there. By a 'happy' coincidence my family was also interned to Dupnitsa.