

Milka Ilieva With Her Friends During The Internment Period



This is the group we were interned with during the Law for the Protection of the Nation in Shumen in 1943. I'm sitting in the center. Behind me from right to left is Zelda, above her my friend Dora Benvenisti is standing. From the utmost left, my cousin Mati Djerasi is standing. In the center, right behind me, is Moni. I can't remember any additional information, except for the fact that we all were from Sofia and until the Law for the Protection of the Nation was introduced we had lived in the poor Jewish neighborhood Iuchbunar, on the same street - Odrin.

Our internment was painful. We were each given the right to carry with us only 30 kilograms of luggage. We left for the railway station in order to catch the train to Shumen, where we were to be interned. It was my mother, Vinka, Jina and me. The other two sisters, Ester and Sara, had already been married: in Stara Zagora and in Sofia respectively; while my brothers were sent to forced labor camps. When we arrived in Shumen, several hundreds of Jews, we among them, were accommodated at the local school's gym-hall. And a commune cauldron of food was installed there.

In that confusing situation, we were sitting desperately, my mother, my sisters and I, in the gym-hall's crowd, when Vinka, who was 20 then already, took the initiative and said, 'Mum, we won't live here.' And we started asking for lodgings. So we came across some Turks who lived near the Tumbul mosque. It was just opposite the local Jewish school. Well, these Turks told us they could accommodate us in one of their rooms upstairs. We were six of us in that room: my mother, we, the three sisters, and one of my mum's cousins with her daughter. We immediately started looking for jobs. We had to dig, wash, clean and all that stuff. We quickly registered ourselves at the Jewish community in the town, where they prepared a list of people like us who wanted to work. So, through the Jewish community we were sent to a ranch of 200 hectares of land. It was situated in the village of Panayot-Volovo. The owner was Ivan Praznikov. Both my sister Jina and I worked there. We dug, harvested and did all kinds of agricultural work there. My elder sister became a

seamstress.