

Mazal Asael In The Jewish Holiday Camp In The Town Of Berkovitsa



This is a Jewish holiday camp in the town of Berkovitsa. Many children from the different classes are here. I am the sixth child from left to right in the fourth row. Our teachers are among us also. The photo was taken in the 1930s.

The Jewish school organised excursions and summer camps. There was a Jewish summer camp in the town of Berkovitsa where we used to go on holiday. Children from the poorer families were accepted in that camp. My mother went to this camp to work as a cook so that my brother Benjamin and I could both go on holiday there. I remember that one summer I fell into a deep pool and had to be rescued. I have very pleasant memories from those vacations and also many good friends with whom I keep in touch even today.

We had various organizations in the Jewish school: Maccabi, Akiva, Hashomer Hatzair. Maccabi was a sports organization that organised international competitions and Hashomer Hatzair was a scout organization and we used to learn Hebrew there. We used to stay after school and play different games or learn Jewish dances; we would try to speak only in Hebrew. These organizations had a very positive educational influence on us, teaching us to be very well organised. While I was studying in the Jewish school all my friends were Jews. They were mostly my classmates and we were all members of Hashomer Hatzair. The Jewish organizations existed until 1943 when internments from Sofia began. The Bulgarian government banned them when the National Defense Law was passed in 1939, but they went on functioning illegally. (The National Defense Law was a law against Bulgarian Jews, featuring detailed regulations. According to this law Jews did not have the right to own shops and factories. The Jews that lived in the center of Sofia were forced to move to the outskirts of the town. The internment of Jews to certain designated towns was legalized. This was in preparation for the deportation to the concentration camps.)