

Mazal Asael With Her Hashomer Hazair Group



This is a photo of nearly my whole group in the Jewish organisation Hashomer Hatzair. I still keep in touch with some of them. This photo was taken in Plovdiv in the 1940s on May 1, Labor Day. I am absent from the photo. My friend Nisim Kohen is first on the left and next to him in the last row is our friend Zelma. First on the right is Victoria Mashiah. 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.)