

Victor Baruh On A Picnic On Lag Ba Omer



This is a photograph of a picnic in Kniazhevo, on the outskirts of Sofia, where the Central Jewish School of Lag Ba Omer is located. Here you can see a great number of my classmates. The photo was taken in 1930. At the time of the photo I was nine or ten years old, a schoolboy in 2nd or 3rd grade. I studied at the Central Jewish School on Kaloyan Street till the first junior high school grade so I know Ivrit very well. I was called to the higher grades to show them how well I was reading from the Tannakh. The Jewish school had the same curriculum as all Bulgarian schools as well as Hebrew and readings from the Bible. The grades consisted of 25-30 children. I remember my teacher in Hebrew, Iveret, as well as our Bulgarian teacher Izraelova. Then my father enrolled me in the Bulgarian school 'Konstantin Fotinov' on Hristo Botev Boulevard next to our home. My favorite subjects were writing and reading. We loved going to the movies, there were two cinemas in the neighborhood - 'Ufa' and 'Exelsior'. And we shicked [a slang word used at the time for entering a public place without paying the required fee]. I remember that I saw 'Ben Hur' in Exelsior - the film about the war against the Romans, including chariots. There is a scene when many rocks began rolling and I guarded myself as if from the screen. One of the first Bulgarian films was shot on our street - its director was Ghendov [the first Bulgarian film-maker]. I remember how they got our street paved. We were playing with lemonade marbles in the street. Everyone had to place them at their own house, and when they began erect the flagstone, one of our neighbors said: 'Well, I have no money for bread, they want me to make the a pavement. From among my childhood friends, I still have contact with Dimitar Panov, with Vasko and Mitko Palazovi. I remember the social life as the kids see it - the policemen on horses who passed along our street - there was no pavement at that time, there were cobblestones which made sparks underneath their hooves. I remember the so-called tribunes where communists and anarchists gathered at the street and someone stood up and started to chant slogans. But they were immediately reported to the police and the policemen came to disperse the crowd with lashes and arrest them. They took the arrested on two horses to the First Police Section just behind our school 'Konstantin Fotinov' - I saw the marks on their faces left from being beaten against the wall.