

Victor Baruh



This is a picture taken in the 1935/1936 academic year in the town of Kyustendil. I am wearing the school uniform of the Kyustendil Boy's High School where I was a student at that time - the school logo can be seen on the hat.

The Jews, especially those who were wealthy, strove to give their children good education - they wanted them to become lawyers, physicians, dentists; those who were poorer became craftsmen - tinsmiths, shoemakers, fabric workers. There were porters - the opportunities of each family determined what progress someone could make.

At the junior high school I had a teacher in Bulgarian, Dimitrova, she was one of my most favorite teachers. In 1934 we went to Kyustendil where I attended the Junior High School No. 2; and later the Kyustendil Boy's High School where my class supervisor was Pena Slaveykova - Pencho Slaveykov's niece [Pencho Slaveykov (1866-1912) is one of the classics of Bulgarian literature] She had graduated in Switzerland and she taught us French. Once she gave us a composition assignment in drama and my father helped me write it. She got my writing published at a newspaper for children, called 'Gradinka' [little garden] under the name of Victor Baruhov. Later I found it at the National Library - this was my first 'publication'. Our teacher in Bulgarian was Batalov - later I found out that he had been Dimitar Talev's colleague [Dimitar Talev (1898-1966) a classic Bulgarian novelist]. Once he gave us a writing topic on 'Les Miserables' so we went to see the movie starring Harry Baur as Jean Valjean. When he returned the notebooks, he asked me to read my essay: 'Can you believe it? Unfortunately a Jewish boy wrote the most wonderful essay.' There was no offense in his words. I have never felt any anti-Semitic moods. When the Law for the Protection of the Nation was adopted there were no outrages but on the contrary - there was sympathy and compassion for us. There were some occasional attacks.