

Victor Baruh In The Forced Labor Camp



This photograph of me was taken in the summer of 1943 while I was mobilized to the forced labor camp in the village of Kurtovo Konare, district of Plovdiv. In June 1943 my mother and I were interned to Pazardjik. We lived at the house of my mother's sister, Victoria who was living in Pazardjik. My mother died in Pazardjik in 1944 - she got a heart attack. From Pazardjik I was taken to the forced labor groups in Kurtovo Konare at the end of June 1943. We worked under extremely hard conditions on the correction of Vucha's riverbed - the river swelled there and caused floods. We lived in small and dirty sheds. When we were on our way to the camp with our luggage the policeman who was accompanying us made us stop, drew his gun and said, 'Look, here you are under my command, you are not leaving the camp. I have the right to shoot.' Our rooms were

separated by planks; several ex-prisoners lived here. They worked on the same site as diggers but they were paid and free - at the weekends they went to Plovdiv and when they came back they told us about their adventures in the big city - craps [the dice game] and prostitutes. We stayed there till 11th November 1943. In Pazardjik I met my brother Armand who was released from Enikioy. At the same time my brother Emil with his family was interned to the town of Pleven and my brother Armand was a political prisoner at the concentration camp in Enikioy. This camp was established in September 1941 as a preventive measure against the communists because of their alliance with Germany. Its official name was 'State Security Settlement'. The prisoners had to build the fences themselves. The Communist Party, which was banned by the Protection of the State Act at the time, organized fund-raising for the prisoners, but only their relatives were allowed to send them parcels with food and other supplies. The authorities had to grant a special permission for each parcel to be sent. At the camp my brother began to translate War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy - I received parts of it hidden in damadjani [demijohn - big glass vessels covered with knitted straw]. Later this translation was published. In fact, it wasn't very good but it was the first one in Bulgarian.