

Lea Beraha



Here you can see me as a brigade leader of the sports club in Sofia in 1946-1947. Above what is today the Ovcha Kupel quarter and the Gypsy neighborhood in Sofia the authorities wanted to build a stadium for mass sports events. Yet, the initiative finally turned out to be a complete failure. We only started digging there and that was it - the site was never finished. After 9th September 1944 everything changed. First, there was a great tragedy - my father was ill. The misery was beyond description. Yet, the Jewish community established a tailor's cooperative named Liberation. I began to work there. I attached sleeves using a sewing machine. I also attended high school evening classes. I studied from 6 to 10 in the evening. From 10pm to 7am I worked - I only took night shifts. The cooperative was in the bazaar opposite the Law Courts and I used to walk to Odrin and Positano Streets, where we lived. We often changed our address and everywhere we lived under terrible conditions; the whole family in one room. By 1947 I was alone. My future husband was a

student in the USSR. My father died in my arms. My sister Eliza got married and left for Israel. My brother Betzalel and his family followed my sister at my mother's request. In 1949 my mother also left for Israel. It was very hard for me. In order to escape from loneliness, I took part in two consecutive brigades. There I fell and broke my hand. I was falsely diagnosed with bone tuberculosis. Later it turned out that I had simple sciatica. From one sanatorium to another I finally reached the Workers' Academy in Varna, where I finished my high school education. There I was put into a plaster cast and during the whole year they took me to exams on a stretcher. I gained a lot of weight and weighed some 90 kilos as a result of total immobilization. I was lucky that my husband visited me. I told him that I didn't intend to marry him because of my illness. Upon his return to Moscow my husband took my tests to the Institute for Bone and Joint Tuberculosis. The professor there concluded that I have no tuberculosis whatsoever. According to him it was more likely to be rheumatism or something of that kind.