

Jul Efraim Levi At A Students' March



This is some kind of a students' march in Salonica, but I don't remember the occasion and the exact date, probably it was in 1935. The photo was taken in front of our school. I'm easily recognized as the only blond boy in the center, next to the girl with the white ribbon on the head and white rose on the lapel.

I was enrolled in the nearest private school of Kiria Deliu. It remains in my memory as an embodiment of the greatness of ancient Greek goddesses: tall and beautiful like the statues and pictures in our books with fairy tales, which our young teacher read to us so beautifully. I even remember that we started to like certain characters from ancient Greek mythology. I, for example, admired Heracles, because he overcame a number of snakes in his cradle. We, the children, often argued who was stronger: Heracles or Achilles, who was dipped by his mother in a magic river in order to make him invincible. I also remember that we all loved our first teacher, Kiria Deliu. She always treated us as if she was an older friend. The school had a large yard and she would run after us during the break and play games with us.

I also have another funny memory from my early school period. One day in class we were singing some song. Without realizing what I was doing I had started singing a second part to the song, similar in melody but in another tone. It was different but nice. Suddenly the teacher commanded the kids to stop, turned to me and said, 'Jul, there is no letter as 'zh' in Greek, what are you singing?' What could I say? I didn't know. I think I blushed. She asked me to go to the blackboard with one of the girls, whom she asked to sing the same song as before. And she asked me to sing what I had been singing before that. And so we did. It was years later when I realized that I had been singing the so popular third part. The teacher was very pleased. She stroked my blond hair and asked me to come with my mother the next day. I don't know what they talked about, but in the evening my parents told me that I would start taking piano lessons with my sister's tutor.