

Leon Madzhar



This is one of the few photos of me as a child. It was taken on 22nd October 1941 in Dupnitsa. I was born in 1926 in Dupnitsa. Like my sister I studied in the Jewish school in Dupnitsa. It was a two-story building very close to our house. After the first four grades in the Jewish school, I went to junior high school in Dupnitsa until it was time to apply for high school. My father decided that I had to study in the trade high school in Sofia. That was a very practical school. It gave qualifications for being an accountant, a merchant, on the whole, to do business. At that time a number of anti-fascist organizations were set up in Sofia and one of them was the Union of Youth

Workers ? UYW, of which I was a member. All members were progressive young people, from whom I learned a lot. In Sofia I was also a member of Betar, a Zionist youth organization. It was very strict, resembling a military organization. It was also involved in educational activities. I was also a member of Hashomer Hatzair. It was a Zionist organization with leftist views, which were more modern compared to those of Betar. The UYW members were both Bulgarians and Jews. They gave lectures on various topics: for example on Darwin's theory and other interesting issues. The members were also involved in anti-fascist propaganda. In 1942 my obligation as a UYW member was to spread appeals in the form of leaflets in the mailboxes with propaganda against the fascists. The goal was to attract more of the intelligent people on our side. In my class in the trade school there were five Jews and I showed them the leaflets, because I didn't know whether they shared the UYW ideas. Unfortunately, I was very young and I didn't hide the leaflets well; they slipped out of my bag and fell to the floor. To my worst luck they were seen by a Bulgarian, a Brannik, who showed them to the business teacher. She showed them to the headmaster. The blame fell on me and two other Jews, Albert Behar and another boy. We were expelled from school. Yet, they gave us the chance to enroll as private students in another high school.