

Sophie Pinkas With Ester Panova And Two Friends



This photo was taken in Vidin in 1941. I am walking in the Town Garden with Ester Panova, nee Moshe, and two classmates, friends of mine. Boris Punkin is on the right side and the other one is Tsanko, but I don't remember his family name. Both were very progressive boys - UYW members. We believed in the same ideals and got on very well. Boris Punkin was a political prisoner and Tsanko was in hiding. After 9th September 1944 we learned that he was murdered by the drajevists in Yugoslavia. Punkin was a doctor in Sofia, an ophthalmologist. We are in the seventh grade here, one year before we graduated from high school. At that time we knew more about the events in Germany and its advances in the European countries. The progressive boys became more active and involved in the UYW organization. I was also its member and we were very good friends. Our friends are dressed in the uniform of the Bulgarian army, in which they used to serve at that time - like all young men - but I don't remember where they served. Vidin was, and it still is, a very interesting town, because it is situated on the bank of the Danube River. The bank itself is very beautiful. Across the river is the Romanian town Calafat, which we could see. There was a nice park, which ended at 'Babini Vidini Kuli' [Baba Vida Fortress]. There was a Turkish prison there before in which most of the prisoners in 1939 were political ones. During that time the creation of fascist organizations - Legionaries, Ratniks, 'Otets Paisii' had already begun. There were also some anti-Semitic activities. They insulted us, called us 'chifuti' and said, 'why don't you leave?' Especially after the successes of Hitler's army in Europe and its invasion in the Soviet Union, the anti-Semites became very active. We, the Jews, decided that we should do something. This was the beginning of our left convictions and our desire to fight the fascist harassment of Jews. We had a UYW group consisting of a number of people; we raised money. Besides money, we later also collected clothes for the partisans. We read philosophic, progressive literature, which I didn't understand at all at the beginning. For example, Marx? I cannot say how many of us Jews there were, but compared to the number of Bulgarians, I think we formed the bigger percentage.