

## Irena's Wygodzka Friend Hela Hass



Hela Hass sent me this picture from Siberia where she was during the war.

She wrote on the back of the picture: 'I wish I could meet you happy once again - really happy, Eni! For you, Hela.' This picture was taken during one of our skiing trips to the mountains before the war, in the 1930s.

Most of my friends were in Akiba - a Zionist youth organization, so I also joined it. I was in touch with my girlfriends for many years. My best friend Hela Hass was in Siberia during the war.

We sent packages to her from Vilnius, from the kibbutz, pictures and greetings. She survived, got married, she was in Israel and died a few years ago.

I was nine years old when I joined the Zionist organization and I was a member until the end. My friends encouraged me to do it. My parents didn't have anything against it.

I remember that my father said, 'You can join anything, but the Betars.' Because Betar was an organization whose members looked like fascists, almost like the 'Hitlerjugend': they had uniforms, brown shirts and these military belts.

They also had this idea to take Palestine by force, which my father didn't like. I joined Akiba, but I wasn't always there. I was also in Hanoar, but later returned to Akiba. Which organization I was in, depended on where my friends were at the time.

There were probably some ideological differences between those two organizations, I don't remember exactly. I only know that they were more pious in Akiba: they made us pray, organized religious celebrations.