

Stela Astrukova With Mrs Shulamit Shamir On The Vitosha Mountain



Here I am with Mrs Shamir on Vitosha Mountain. The photo was taken in 1983 – 1984.

On the back of the photo there is an inscription:

‘To Stela as a memory of the visit in Bulgaria Shulamit.’ This is the handwriting of Mrs Shamir. The photo was sent to me by her with an accompanying letter.

We had a positive attitude towards the state of Israel even during the cold war with the country.

We obeyed the official position, but we believed that our government was not right.

My husband was the first who established contacts after the end of the cold war and invited Mrs Shamir to visit Bulgaria.

The Foreign Minister at that time was Ivan Bashev who was very open-minded.

He had met her at a congress in Washington and she had told him that he was a Jew from Bulgaria.

When he came back, he asked to see my husband who was chairman of the Jewish organization from 1961.

They both decided to invite Shamir but it could not be an official visit because of the Arabs, with whom we kept warm relations.

So, she came as our personal guest. I remember that she came with Ruth Shaul from the president's administration.

During the official welcoming Ruth greeted my husband on behalf of her mother and father.

She was also a Bulgarian Jew. It turned out that her parents had helped my husband when he was underground.

They had had a workshop for wool textile on Pirotska and Hristo Botev Str.

During the most dangerous period of his illegal activity he locked him with food in the workshop.

That was the only place, which was warm because of the wool there.

We took them on a walk along Vitosha Str. Shamir was very happy to come here.

She gave me a very beautiful mezuzah as a gift and later sent me a letter of thanks.

Later a round table was organized on the topic of the salvation of the Bulgarian Jews and she came with an official invitation.

Later she came with Shamir himself. I remember that we got very close.