

On 'Bounardzhik' Hill



Plovdiv, 1936. On 'Bounardzhik' hill. On the photo from left to right are: Sofi, a neighbor of ours, my mother, Liza, pregnant with my sister Viky, my father Zhoudi, Tanti Rebeka (Zhoudi's sister), Tanti Sofi (Zhoudi's sister). The children are in the second row, from left to right: I, Sami (my brother) and my cousin Emil Vagenshtain. There is no stamp of a photo shop on the back of the photo, nor any other inscription.

I like Plovdiv very much and am greatly committed to this city. I call myself a great-Plovdiv chauvinist. Several times I changed Plovdiv for other towns and lived there for some years but I have always returned. At that time – the 1930s – the years of my early childhood, I recall that there was electricity in Plovdiv. We used to have electric bulbs but there were houses in which one could see the gas lamps shedding light until late in the evening. Those made about fifty per cent of the houses. Not only did our house have electricity but it had sewerage as well. 80% of the houses didn't have sewerage. There was this profound smell which could be felt everywhere because the cesspits were in the yards and everything was done there, people even bathed there in the summer. When the cesspits were full, gypsies were hired to clean them with buckets. The payment was per bucket. Much later, in the 1940s, the sewerage was regulated. At that time the tunnel was built which helped the traffic in Plovdiv. Before that there were awful traffic jams because the traffic was taking place on one main street and there were horse phaetons, horse carts and cars moving on it. There was the noise from the horse clatter and the claxons. The phaetons were waiting for clients at the station.