

# Jul Levi Conducting In The Jewish Cultural Home



This photo was taken at the end of a merry concert full of emotions and fun in the 'Jerusalem' Hall in the Jewish Cultural Home in Sofia or the so-called Bet Am. The audience is Jewish and mostly people around 60 years old. Next to me, on the right is the conductor Dotso Vutkov; he is a Bulgarian and a very good friend of mine. We were both conducting so that it would be funnier. On the significant date of 10th November 1989 I was in Kiev, where I had a concert. I was a conductor in the big Kiev hall 'Ukraina.' Those halls were called 'interconcerts' in musicians' slang, because they gathered at one place many actors and conductors from all musical theaters of the former Soviet countries together with the local orchestra. So, on 11th November, the morning after the concert my phone rang and woke me up. Some actors and musicians were looking for me to tell me what had happened. 'Maestro, are you ready? Come down quickly!' Me being a conductor my hotel room was one floor above theirs. 'Wait, I can't come, I haven't gotten up yet. I must wash and shave!' I said. But they said, 'You will wash and shave later! It's very important, come down!' So I went down. They all surrounded me and said, 'You have no idea what news we have for you!' 'What?' I asked. 'Todor Zhivkov is no longer in power!' 'You are kidding me!' I answered. So I learned that the previous night one of the dancers had spoken to her mother who had explained to her what had happened. I had to return to Bulgaria to find out what exactly had happened. To be honest, I was happy. I didn't regret that. Although, especially towards me, Todor Zhivkov had always been nice. He gave me a number of awards. Frankly speaking, he wasn't fit to be a great leader. Otherwise, he was kind and intelligent. He was nice to Jews. Before 9th September 1944 he had even been an actor in the 'blue-shirt theater' of Boyan Danovski and Mois Beniesh. I know that from them both. Still, in spite of the crisis, which followed after 10th November, I don't regret those changes.