

Milka Ilieva And Her Friends



This is me with some friends. The picture was taken right before our internment [during the Law for the Protection of the Nation] in Sofia in 1943. I'm 14 here. It wasn't by accident that we had a picture taken when we were all together, because not all the Jews were to be interned to the same town. Some were interned to Varna, others to Kyustendil and there were also Jews interned to Shumen (as I). We were scattered throughout Bulgaria.

The picture was taken in our native, poor Iuchbunar neighborhood, on Opalchenska Street. The second from left to right (standing) is Avram, but I don't remember his surname. The squatted girl (the second from left to right) is my friend Mati [Matilda] Yomtov. She now lives in Israel. I don't remember who's in the center. The third girl from left to right (also squatting) is Avram's sister, but unfortunately I can't remember her name.

I remember very well the Sofia Jews' demonstration in protest to the government's decision for interning us. It was on 24th May 1943. At that time I was already 15 years old, but I was not a member of the Union of Young Workers, in contrast to my sister Jina, who was. Well, on this day I was just walking down Klementina Square with my sister Jina when we met acquaintances from the Jewish community. They informed us that they were going to organize a manifestation addressed to King Boris III and against his decision for our internment. After that, the whole Jewish community gathered in the synagogue. And our procession started from there to Klementina Square. We reached Father Paisii Street, near Bet Am. And suddenly mounted police appeared in front of us. A severe scrimmage followed while we, the kids, fled away in all directions. I remember that I started running from Father Paisii Street and I stopped as far as Osogovo Street, in the Jewish school. Then I hid with a friend of mine. The police started visiting the Jewish families, from house to house, and they arrested all the Jewish men. Not before long, they interned us.