

Milka Ilieva And Lily Behar



This is me (from the left) with my friend Lily Behar (I don't remember her maiden name). She's a doctor. The photo was taken before the Law for the Protection of the Nation [in Sofia in 1939], so I'm 11 here and she's around my age.

All my friends then were Jewish girls, whom I was with at the Jewish school and Hashomer Hatzair: Mati Yomtov, Sarika Shamli, Dora Benvenisti and others. Afterwards they left for Israel and since then we have met by chance, well advanced in years, and we have even made out who was who. But back in my childhood years, I was always with them. We had a favorite game called 'semanei derekh' [literally from Ivrit: 'traffic signs']. We walked in Borisova Garden, the big park in Sofia's suburbs [today this park is in the city center] separated in groups. The first group had to start

before the second one, they walked and from time to time they had to put some signs, for example arrows made out of twigs, to show the direction, or they made some kind of a funny obstacle. Or they improvised a swastika, again made of twigs that meant 'danger.' And the 'danger' turned out to be a puddle for instance. Or they drew a square and a number in it with chalk. If the number was ten for example the second group had to seek for something hidden at a distance of ten steps from the square. We sought, sought and finally found pink sweets wrapped in a paper.

We often went to the Byalata Voda area, which is on Vitosha, a mountain near Sofia. We were scouts there. We were separated into two groups: boys and girls. And we arranged fantastic competitions. We ran with our legs in sacks. Liko Seliktar was irreplaceable as an organizer of these games. We were taught how to light a fire in open nature, how to cook and so on. My childhood was absolutely calm. Up to the moment when the Germans invaded Bulgaria and the Law for the Protection of the Nation and the Law for the Protection of the State were introduced.