

A Funny Forced Labor Camp Photo



This photo was taken during the Law for the Protection of the Nation at the entrance of a tobacco warehouse where we, who were about 800, slept on our way to the forced labor camp near the village of Beli Izvor, Ardino region, present-day Kardzhali. I remember the smell and the dirt inside. When I came out of that warehouse I was nauseous from the clean air outside, I had gotten so used to the dirt inside. We had put on make-up to joke about how we would look when the war was over. We made this photo on our way to the labor camp. '1-2 hours before we are conscripted.' These

words are written on the back of the photo. Of course, we were not about to be conscripted, but to do hard labor, but at that time the people leading us called it that way. The photo demonstrates that even in the worst times Jews can laugh about their fate. I think this quality preserved our life. I am in the lower row to the right and next to me is the future great artist Marko Behar. Standing first from the left is the journalist Nichko [Nissim] Benbasat. The writer Haim Oliver is first from the right. In the middle is the great Israeli conductor Isak Gratsiani, who was in our group in the beginning. Then he, Jacques Natan and I were transferred to another group.