

Mordechaj, The Leader Of Hashomer Hatzair Kibbutz In Dzierzoniow



This is a friend of mine, Mordechaj, the leader of Hashomer Hatzair kibbutz in Dzierzoniow. The photo was taken in the 1940s.

I was nine or ten years old when I became interested in Hashomer Hatzair, but my family didn't like it, because they didn't like me coming home late. Why Hashomer Hatzair? Because it offered a lot of fun. There were various sections - for the adolescents, for schoolchildren. But no politicking. The purpose was to shape people. I knew a few girls who were members, they persuaded me to go. Those were girls I knew from the Krasinski Gardens. There were age groups, I was in the youngest one. They hinted it was about educating the future elites, that there'd be a Jewish state. We knew

about it from history.

There were instructors. First some casual-style lecturing, then we'd play. It was like scouting. Excursions were organized, things that young people find impressive. For instance, swimming lessons. There were covered swimming pools on the Vistula with wooden floors, designed so that the water gradually got deeper and deeper. Those were commercial, private-owned swimming pools - Polish, Jewish. Cafes with tables on jetties, water in between. They took us there, and I learned to swim. The Vistula itself was dangerous, unregulated. That was under the auspices of Maccabi.

My family poverty didn't prevent me from becoming more and more deeply involved. Even if any membership fees were charged by Hashomer Hatzair, they were minimal. I wouldn't have had the money to pay. Instructors came, elder people, already trained. It was them who took us to the kibbutzim in Grochow, showed us: 'Look, those are the people who'll be building the state!' There were kibbutzim in the Goclaw area, on Grochowska Street. We went there to meet young people preparing for aliyah to Palestine. I remember as if it was today. They had milking cows there, cultivated the land, grew vegetables. There were houses, dormitories, in which young people lived - not only from Warsaw, I guess, but from all kinds of places. They lived in military barracks-like conditions. The land must have been leased, and they cultivated it. They sold the produce and that's how they earned their living. The main idea was for them to learn, to prepare Jews for working as farmers. They had instructors and they were being trained to become conscious farmers. I remember, when we came, they laid various kinds of fruit out on tables - their produce. It was their pride, that they had grown it all themselves.