

## Milka Ilieva With Her Friends From Hashomer Hatzair



Here are my friends from Hashomer Hatzair in Sofia in 1940. I'm sitting on the left. Lily Beraha is the second from left to right. Dora Benvenisti is at the utmost right, down. You can see Milka Mentezh on the right, up. Mati Yomtov is next to her from the right. I have forgotten the name of the girl on the left.

The songs I knew in Ivrit I'd learned in Hashomer Hatzair. We used to sing a lot there, too. There was a very nice song. It began with, 'O, ani-i-i itayavti, itaya-avti-i-i...' We were taught to sing polyphonic music so that it sounded really beautiful. We were divided into two groups. When the first group, consisting of boys, started singing alone the whole first stanza and in the moment when they began the second stanza with a slightly different melody, the second group joined, starting from the beginning and singing simultaneously with the first one. And it always turned out very nice. I remember us singing songs like: 'Ine ma tov uma naim shevet achim gam yachad' [literally from Ivrit: 'how nice and cozy it is, brothers, staying together'], or: 'Sham baerev...' [From Ivrit: 'There, in the evening...'], and so on. It was a wonderful time.

I remember very clearly that as early as 1935 Hashomer Hatzair looked after the poor kids, among whom I was, too. We were all from the poor Jewish neighborhood of Iuchbunar. Our fathers were workmen. We studied at the Jewish school where we received free coats and shoes because of our poverty. We were supported economically there, while in Hashomer Hatzair the help was spiritual. And this was more important. They helped us grow up as personalities. This organization gave a meaning to my life. They not only recommended us what to read, I'm speaking of literature with very high artistic values, but also excellently entertained us with games stimulating the sense of unity in our community. Besides, the older boys and girls played the violin for us, so that we could get acquainted with music. For example, the well-known musician Klara Pinkas often played the

violin for us.