

Sofi Danon-Moshe With Her Classmates



Here I'm the first one standing on the right. I'm with some classmates. They are Bulgarian girls from the high school I don't recognize. We are on the bridge over the Maritsa river where the photo was taken. We are wearing our school uniforms. The year is 1942. The photo was taken in Pazardzhik. The principal of our school, Hadzhitodorov, was very liberal. I was his favorite student. At that time it was a custom to organize balls. My first ball was in the sixth grade. It took place in the building of the Girls' High School. There were only girls. But when we were finishing school in 1942 the principal decided to make one single farewell ball for the Boys' and the Girls' High Schools. It took place in the 'chitalishte.' Jews weren't allowed to walk on the street that was leading to the 'chitalishte.' That was a main street and in the big hall of the 'chitalishte' there were drama performances, concerts and we were forbidden to attend all those events. But I asked the principal, 'Shall I come to the farewell ball?' and he said, 'But, of course.' I needed a beautiful dress. I didn't want to go in my flannelette dress and the black apron. My mother managed to make my dress from some of her slips, which she used to wear under her silk dresses because those were usually transparent. Those slips were made of morocco. Now I know that the name of the fabric, morocco, comes from the name of the country. That fabric was a little rough, dark blue in color. My mother sewed a dark blue dress for me with a silk ribbon that was blue, too, and a white belt. That was my ball dress. Of course, I had to put on the badge. I went to the 'chitalishte' with my friends. At a certain point I noticed that the boys from the Boys' High School had gathered in a corner and were pointing at me. I slowly made my way to the principal and told him, 'Something's happening, Mr. Principal.' 'It's nothing. Stay here next to me.' And the boys, all of them together, started coming in my direction and said, 'Hey, you, the Jew, get out of here!' The principal whispered in my ear, 'Don't move from here!' And I remained there. A police officer came in five or ten minutes. He came into the room and immediately moved in my direction. He was wearing a cloak and had a sword. He was so tall and was coming towards me in giant steps. 'Are you a Jew? Come on, go out!' And the principal couldn't say anything, poor man. The police officer just told him, 'She doesn't have the right to be here.' And the principal replied, 'But how is that possible? She's a student of mine.' And we went out and walked down the main street. I will never forget that. Imagine a short, thin girl, a midget of a girl, and two steps behind the guy with the cloak and the sword. And people

turned to look at us. They didn't know what was going on; was I some kind of a criminal or what? And he walked with me as far as my house. And you can imagine how my parents met me. I only managed to reach the bed and fall on it.