

## Sofi Uziel And Her Class



This is my class in Vladaya in 1938. Our class teacher, Mileva, was a very wicked person. She made me repeat the year although I was an excellent pupil. I am on the very left. I started working at the age of six. I used to work in my spare time when I finished my homework and sometimes I went on working till midnight. We had a small grocery here, on the corner. We lived on the income from that grocery and on my father's invalid pension. My father used to spend three months a year in the Home for Invalids in Bankya. This was his holiday. We used to visit him on Sundays and that was our holiday. My father was very ill - he suffered from insomnia and couldn't sleep because he had a grenade splinter in his brain. He died from it later. There were no operations back then. Although very ill, my father cared for us very much and insisted on our speaking properly. I had a free ticket for the railways. I used to go to Vidin to see my aunt Sara Benaroya. I was very skinny. I also used to go to a camp [Rakitovo], which was one stop before Velingrad. Children of war invalids used to be sent there. I didn't study at a Jewish school. The youth in my time was progressive. I felt bad about not going to a Jewish school, but the two Jewish schools were quite far from my place and there was nobody to take me to and from school. Later on, when I grew up, I liked it in the Bulgarian school. It was then that I got introduced to communist ideas, which were progressive at that time - I was a member of the UYW the young communists' organization. I graduated from the First Girls High School. We were poor girls. A group of ten girls, including me, used to play hookey, but otherwise I was an excellent student. There were Jews at the school but I wasn't friends with

them - they were children of wealthy Jews, while I was the child of poor Jews. I managed to finish school thanks to Aunt Sofi's money and the allowance I used to receive from the War Invalids' Society.