

Heda Ambrova With Relatives And Friends



This photo was taken in our yard in Piestany. From left: Karol Kürti, Alica Herzog, Edit Porges, Magda Erdelyiová, Eva Herzog and I (Heda Ambrova). Young people used to come to our place often. Our yard was this ‘family center,’ and everyone felt comfortable there. Our door was open to everyone.

Up to 1928 there was only one Jewish community in Piestany, an Orthodox one. In 1928 it divided into a Neolog one and an Orthodox one. I don’t know the reasons for the division. The Orthodox Jews had their own synagogue, a very nice one. Jewish social life in the town took place only via the Maccabi. We didn’t have a gym, so my mother and her friends signed an agreement with the workers’ gymnastics club. They had a hall that also had a stage for theater performances. The club let us use the hall, and Maccabi purchased equipment – parallel bars, uneven bars, a mat, a pommel horse and a sawhorse. We then exercised there twice a week. Our instructors were qualified. I know that one of them had come all the way from Ostrava. His name was Müller. He found a job here, and then began instructing. He even taught preschoolers. He also taught two young women, very talented ones, from Trnava. Towards the end, a student from the Faculty of Philosophy who was taking physical fitness, English and German also exercised there. Each year a so-called Academy was held, where a gymnastics program was put on, and later also musical numbers. It was very popular amongst the non-Jewish population as well. The gymnastics numbers were so good that Sokol came to see my mother to see whether she wouldn’t take on some group of Sokol children.

Children from Orthodox families were very strictly watched. They didn’t even associate with us very much. They attended only a Jewish school. Later, in 1938 and 1939, Protestant and Jewish children were expelled from the state school. A special class was created for them. The only Orthodox child that came to Maccabi to exercise was Lili Hersteinova. She was from a family of eight or nine children. She had a very nice voice, clear as a bell. She was a lot younger than I. My mother managed to pull off one master stroke. She convinced her mother, who was a widow, to let Lili leave with the ‘Kinderaliyah’ to Palestine. She lives there to this day. From the Orthodox families, only one girl returned from the girls’ transport, and that was Miriam Leitner. She was a

year younger than I.