

Raina Blumenfeld On Holiday



On this photo we are on holiday in 1940. This is a resort complex with mineral spas near the town of Kostenets in Southern Bulgaria. In this photo is me on the far left and my younger sister Ziumbiula - third on the left. We used to rent a village house close to the spas and spent a whole month there. When I was a child we went on holidays very often. We had to do it because my father suffered from sciatica, and every summer we used to go to the hot mineral spas in Gorna Banya [a village close to Sofia, which is now a district of Sofia]. We used to load a horse cart with our luggage, rent a room in the village and spend a month there. We went to Gorna Banya for three years, then to Ovcha Kupel for three years. At that time my mother took good care of all her four children and used to make 'chateau' for us every morning. It is made of well-beaten egg white, and then the yoke and sugar are added, all this is stirred well and is eaten with bread. I will not forget an incident, when our whole family of six persons had gathered in an alcove in Ovcha Kupel to have our meal and a woman who was a tenant in the same house, asked mother whether all the children were hers. My mother answered with a saying in Ladino: 'Your eye - in a basket!' This meant to protect oneself from bad thoughts of other persons. When I was a child I knew a lot of games, which are not played nowadays. Boys and girls used to play The King-Gateman. This game wasn't only known by the Jewish population in Sofia. Two boys hold each other's hands above their heads to make a gate. All the others line up in a queue and pass between them, singing: 'King-and-Gateman! Open the gates and let the King's army pass through! Open, close, leave only one man!' When the last word is sung, the two boys, through whose 'gate' the others pass, suddenly drop their hands and catch somebody. The last one to remain takes the place of one of 'gate-boys' and so everything is repeated on and on. We also used to play a men's game, 'jelick', we would dig a hole, put a piece of wood on top of it and with another piece of wood had to throw it out as far as possible.