

Rebeka Avram Natan (nee Geron)



My mother Rebeka Avram Natan (nee Geron) in Ruse in 1921.

My mother Rebeka Avram Natan (nee Geron) was born in Razgrad in 1897 or 1898 - we could not find out the exact date. And we always joked with her that we could not celebrate her birthday because we did not know her date of birth. She had a primary education. At home my parents spoke mostly Spanish [Ladino], but when our neighbors came, they spoke Bulgarian. My mother knew Bulgarian because she had worked as a seamstress in a Bulgarian company and she could read in Bulgarian.

The Jewish community lived in the Jewish neighborhood which was outside the center of the town. It consisted mostly of one-floor houses and not only Jews lived there. The place where I lived from 4-5 years of age until 13 years of age had four houses in one yard. Jews lived in two of the houses and Bulgarians in the other two. Throughout the years we kept in touch with the children of our Bulgarian neighbors. The mother in one of the families died young and my mother also looked after the children. Turkish people also lived next to us. All the children from the nearby houses gathered together and played games. Our house had three rooms and a kitchen. The four of us - my parents, my brother and I lived there. My grandmother and my uncle paid rent in another house. We had a toilet, a bath and electricity.

At that time there was a variety of Jewish professions. There were rich merchants, street vendors, craftsmen, porters, factory owner such as Avram Ventura. He owned the 'Zhiti' factory, which

manufactured bolts, rivets and nails. There were also Jewish workers, but there was also that very nice organization of the Jewish community 'Malbish Arumim', which raised money from the rich and gave breakfast and lunch to the poor children in the Jewish school. It was founded by the Jewish municipality. In the autumn they also bought clothes and shoes for the poor Jewish children. At that time we did not feel anti-Semitism towards us. We were very tolerant to each other. We always took part in the parades and national holidays.

Friday was a market day - my mother did the shopping - mostly fish from the Danube, vegetables, agrištada [Traditional Jewish holiday dish prepared from fish with sour egg sauce, oil, salt and lemon, which is served on Rosh Hashanah.], vegetable marrows, andjinara [Traditional Jewish dish made by pickled vegetable marrows, oil, salt and wild plums, which is served on Rosh Hashanah.]. My father worked and my brother and I went to help carry the bags. Usually villagers came to the market selling their produce. I was sent to buy only yogurt from a Jewish dairy shop. My father bought butter, cottage cheese, cheese and yellow cheese from a Whiteguard - Nikolay. In 1938 some cousins of ours emigrated to Israel and left us their house, but later they sold it to another family. I do not know their names, they are from the Geron family on my grandmother's side and the house was sold through some middlemen to Nikolay and Olga Spasovi. They did not have any children. They were communists, at that time my brother also joined the Union of Young Workers (UYW) - the youth organization of the Bulgarian Communist Party. We did not have a radio because we did not have the money to buy one. But they did and we all listened to the news and knew what was going on. We discussed the developments and talking with Nikolay and Olga, my father who was a Zionist and a religious man, became a communist and a supporter of the partisans. We hid in the house some of their illegal friends.