Leontina Arditi

This is me playing the violin. The photo was taken in Sofia in 1943. My father Samuil Moisey Arditi brought me up well. He taught me not to get dead set against anybody and anything. One of his major gestures towards me was that he sold his wedding-ring in order to buy me a violin. He felt I had an ear for music; I was only four then. The neighbors reproached him for this, because 'a musician can't make a living for a family', especially if the musician is a girl. My violin teacher was uncle Kamen, the famous violinist Kamen Popdimitrov, my father's friend from his years in France. In Bet Am I played the violin in Mario Menashe Brontsa's orchestra - we had a wonderful big symphony orchestra. I was small then and I remember vaguely the famous manifestation of 24th May 1943 when the Jews marched to tell the King not to expel them. As a matter of fact 24th May,

the day of the Slavic alphabet, as well as of the saint brothers Cyril and Methodius, who created it, was my favorite holiday. I was 14 years old then. I remember I had put on my red blouse. Suddenly the people who participated in the events started running because there was mounted police that scattered them. I was playing in the street; mum came, collected me, brought me home and said: 'Take off this red blouse! You have chosen a bad moment to wear it!' [red as a symbolic color of the communists] It was this day that I first heard of the word 'anti-Semites'. I heard: 'The anti-Semites battered to death the Jews!' I didn't know what it meant; I couldn't even pronounce it. We were six Jewish children, who studied in the Bulgarian school, but nobody bothered us, nobody maltreated us.