

## Shimon Danon's Visit To Buchenwald



This is a photo of my visit to Buchenwald with my colleagues - prosecutors and judges in the 1970s. It was a special group, we were on exchange with our German colleagues - they used to spend their vacation in Bulgaria while we used to spend the vacation there. This is the Buchenwald memorial. During the Holocaust we stayed in Pazardzhik. I would like to emphasize here that a wrong notion exists that the Bulgarian people saved its Jews. I have a slightly different opinion concerning this. I think that Jews in Bulgaria became more confident about their future not because of Bulgarian society as a whole. I cannot deny that there were quite a lot of Bulgarians who were helping Jews for different reasons. Actually, the ones who used to chase our people were rather shocked by the losses of the Germans on the East front. The more the Red Army approached our borders, the more some people felt 'close' to their Jewish compatriots. After the Stalingrad battle they began to fear that retribution would reach them for the things they had done. And they had done awful things. I remember the Brannik boys (only young people) one evening loading up some carts with paving stones and marching in our street. Ours was an entirely Jewish street. There weren't any Bulgarian families there. There were only two Armenian houses: one in the beginning and one in the middle of the street. The youngsters systematically smashed windows and sashes. They only left out the Armenian houses. First they threw one big paving stone to break the window frame and after that - smaller ones - like a hailstorm. A large paving stone broke our bedroom window. We all lay under the beds because glass and stones were falling down and we feared for our lives. On the same night they attacked the Jewish community building as well. Everything was vandalized and robbed. There was a guy, Gogo Dulgia, who usually carried a whip in his hands. We could only go out from 4 to 6 p.m. It was the only time we could buy ourselves something. Everyone who hired Jews had to get special permission. On my mother's side our family suffered great losses. My aunt lost both her sons. Although they had left-wing convictions, they studied in the English College in Sofia. One night, Branniks came to my uncle's place and blackmailed him to give them several million leva within two hours. As he couldn't do it, they killed his children on the same night. The monument that was built in their memory has been ruined by Bulgarian neo-

fascists.