

Ernestin Farhi, Blanka Daniel And Their Sister Sofi



The photo shows my mother Ernestin Farhi (nee Kalmi), her sister Blanka Daniel in the middle and her other sister Sofi. My mother, who was 14 years old at the time, is on the right. Blanka is in the middle. The photo was taken in a studio in Ruse between 1910 and 1915. On the left there is an inscription: village Gelchu, Ruse. On the back of the photo is a seal of the photo studio in French language: Atelier Photographique de S. Geltsch, Rue D`Alexandre, Roustchouk [i.e. Ruse, as the town used to be called]. There is no other notice. My mother was Ernestin Yakov Farhi, née Kalmi [1899?1958]. Born and raised in Ruse, she was a wonderful woman and mother. She knew three languages ? Ladino, Bulgarian and French. She was a great cook. She organized her time perfectly and had time for everything. She could not only do embroidery, but also make things from satin. She could also play the piano and paint. She graduated from the French College in Ruse [Bulgarian-French diplomatic relations date officially from 8th July 1879 when the French Consul Y. Shefer handed his letters of accreditation to King Batenberg. The French subsequently established colleges in Ruse, Varna and Plovdiv. The one in Ruse was founded before the establishment of diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and France because there was a French consul in the town from the time of the Ottoman Empire. French colleges are famous for their good education. There is no information on the number of Jews who studied in these colleges, as they were usually established at Catholic missions.]. The teachers there wanted her to study in the Musical Academy in Bucharest [Romania] because at that time there was no such academy in Bulgaria. My grandfather Yakov Kalmi did not allow it, however, because he thought she would become a 'shafrantia' [meaning a woman of easy virtue]. Instead of leaving for Bucharest when she was 17 years old, she was thus married to my father, who was 34 years old at that time. My mother came to Shumen from Ruse with her fashionable clothes, her refined tastes, the piano, ancient music sheets and her French books, and suddenly found herself in a patriarchal, provincial environment. Being very young at the time her wedding was arranged for financial reasons, she accepted her fate. She never acknowledged to me that the environment in the Farhi family oppressed her. She rarely shared anything and did not like to bare her soul, nor did she require us to confess our

heartaches to her. Nonetheless, all her actions were infused with her own independent spirit. She fought for a long time to free her family from the dictatorship of grandmother Senyora, my father's mother.