

Linka Isaeva With Her Parents



This is my father Jack Natan, my mother Malka Natan and me, photographed in 1936 in Sofia. My father was born in Nova Zagora in 1889. He graduated from the University of Law. After World War I his family moved to Sofia, as the male family members had started some trade there. My mother was born in Constanta, Romania. She met my future father at the wedding of her older sister Charlota. He liked the bride's younger sister. They married in 1923 in Sofia. They had a religious wedding. I was born three years later. My mother always lived in her husband's shadow. When she came to Bulgaria, she didn't know a word of Bulgarian. She started learning the language, but my father used to speak both in Ladino and in Bulgarian with her. He didn't let her speak with me in Romanian, to make sure that I would learn Bulgarian well. Now I feel sorry that I don't know Romanian. As to my mother, she never learned Bulgarian well and regretted that she had no profession. Nevertheless, she was a good housewife and raised my children while I was working, for which I'm very grateful. We always lived in rented lodgings and never owned a house. During the crises at the end of the 1920s, the financial situation of the family wasn't so good. Later, when my father began working as a bank clerk, it improved. He had to pay his debts, accumulated as a result of his unsuccessful trade though, so we never succeeded in obtaining our own house. When he paid back all his debts in 1942, the anti-Jewish laws came into force, and we were compelled to leave Sofia and start from scratch. We always lived in two rooms: one for my parents and the other one for me. We changed our flats six times - three times before 9th September 1944 and three times after. We were forced to do this because we didn't have our own place and constantly had to search for cheaper lodging. The flats weren't furnished, and we moved from one to the next with all our household belongings and furniture. (By the way, it isn't common to rent furnished flats in Bulgaria.) My mother had servants for the heavy housework - they were girls from villages around Sofia. They used to sleep in our house, they were treated as part of the family, and they didn't go home very often. They only did the house cleaning and the washing. Cooking was entirely my mother's responsibility. I remember three or four girls. The girl I remember most clearly was called Giurgia. She was from Sarantsi. We kept very warm relations with those girls afterwards.