

Ida Alkalai With Her Husband's Sister Riri Kalo And Her Younger Son, Zhak Alkalai



This is a photo of me, my husband's sister Riri Kalo and my younger son, Zhak Alkalai. It was taken in Dupnitsa at the beginning of the 1950s.

My husband, Aron Alkalai, and I were very much in love. We have known each other ever since our adolescence. We had a large Jewish company. We got together and went to the cinema. We met at a hill near the town. He was very handsome and they called him 'the baron.' I was a very merry girl and sang very well. In September 1944 Aron went to the war front. He had enlisted as a volunteer.

Then I gave him a lighter as a gift. Before that he had given me a bracelet. I had prepared my gift beforehand and hid it from my parents. Lighters were quite different then and we called them 'tsigarnik'. I was very worried when Aron and my friends went to the labor camps and after 9th September 1944, to the front. But the Jews in Bulgaria felt obliged to take part in the war against fascism and enlisted as volunteers. We got married in 1945. We only married before the registrar. I think that there were no religious weddings then. After we got married, Aron insisted that I shouldn't work, so I stayed at home for some years. I did the housework and looked after our two children.

My husband was also born in Dupnitsa. He graduated from the vocational school in the town. He has a master's certificate for a cobbler. His father, Nissim Alkalai, was a much respected man in the town. He worked as a clerk in the Jewish Bank until it was closed in 1940. His family members were very intelligent. His uncle, Mois Alkalai, was a headmaster and teacher in the Jewish school and the chairman of the Jewish municipality in Dupnitsa during World War II

After we got married, our two children were born: Nissim and Zhak. They weren't raised especially in the spirit of the Jewish traditions, although after 9th September 1944 we continued to celebrate the Jewish holidays. You can say that they know the Jewish traditions well. We always celebrated Pesach. We lived with the family of my husband. His father read the Haggadah. The other holidays weren't very strictly observed, probably only Yom Kippur, when we fasted. Our children don't understand and can't speak Ladino.