Rebeca Assa

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- **Family background**

I was born on March 24th 1922 in Plovdiv. My ancestors were born, and lived, in Bulgaria. My father's parents were born in Plovdiv. Both my grandfathers had died before I was born, and that's why I know almost nothing about them.

My maternal grandfather was named Rahamim Ilel, and he was also born in Plovdiv. Only my maternal grandmother, who was named Rashel, was born in Karlovo [a small town in Central Bulgaria]. My grandmother had moved to Plovdiv, and she met my grandfather there and they got married.

My paternal grandmother, Perla Benvinisti - I don't remember her maiden name - had been a professional cook and she cooked for the rich families, for weddings and other celebrations. She was very popular among the rich Jews.

My [maternal] grandmother had died when she was 75 years old in the house where I lived with my mother and father. Both my grandmothers wore scarves on their heads so that the hair remained hidden.

My paternal grandmother lived with her older son, Rahamin in Plovdiv - according to the tradition he was the one to take care of his mother. The house belonged to Rahamin's wife. Grandmother also lived with her other son, Mihael, and in the end, my mother took her to live with us.

My mother's name was Lora - nee Ilel, Benvinisti after her husband. She was born in 1900. I remember that she used a sewing machine to sew sheets and clothes that were sold in shops later. She didn't get enough money from that; they used her as a cheap labor force.

She went to work so that she could help my father, who was a shoemaker and repaired shoes. His name was ?air Benvinisti. My mother had a brother who had gone to the United States in 1930. I have cousins there but I don't know them.

My father went to the Jewish school till the 4th class. The funniest thing was that even when he was 80 years old, he still remembered the names of all the 32 classmates he had there. He used to recite those names on each family gathering and that always impressed and amused us very much. Both my parents were literate. My father's favorite book was about Vasil Levski 1.

My father had a sister, Sultana Benvinisti, who also went to the United States to live with her fiancé Marko Amar. They were together for a long time in Bulgaria and they even had a child, Aron, but her fiancé suddenly left for the USA.

Everybody then thought that he had abandoned her after she had lived with him for eight years, but one day a telegram arrived saying that he would wait for her at the New York airport. My aunt's farewell was impressive.

I remember that my paternal grandmother lived in a small house and received a lot of congratulations for finally managing to marry her daughter off. Aron is as old as me, but I don't know anything about him. I remember a street with many cabs and many people in them who had come to see Sultana off to the airport.

The whole of Plovdiv had gathered. Before that my father had gone to some rich Jews to ask for money so that he could help her leave. Mutual aid is really great between Jews.

- **Growing up**

The first house I lived in was in the Marasha quarter. I was born there in 1922. That was the poorest quarter in Plovdiv. It was a place with small, two-floor houses situated on top of each other. The poorest people lived on the first floor, and the richer, on the second.

We lived on the second floor, only because my father had work. The owner of these houses was a Jew and he rented out houses. The houses were situated in such a way that they formed a large inner yard. Only Jews lived there.

We moved into another house in the central part of the town in 1936. My father worked in a small shop where there was also a bakery. The Jews went to have their shoes repaired. We rented the floor above the bakery. The house was next to the Jewish school.

We lived in two rooms on the second floor. We, the children, lived in the bigger room and our parents, in the smaller one. We also had a small kitchen where my mother used to cook. The house was quite unstable and I was afraid to go out on the metal balcony because I thought I might slip and fall down.

Anyway, there was electricity in the house. When they closed the bakery where my father used to work, a good friend of ours, a Bulgarian, placed a barrack at my father's disposal and he continued to work there. We had many acquaintances that were Bulgarians. They helped me a lot, and we loved each other very much. Plovdiv was a nice town and people there were very friendly.

There was a man, Hadji Haim, who lived next to the place where my father worked. He himself had seen Vasil Levski.

We were very proud of the fact that we knew him. This man lived in the biggest building in Plovdiv. It had three floors, and there was a grocery on the ground floor where we could buy on credit.

My father was called to appear before an army commission in the town of Karlovo. He was very short and thin and they didn't accept him into the army. He went back to Plovdiv on foot because he didn't have money for a train ticket. He was a healthy man and lived to an old age.

We usually went on excursions out of Plovdiv in the summer. We traveled in a taligi [long carriage]. We used to go to some village near Plovdiv - usually to Komatevo. We didn't have our own carriage, and we usually hired one to transport us.

We talked both in Ladino and Bulgarian at home. Sometimes we even spoke the two languages simultaneously - for example my mother said something to me in Bulgarian and I answered her in Ladino. My mother tongue was Ladino.

Unfortunately my children don't know Ladino. They understand what we are talking about, but they can't talk in that language. I speak Ladino and Hebrew. I used to speak Ladino to the children of my age before I started school.

This language has always been closer to me. Later I spoke with my husband in Bulgarian. His parents had spoken Ladino but he didn't learn the language because he graduated from a German school. There was a secondary school up to the 7th class in Plovdiv where they taught German.

The Jewish school also went up to the 7th class. My two brothers and I graduated from the Jewish school in Plovdiv. I didn't know many words in Bulgarian when I started school. I used Ladino words when I had to write an essay, because we only spoke Ladino at home.

I learnt Bulgarian only after I started school. We only completed the 4th class [the equivalent these days is the 7th grade], as our parents didn't have enough money to support us. We studied French, Hebrew, Jewish history and Bulgarian history in the Jewish school.

They made us go to the synagogue every morning. We studied up to the 7th class in the Jewish school - that means secondary education according to the Bulgarian educational system. The school was situated in the central part of the town.

My older brother Albert Mair Benvinisti was born in Plovdiv in 1924. He studied at the Jewish school up to the 4th class. He started to work as a laborer in shops and warehouses from a young age. When he was young he worked in a shop and after that, he left for Israel in 1948.

He fixed himself nicely there - he works in an Israeli company dealing with machine production. My brother got married in Bulgaria, then lived in Israel for 13 years, and then came back to Bulgaria again. He is a Bulgarian citizen at the moment but he lives in Israel most of the time.

He travels to Bulgaria often because of his work and sometimes stays here for a couple of months. He earns more money in Israel. He also worked as a truck driver in Bulgaria and used to gather the leftovers from the restaurants, transporting them to some farm.

My younger brother Rahamin Mair Benvinisti was born when I was five - in 1927. We lived on 27, Bratia Miladinovi Street then. I remember his delivery very clearly. There was a midwife in the quarter where we lived. Her name was Mazal [luck in Hebrew].

She assisted in the childbirth of both my older children. My younger brother studied in a Bulgarian school and he had a secondary-school education. He worked as a laborer in shops and warehouses, he used to repair shoes - he did that in Israel also.

My younger brother did a thoughtless thing: he went to Uruguay in 1949, after he had spent a year in Israel. He thought that he would succeed in [South] America but the fact was that he didn't have any particular education.

He was only a great specialist in repairing shoes and that was how he made his living. He's retired now and wants to come back to Bulgaria, but he can't because he can't receive his pension here. This is possible only in Israel.

My mother and father considered themselves modern people and didn't observe the kashrut but we performed the ritual on Easter. I remember that my father didn't want to eat from the tough matzah and secretly bought fresh bread for himself. He didn't go to the synagogue.

He thought that wasn't necessary. Only my mother went there, but mostly to meet some people, or show off some of her new clothes. Women used to sit on the balcony in the synagogue. That was considered the elite.

Every Pesach, my mother and father bought suits for both my brothers and, whatever dress I wanted, for me. The used to take credit from the bank and then pay it off. They always bought us new shoes, too.

We used to gather at my father's younger brother Isak for Pesach, as he was considered to be the most prosperous in the family because he worked in a factory. Three families used to gather then - ours, my uncle's and the one of my father's other brother, David.

That uncle of mine came from the town of Haskovo where another family had adopted him. We had to keep it secret whenever he came because he had been sold in Haskovo on the condition that he wouldn't ever see his mother.

Anyway he used to come and see her secretly. His foster parents were rich people and my father's brother risked them giving him up because he used to come to Plovdiv. My paternal grandmother's family lived in misery and that's why they had to give their child away.

We used to lay a white tablecloth for Pesach, and we also had special dishes that my mother only cooked on this holiday and she called them 'lalosa'. When we went to celebrate our Easter with some of our relatives, my mother used to take those dishes again.

My father's older brother Mihael used to read the prayer. I could also say the Haggadah because I had learnt it at the Jewish school. We had a tradition to hide a piece of the matzah [the afikoman], and the children had to look for it around the place.

We believed that the child who found it would be the happiest one during the whole year. This holiday lasts for eight days but we only took off work on the first and the last days, when we went to the synagogue.

My father didn't go to the synagogue - even on Yom Kippur, the holiday of the great absolution. Only my mother went there and she always invited my father to go with her, though she knew his

attitude to that. On this day we weren't supposed to do any work or eat anything the whole day. We weren't even meant to turn on the light.

On Purim holiday the children were given some money so that they could amuse themselves and spend as much money as they could. Every relative who visited us that day, or met us in the street, gave us money.

Our family didn't have the opportunity to buy fruit for the holiday Fruitas 2. My mother's brother Liezer used to help us because he was richer. In my family my father used to buy the bread, and my mother went to the grocery.

The owner of the grocery was a Jew and his name was Rafael. My mother used to put a scarf on, take the basket and go shopping. She could buy on credit in this shop because she couldn't always pay.

My husband is named Moritz Assa and he was also born in 1922. He was from a richer family than mine. He lived nearby and, when I was going out for work in the morning, he also went out so that we could walk together. My husband was studying in the commercial high school in Plovdiv.

We got married in 1941 when we were 19 years old. He came to live in our house when we were just 16. His father had turned him out of home because he was a communist and they couldn't accept me for a daughter-in-law because I wasn't from a rich family.

We moved to 16 Bratia Miladinovi Street in 1936. I met him when I was just 16 years old. I was already pregnant when the chazzan came to marry us. That's why we didn't get permission to marry in Sofia and had to marry at home. The wedding was performed according to the Jewish traditions: with a talamu [Ladino for chuppah] over our heads that made the place holy as in the synagogue.

At this time my husband was involved in illegal activities and was gathering followers of the Revolutionary Youth Union [RYU] 3. He went to the school and agitated young men to become followers of the RYU. The police were looking for him and he used to hide in the homes of his friends - students.

He came to sleep in our home just for one night, on 1st March 1941, after we got married, and then he got arrested. I suspected that the landlord's son, whose name was Berto Garte, had informed the police about him because everybody else in the house was our friend. We met this man again many years later in Israel, but he insisted that it wasn't him that had betrayed my husband.

My husband was a very respected person, and when the policemen led him through Plovdiv the whole town went out to see him. He was fettered in heavy iron chains so that he couldn't run away.

I remember that his legs were hurt, and we managed to hire a carriage to take him from the prison to the court. My husband was in prison in Varna [a town on the coast of the Black Sea] for three years as a political prisoner.

I recall that my brother had worked since he was a little child. I also started work when I was 13 years old. I wanted very much to study at the commercial high school because I liked mathematics a lot. My mother wanted me to become a dressmaker instead.

I opposed that, and found myself a job at a shop in the main street. I started to clean the threads from the finished dresses there. Later, I started to sew with a machine and sewed 17 shirts a day. Of course, the work was shared between the different workers - I used to sew the collars, the other workers, the sleeves or the cuffs, and so on.

The owner of the dressmaker's workshop was a Jew and his name was Baruh. There was a butcher shop, Manevi Brothers, just opposite the place where we worked, and we used to have lunch there. The owner, Mr. Manev, even gave us food for free.

My mother had a treadle sewing machine, Pfaf, that she had bought second hand. This machine is still in good condition in my basement. My mother worked at a tobacco store at first and she was sewing sacks there. As she couldn't bear the smell of tobacco, she started to sew handkerchiefs. After coming back from work, I used to take her place behind the sewing machine while she prepared the meal.

I lived under rent the whole time. Only when my husband became a commercial representative in London in the late 1960s did I understand that the municipality sold apartments, and they let us buy the apartment where we live now. We took credit from the municipality to buy it. All our friends in London were very surprised that we didn't have the opportunity to buy it ourselves.

My mother and father had socialist political convictions. They had always been left-wingers. In the 1930s my father hid people who were illegal and wanted by the police for their extreme pro-communist convictions.

Such people used to take refuge in the Soviet Union at the time and came back after 9th September 1944. 4. Many guerrillas [antifascist orientated members of armed squads] have visited our home in Plovdiv. I remember that one night Malchika came to our house.

He was wearing a squash-hat and he came to instruct us to recruit people to join the party. [Editor's note: Malchika was the nickname of Adalbert Antonov, an active UYW member, who took part in the underground communist movement in Bulgaria. He was caught by the police and later executed.]

We held the gatherings of the Revolutionary Youth Union in a small wood near Plovdiv, and the boys used to hold hands with the girls so that it looked as though we were couples. We did that because the police kept an eye on us. I stopped being involved in illegal activities after my husband went to prison.

We didn't have any concrete ideas against the official authorities; we just wanted the working class to be paid better and have a better influence in the society. That's why we had a club where we used to read The Capital by Karl Marx. These ideas were very popular among young people.

All the young people that came from the villages to look for work in the town became members of RYU. My husband had impressed a great number of people with the antifascist cause. All that was considered illegal then. I remember that he impressed students from the carpentry school in Plovdiv.

He didn't only have troubles with the police because of his convictions: one evening we were walking together with Malchika when suddenly some classmates from the commercial high school

attacked my husband. Malchika and I ran away then, and left him to fight them alone.

There were 32 members of the Revolutionary Youth Union in Plovdiv. That was quite a number for the town. There were wonderful people among them whom I had the honor to know. Malchika, for example, was a very erudite person. Unfortunately many people died in the mountains [the members of the guerrilla squads used to hide out of towns and villages].

- **During the war**

Our state got worse after the 'Nation Defense Law' [Law for the Protection of the Nation] 5 was accepted in 1939. The first anti-Semitic sentiments started to appear and we started wearing badges. The Jews in Plovdiv were not interned; only rich people were moved to ghettos.

Many of them used their money to 'ransom' their chance to escape abroad. So many of the richer Jews from Plovdiv went to live in Western Europe, or in the United States. The situation was very tense - there were 'brannici' [Brannik] 6, and they didn't allow us to go out on the streets freely.

Anyway, there weren't the extreme anti-Semite movements as there were in Germany, but the merchants were afraid to open their shops because Brannik members would break the windows. These were just hooligans - they weren't expressing the attitude of the whole Bulgarian society towards the Jews. In this connection I can say that the Bulgarian people is the wisest and the best one. We lived really badly in the time of Fascism.

Our first son Isak was born in 1942 when my husband had already been sentenced to political imprisonment. I raised my son alone with the help of my father who went on maintaining the whole family during the Holocaust - he worked as a shoe repairer. We couldn't go out, and I could only take my son for a walk outside the front of the door of the house.

A woman whose sons were 'brannici' lived in our house on Bratia Miladinovi Street. She used to have a very good attitude to my family and, as she had a radio, she constantly informed me about the latest developments from World War II.

She was the first to tell me that the Soviet army had entered Bulgaria, and that we were saved. After 9th September 1944, the first Prime Minister, Bagrianov, issued a decree and set free all political prisoners and I was very happy that my husband would be freed at last.

- **Post-war**

My husband came back from the prison in Varna on 8th September 1944. I stood by the window for several days and nights waiting for him to come back. I remember that my younger brother didn't recognize him from the distance, but I ran [to him] immediately and hugged him.

Our first son was born while my husband was in prison - he hadn't seen his father! I remember that when my son was very little he cried from jealousy because I had my head on my husband's knees.

After 9th September 1944, my husband was chosen as a member of the Regional committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party [BCP] and, in 1946, he got a lodging in the main street in Plovdiv - on 1, Kniaz Alexander Street.

My second son, Maer, was born there. My husband worked for free then. After some time my husband's work became more organized and he started to get 40 leva a month. At the same time, my father was working as a shoemaker and supported us financially.

Then, for the first time, the organization Joint 7 came to Bulgaria and they gave clothes to many Jews and Bulgarians. That was the first time I tasted margarine and I found it very delicious. They also gave us many other products such as cheese, rice, butter and powder milk.

My husband went to work in the central committee of the BCP and my two children and I stayed with my mother. My husband and the people around him who dealt with the party business did that almost for free. They were exceptionally honest and motivated ideologically.

My husband was in a party school 8 in Sofia for two years where the future party leaders were trained. Meanwhile, I was living with my parents in Plovdiv. I used to sew at home because we were short of money, and I also distributed food vouchers. My husband Moritz was totally devoted to his ideas. I thought then that this idealism was not absolutely positive because it suggested that those who weren't communists were not human.

The great aliyah in Sofia happened in 1948 - thousands of people left for Israel. My brothers also left then. The older one had already married and had a child at that time.

I moved to Sofia in 1950. There were commissions that distributed lodgings. Such a commission gave me two rooms with the right to use a living room on Klement Gotwald Blvd [today Evlogi Georgiev Blvd].

My landlady had a husband who had been interned as an anti-communist because he had been a rich man. We got along very well with our landlady. I remember that she was very grateful, for I met her husband warmly when he came back from the internment.

Two of my children got married in that house. We moved to the apartment that we live in now - in the Hipodruma quarter - in 1962. I had already started work and was dealing with social activities then.

My parents came to Sofia two years after me because I wanted to work, and my mother came to look after the children. My mother and father easily became residents of Sofia [Sofia Resident] 9. I began to sew shirts and got very little money for that, but it helped us anyway.

My father started work in a co-operation for shoe repair. Our third child, Margo, was born in 1951. When she tuned two, I started work in a dressmaker's, Boyka, where I was promoted to quality controller. I worked there for 13 years and after that, I retired. My husband was sent to London in 1968 as a commercial representative of Bulgaria, and my children and I went there a year later.

We lived in England for five years. My husband was dealing with the whole trade exchange between the United Kingdom and Bulgaria. During our stay in London my husband managed to increase the exchange between the two countries several times over. His colleagues still remember him with respect.

We lived with our three children in London. My daughter married and had a baby at that time. I used to look after her baby in London. My older son also got married and gave me his child, Moritz,

to look after.

All my five grandchildren speak perfect English. After we came back, we stayed in Bulgaria for eight years, and then went to London again because my husband was sent there as a commercial representative.

My older son Isak graduated from the university in Kiev, Ukraine. He went to work in Vienna, Austria, as an engineer, and he speaks English and German perfectly. After the political changes in Bulgaria in 1989, he went to Israel and hasn't come back since.

His son lives in Germany. My younger son, Maer, was born in 1946 in Plovdiv. He graduated from high school in Sofia, and he has a secondary-school education. He is married and has two children, Moritz and Maer. He lives in Sofia and is in the trade business.

One of his sons lives in Israel. My daughter Margarita was born in Sofia in 1951. She also has a secondary school education - she graduated in Sofia. She has a family and two daughters, Tzveta and Lora, and she is a clerk. All my children are married to Bulgarians.

I have been to Israel many times. The first time was in 1964. I visited my brother in Jafo for three months. Bulgarian Jews inhabited this town, so I didn't have any problems talking to people there.

There is a great invasion of Russian Jews there now, and the last time I went there I saw many sign-boards in Russian, too. During the wars in Israel [the Six-Day-War 10 and the Yom Kippur War 11], my two brothers lived there.

In 1989, when the political changes began, I was a little afraid that separation between Jews and Bulgarians would occur again, and that the people who had been in prison because of political reasons before 9th September 1944 would be imprisoned again. But it didn't happen.

We went on observing the Jewish holidays after 9th September 1944. There was a period in the 1950s when Zionism was declared to be equal to fascism and we were a little scared then. It was questionable whether Jews could take leaders' positions in the BCP.

I am very pleased of what Liudmila Zhivkova 12 did. She opened Bulgaria to the rest of the world and contacted the United States first. That was a very brave act for the time. I knew her personally from the time in London, and she seemed a very humble person to me.

After the political changes in Bulgaria from 10th November 1989 13, the Jewish community gained a lot of freedom. We had the freedom to meet as much as we wanted. During the communist rule there was a period when we were forbidden to meet in the Jewish community club.

The Jewish community is very well organized nowadays. We have different occasions in different clubs that we visit regularly. We have a Health club where we do physical exercises, a Ladino club where we practice the Ladino language, and a Hebrew club where we learn Hebrew.

We also have a club named Golden Age where we gather every Saturday - we listen to lectures and music, or discuss different topics. Many people are interested in studying Ladino and go to this club.

My husband Moritz Assa is the president of the Jewish organization Shalom in Sofia and he actively participates in the Jewish community life. The Jewish organization in Sofia takes care of the activities of the Jewish Culture Home, which offers us a rich cultural program, many social benefits and opportunities for meetings.

All the Jewish Culture Home activities are supported by different foundations and mostly by the American association Joint, and the English one, Lauder [the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation]. We also receive funds from restituted Jewish real estate.

I also visit the community regularly. We take care of the poor and people in need there. Joint foundation also helps us a lot. We collect clothes and distribute them among the poorer families and orphanages. Our club develops a wide range of charity activities. We also have an old people's home where we look after lonely, elderly people.

I live very freely now. Every Saturday I go to the club where we listen to lectures from different professors. The last lectures were about Judaism so that we, the Jews, got to know about the sages of our history. I find the book that describes the most famous Jews in the world very interesting. The club's main activities are supporting mutual aid between Jews and the organizing of educational lectures.

- **Glossary:**

1 Levski, Vasil (1837-1873)

Bulgarian national hero. Vasil Levski was the principal architect of the campaign to free Bulgaria from the oppression of the Ottoman Empire. Beginning in 1868, Levski founded the first secret revolutionary committees in Bulgaria for the liberation of the country from the Turkish rule. Betrayed by a traitor, he was hanged in 1873 as the Turks feared strong public resentment and a possible attempt by the Bulgarians to free him. Today, a stone monument in Sofia marks the spot where the 'Apostle of Freedom' was hanged.

2 Fruitas

The popular name of the Tu bi-Shevat festival among the Bulgarian Jews.

3 Revolutionary Youth Union (also called the Union of Young Workers)

A communist youth organization, which was legally established in 1928 as a sub-organization of the Bulgarian Communist Youth Union.
After the coup d'etat in 1934, when the parties in Bulgaria were banned, it went underground and became the strongest wing of the BCYU. Some 70% of the partisans in Bulgaria were members of it. In 1947 it was renamed Dimitrov's Communist Youth Union, after Georgi Dimitrov, the leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party at the time.

4 9th September 1944

The day of the communist takeover in Bulgaria. In September 1944 the Soviet Union unexpectedly declared war on Bulgaria. On 9th September 1944 the Fatherland Front, a broad left-wing coalition, deposed the government.
Although the communists were in the minority in the Fatherland Front, they were the driving force in forming the coalition, and their position was strengthened by the presence of the Red Army in Bulgaria.

5 Law for the Protection of the Nation

A comprehensive anti-Jewish legislation in Bulgaria was introduced after the outbreak of World War II. The 'Law for the Protection of the Nation' was officially promulgated in January 1941.
According to this law, Jews did not have the right to own shops and factories. Jews had to wear the yellow star; Jewish houses had to display a special sign identifying it as being Jewish; Jews were dismissed from all posts in schools and universities.

The internment of Jews in certain designated towns was legalized and all Jews were expulsed from Sofia in 1943. Jews were only allowed to go out into the streets for one or two hours a day. They were prohibited from using the main streets, from entering certain business establishments, and from attending places of entertainment.

Their radios, automobiles, bicycles and other valuables were confiscated. From 1941 on Jewish males were sent to forced labor battalions and ordered to do extremely hard work in mountains, forests and road construction. In occupied Macedonia and Thrace the Bulgarians treated the Jews with exceptional cruelty.

The Jews from these areas were deported to concentration camps, while the plans for the deportation of Jews from Bulgaria was halted by a protest movement launched by the vice-chairman of the Bulgarian Parliament.

6 Brannik

Pro-fascist youth organization. It started functioning after the Law for the Protection of the Nation was passed in 1941 and the Bulgarian government forged its pro-German policy. The Branniks regularly maltreated Jews.

7 Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)

The Joint was formed in 1914 with the fusion of three American Jewish committees of assistance, which were alarmed by the suffering of Jews during WWI. In late 1944, the Joint entered Europe's liberated areas and organized a massive relief operation.
It provided food for Jewish survivors all over Europe, it supplied clothing, books and school supplies for children. It supported cultural amenities and brought religious supplies for the Jewish communities.

The Joint also operated DP camps, in which it organized retraining programs to help people learn trades that would enable them to earn a living, while its cultural and religious activities helped re-establish Jewish life. The Joint was also closely involved in helping Jews to emigrate from Europe and from Muslim countries.

The Joint was expelled from East Central Europe for decades during the Cold War and it has only come back to many of these countries after the fall of communism. Today the Joint provides social welfare programs for elderly Holocaust survivors and encourages Jewish renewal and communal development.

8 Party Schools

They were established after the Revolution of 1917 in Russia, in different levels, with the purpose of training communist cadres and activists. Subjects such as 'scientific socialism' (Marxist- Leninist Philosophy) and 'political economics' besides various other political disciplines were taught there. After WWII such institutions were established throughout the Soviet-dominated Eastern European countries.

9 Sofia Resident

In the years between 1944-1990 it was difficult to get a residence in the capital Sofia, as in accordance with the Bulgarian law at that time the resident ship was restricted, i.e. one could not change easily his place of living.
A man with no residence permit in Sofia was not allowed to live there permanently (only temporarily, being a university student, for example). After the political changes in 1989 these restrictions were removed.

10 Six-Day-War

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three.
Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended.

The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

11 Yom Kippur War

The Arab-Israeli War of 1973, also known as the Yom Kippur War or the Ramadan War, was a war between Israel on one side and Egypt and Syria on the other side. It was the fourth major military confrontation between Israel and the Arab states.

The war lasted for three weeks: it started on 6th October 1973 and ended on 22nd October on the Syrian front and on 26th October on the Egyptian front.

12 Zhivkova, Ludmila (1942-1981)

daughter of the general secretary of the Bulgarian communist party, Todor Zhivkov and a founder of the international children assembly 'Flag of Peace'. In 1980 Zhivkov appointed her a chairwoman of the Commission on science, culture and art.
In this powerful position, she became extremely popular by promoting Bulgaria's separate national cultural heritage. She spent large sums of money in a highly visible campaign to support scholars, collect Bulgarian art, and sponsor cultural institutions.

Among her policies was closer cultural contact with the West; her most visible project was the spectacular national celebration of Bulgaria's 1,300th anniversary in 1981.

When Zhivkova died in 1981, relations with the West had already been chilled by the Afghanistan issue, but her brief administration of Bulgaria's official cultural life was a successful phase of her father's appeal to Bulgarian national tradition to bind the country together.

13 10th November 1989

After 35 years of rule, Communist Party leader Todor Zhivkov was replaced by hitherto Prime Minister Peter Mladenov who changed the Bulgarian Communist Party's name to Socialist Party.
On 17th November 1989 Mladenov became head of state, as successor of Zhivkov. Massive opposition demonstrations in Sofia (with hundreds of thousands participants) calling for democratic reforms followed from 18th November to December 1989.

On 7th December the 'Union of Democratic Forces' (SDS) was formed consisting of different political organizations and groups.