

## Mayer Rafael Alhalel On The Danube Coast



This photo has some documentary value because you can see the yellow star I was forced to wear during the Holocaust. The photo was taken in the old Jewish quarter Kaleto, where our ghetto was. It was also taken right after the big flooding of the town on 4th March 1942, which is still remembered as a terrible natural disaster and you can see behind me the destroyed dikes through which the water flooded the town. I was still a student then. Between 12,000 and 13,000 Bulgarians, Turks, Wallachians, Armenians and Jews, all lived in Vidin. Each of those had their own neighborhood. The Jews were only 1,200 and lived in the Jewish neighborhood Kaleto. In the past Kaleto had been surrounded by a ditch and that was the whole town. But in the beginning of the 20th century, the town expanded and only Jews remained in Kaleto. During the Law for Protection of the Nation it was turned into a Jewish ghetto. That's why only a few Bulgarians lived there and we got along well with them. During the Holocaust Colonel Marko Borandjiev, the head of the Vidin garrison, lived here. He was also nice to us. His daughter was a classmate of ours. Although she was a Legionnaire, she sympathized with us. During the Holocaust the Bulgarians always helped us, although our closest neighbor was a fascist. His name was Dimitar Chomorev. He had a son and a daughter. His wife had died. Dimitar Chomorev believed in Hitler's ideas. His son was a admirer of English culture. His daughter was a Legionnaire. But we respected each other as neighbors. We always helped each other, and we never discussed our different ideologies. During the Law for Protection of the Nation in 1942 the radio sets owned by Jews were confiscated and the others in the town sealed. We would invite Dimitar and the other neighbors to play tablanet [a card game] at home, while a Jewish boy, interned from Sofia to Vidin, and I went to Dimitar's home to listen to the news on the radio. His radio hadn't been confiscated or sealed because he worked in the police force.