

Leontina Arditì's Home In Koniovitsa, Sofia



This is our house in Koniovitsa, a miserable Jewish residential district in Sofia. The picture was taken in the 1940s. I had a very happy childhood. I learnt how to walk in Dolni Dabnik, and began going to school in Mezdra. My father worked in a mill and my mother was a housewife but she managed to breed simultaneously two geese, twenty hens and God knows how many ducks. My mother used to stuff the geese with maize so that they would get fat. She had learnt that from her mother. My poor granny Mazal had a strange nickname: the Courtier. The history of her nickname was the following: She was close to a cook of King Boris III, who liked meals with goose very much. Once her friend the cook told my grandmother: 'Mazalika [diminutive from Mazal], if you can bring me four geese a month you will earn a lot of money'. She didn't earn much money, but she kept on taking four geese a month to the palace, stuffing them with maize the same way my mother showed me. The geese swell this way only for a month or two. I have lived between two classes. I remember that the Jews were on friendly terms with the Bulgarians as well as with the other nations. There were as many Jews at a Jewish celebration as were Bulgarians, Turks and even gypsies. As a whole, I've grown up in the surrounding of horses, carts, hens, gypsies, Turks, Wallachians, Russian guardsmen. I've grown up in a healthy atmosphere. We are talking about my childhood years in Mezdra. It was a small town with some 2,000 to 3,000 inhabitants, where no other Jews lived except my family. And I never heard offenses. When my family moved to live in Sofia I was growing up in the poor Jewish quarter Koniovitsa. We lived in the house of my maternal relatives and it looked very bad. It consisted of a primitive room with a small corridor, without running water and electricity, and still five or six people lived there. When we got interned we went to live there for a while again. Then we had to go to Dupnitsa.