

## The Varsano Family



In this photo is the Varsano family. In the first row, from right to left are Olga Varsano (nee Almozino) - my mother, Bitush Varsano - my father and Berta Nousan - my sister-in-law Tsivi's mother. In the second row, from right to left are Stela (Ester Galvy, nee Varsano) and Beka (Rebeka Varsano), my sisters, Tsivi - my sister-in-law, Isak's wife and I, Roza Anzhel.

There is an authentic inscription on the back of the photo in black ink. '27th February 1944, Vratsa. Dear relatives, as Dora is leaving I am sending you this photo so that you can see us. The ones with inscriptions are my daughters and the other girl is Isak's fiancée with her mother. Isak is not in the photo because he's in the army. We are kissing you all. Send us a letter if possible. We are all in good health. Bitush.'

On the front of the photo there is a stamp of photo Artona, Sofia, and the back looks like a postcard. The photo was taken in a studio. Dora is the wife of my husband Larry's brother - Isak.

Our family was interned to Vratsa in accordance with the Law for the Protection of the Nation, the comprehensive anti-Jewish legislation initiated after the outbreak of World War II. The train was overcrowded - cattle trucks, we were carrying clothes, we had even taken the sewing machine, mattresses to sleep on. Can you imagine how much luggage we, the women, were carrying and were dragging to the railway station in order to move to Vratsa? We traveled all night long. That was the first time I had been on a train.

At the very station we were awaited by policemen and military officers and we were accommodated in the building of the school which was on the way to Vratsata [the 'Vratsata' site, which is not far from the town of Vratsa and the name literally means 'doors'], they called it 'kiumiura' [the charcoal]. We were accommodated in a classroom, how shall I put it, do you know what packed like sardines means - we were sleeping man to man. There wasn't enough room.

After a while we started looking for lodgings because we were given permission to do so. So we went to live on Tsar Krum Street. We were living in a cellar there - in a basement. There lived a lot

of people - my mother and Tsivi and Stela and Beka. My father was in Somovit. Before the internment they had arrested him and sent him to Somovit. Opposite our place there was a Turkish bath house, which wasn't working, and there were rooms for rent. There we rented a room for my future mother-in-law who had been interned to Lom alone and we took her from Lom to Vratsa. So we helped her to settle down there, so that when her son came back from the camp he would have somewhere to live together with her.

We had to pay rent but in order to pay this rent we had to work, we didn't have money. There were work restrictions for us. But my mother was woman of strong character. She called one of our neighbors, who lived just opposite us and offered her to sew a dress for her because I was very skillful, and asked to tell her relatives and acquaintances about my skills if she liked the result. Then this woman brought some striped fabric and I sewed a dress for her to wear when visiting friends. The ends of the stripes met the so-called herringbone cloth. She was extremely pleased with the result. She was the wife of a lawyer and after that all her friends started calling on us. They came to bring the cloth and we only worked.

All the girls helped, Stela, and Tsivi, we used to even sew at the light of the gas lamp. We used to sew until we stopped seeing anything. We didn't have a mirror for the women to look at themselves. We used the window for those purposes. And we were making our living that way. It doesn't mean that we had a lot of work but at least we got some money to pay the rent.