

Victor And Ester Baruh



This is a photo of my wife, Ester Baruh, nee Asher, and me on my 70th birthday in 1991. The picture was taken in Sofia. On 39 Sveti Naum Street, where nowadays my son Valeri lives, my neighbor was Chavdar Kiuranov [Bulgarian politician, member of BCP and its successor, the Bulgarian Socialist Party] and we were both members of the Klub za Glasnost i Preustroistvo. We built the apartment house together with his brother Todor Kiuranov and the artist Marko Behar. When the Berlin Wall fell down we lived with expectations but now after 10th November 1989 a second great disappointment came - after the disappointment of the years following 9th September 1944 [communist seizure of power]. A miserable situation - you can't even buy a book. The life of old people is very hard: I mean the current financial situation. My wife Ester was a teacher in Biology. Both my children, Valeri and Shelly grew up without being educated in the Jewish traditions - it's a pity that I didn't instill them in my family. Maybe my ideas from those times

had influenced this decision. Valeri graduated from Sofia Technical University with a degree in refrigerator engineering, and Shelly graduated from Sofia University in Bulgarian philology. My wife died in 1997 and now I live with Shelly and her daughter, Ada Evtimova. She is 21 and is now a student at the University of National and World Economy. They accept the Jewish traditions willingly and with great interest. I attend some activities at the Jewish Community Center in Sofia. My children don't speak Ladino and I'm sorry for that because in my family as well as in my wife's family they used to talk in Ladino and many people knew Ivrit at that time. I know Ladino from the conversations that I listened to as a child in my family - my parents took me to weddings, to requiems, to visit some friends of theirs and gradually I learned it. It's a conserved Spanish similar to the Bulgarian in the speech of the people in the Rhodope mountains where some ancient Bulgarian words are preserved. Once in the holiday house of the UBW [Union of the Bulgarian Writers] near Varna I came across a Spanish writer who had come to Bulgaria for an international meeting of writers. One day he was standing by the sea and I said to him, 'Espanoles en la mar' [Spaniards by the sea] - it is a radio program for fishermen in Spain. Then we met in the bar and had a talk and after he went back to Spain he wrote an anecdote of our conversations in ABC newspaper and in the meanwhile he also wrote, 'That man talked to me in Cervantes's language'. The reason for this is that while we were talking about my youth I said, 'Mi mansevez'. 'Mansevez', he said, is a word out of use nowadays. Now they say juventud.'