

Sarina Sabitai With Her Baby



This is a photo of my mother Sarina Sabitai and my eldest brother Israel Israilov, who is very little here. The photo was taken in the yard of the house at Pernik Street, where my parents used to live in 1923. My mother's parents came from the town of Berkovtsa. My mother became orphan at a very early age - her mother died when she was 5 or 6. Her father remarried, but his second wife was a nasty woman who treated my mother very badly. After they got married, my parents went to live in my father's parents' house at Pernik Street. My father earned his living as a plumber and tinsmith. In 1928, a year before I was born, the winter was severely cold. Many water pipes and taps had cracked. That created plenty of work for my father and, putting a lot of efforts into it, he managed to make his fortune. And in the place of the one-roomed house, he built a house with two rooms, kitchen and a toilet inside, which was a great rarity at that time. We had hot water from a coal-heated boiler, too, which my father, being a very skilled craftsman, had connected to the stove. Four children were born in that house - one boy and three girls (including me). The houses in

the Jewish quarter were densely positioned - yard next to yard. Only Jewish families lived around us. There were some Bulgarian families living in the next street, and I had a very good personal friend, whose name was Kristinka. Later on, being teenagers, we used to go out together, too. Our relations [with the non-Jewish neighbors] were always very good. There were, however, such times, when Bulgarian boys teased us with the words: 'Come on, Moshe, go to Palestine!' My mother had taught me to answer: 'O.K., but you don't let us go!' I didn't like those moments, but otherwise people treated us very well. Apart from that, my mother was a very compassionate woman and she would constantly ask me to take leftovers from our food to people who were poorer than us. Our family was comparatively well off because my father had succeeded in changing his fortune through his work as a tinsmith and plumber, and had even managed to open a scrap warehouse. The house he had built was at the corner of Pernik and Positano and for that time, it was one of the best in the quarter. During the winters we used coal for heating and we had a shed full of coal. My mother used to give a bucket of coal to everybody who would ask her for some - she never refused anyone and always showed compassion for those poorer than us. There were many poor people at that time. The poorest Jewish families lived in our quarter. Wealthier Jews lived in the more central part of Sofia.