

Buko Katalan In A Forced Labor Camp



This is a picture of my father, Buko Davidov Katalan, taken in a forced labor camp in the summer of 1942. When the war began and the Law for the Protection of the Nation was promulgated, my father was forced to go to the labor camps for three years - from the beginning of spring until the late fall. All Jewish men were forced to work in these forced labor camps. My father was sent to the Rila or to the Rhodope Mountains near to the borderline with Greece - the villages of Liubimetz and Krushevene - to crush rocks and to build roads. We felt fear in the air, there were talks about where the people who had been interned were sent. I remember clearly how a train full of Hungarian Jews arrived in Kazanlak. It was before our internment in 1943; the echelon stopped in our town and many people came out of the wagons. They were accommodated in the yard of our Jewish school. The local Jews managed to take a lot of them to their homes in order to get them fed and cleaned. A girl came to our house - I shall never forget her although I can't remember her name. She was a beautiful girl of 14 or 15 with a large braid. She was alone, she had no parents and I can still see her red coat with white fur. She stayed for a couple of days at our place; almost everywhere there were several Hungarian Jews. But then they were taken back to the wagons and the train left. Almost all of the Hungarian Jews were annihilated with the exception of those who managed to run away and those who had realized what was to follow.