

Bina Dekalo



This is a photo of me taken in 1946 in Sofia. Then I worked in our Jewish organisation. I was something like an inspector there. There were many problems to be solved, mostly with the Jews who returned from the countryside where they had been interned. I wrote down the people's complaints, requests and petitions. Before 9th September 1944 this was the commissariat on Jewish issues, located in the centre of Sofia on Dondukov Blvd. After 9th September the Jewish Consistory was housed there. It also had other buildings, for example, a beautiful house on the corner of Bacho Kiro Street and Iskar Street, which was donated by a Jew who moved to Israel. Shortly after 9th September 1944 [the day the communists officially took power in Bulgaria] a Jewish cultural and educational organization was established in Sofia. I started working there. This organization solved various problems - accommodating people, who had been interned and returned to Sofia, and distributing clothes and food received from the Joint organization. I was very eager to continue my education in the conservatory, but everything I had experienced during the Holocaust, the hunger and deprivations had affected my vocal capabilities and I could no longer sing in the high pitch range. The first years after 9th September 1944 were, on the whole, poor. We didn't have much money then. The situation in Bulgaria was such that we all received rations for bread. The Joint organization helped the Jews a lot then. An American representative of the organization arrived in Sofia and brought us many new and second-hand clothes, powdered milk, canned food. Then gradually the country stabilized. After the Central Committee of the Communist Party was founded and established itself as leader of the nation, the Joint organization was banished from the country, because they thought that their representative was a foreign agent. All property of the organization was given away to senior homes and other places. Joint had brought to Sofia knitting and sewing machines to give the Jews employment.