

Regina Grinberg, Senyora Geron, Sharlota Levi And Senyora's Son Sami



Starting from the bottom: Sami, the son of my sister Senyora, myself, Regina Grinberg [nee Farhi], and Sharlota, my younger sister. In the end is Senyora, my older sister. We are sitting on the stairs of the smaller of our two family houses in Shumen. The photo was taken in 1943. [During the Second World War] the world around us started to change. People started breaking the windows of Jewish shops, our family shops were closed down and insults were written on our walls. Finally we were made to wear badges [yellow stars]. The Turks who lived around our neighborhood suddenly

became very vicious and started calling us 'chifuti'. We were even forbidden to travel. During the course of the Holocaust my father went completely bankrupt, even losing his vineyard. The head of the police bought it for an insignificant sum of money, but eventually paid us the real price for that vineyard after 9th September 1944. Imagine that. Haim, my sister Senyora's husband, was also broke. He had a glass shop that was closed down by the authorities. He had no money and was forced to sell his clothes. Every year he was sent to labor camps, as were all healthy, young Jewish men. In 1942 I graduated high school and wanted to study abroad, but I was not allowed to travel. I was only permitted to study economics in Varna, but I chose not to. By accident, and much to my good fortune, I met a dental mechanic who offered me work in his laboratory and paid me quite well. At first my father was not happy that I had become a worker, but later he and others started admiring me for finding the job. At that time I had fallen under the influence of socialism, and I became a member of the Bulgarian Communist Party. Life was changing, and so too were our priorities. I realized that things were not as they had been on the Jewish street. I was the youngest of my three sisters, and I can say that I was truly a child of a different generation. My sisters did what their parents expected of them. For example, my elder sister Senyora did not marry out of love. Instead, she followed my mother's advice to trust the decisions of her elders. The family chose Rafi Kohen to be her husband. When the boy came to ask for her hand, she only made a wry face but obeyed. After an engagement that lasted a year [to see if they could live together], they married in the Shumen synagogue.