

Avni Tuncer And His Nephew Moshe Nassi



This photo was taken in Yesilyurt in 1990. Here you can see my father Avni Tuncer and his nephew Moshe Nassi, with a portrait of my grandfather Izak Nassi. My father's elder brother, David Nassi, who was three years younger than Viktorya, was born in 1898 and raised in Romania. The only thing I know about him is this: when he was 17, he volunteered to fight in World War I. He served in the Romanian army and fought from 1915 till 1918. When the war ended, he came home. Three months later, when he turned 20, he was called to do his military service. He tried to explain that he had served in the war as a volunteer for three years, but was told that volunteering was one thing, military service another. He got so infuriated that he ran away, deserting home, family, country, everything. They never heard of him again. One day, 10-15 years ago, my telephone rang. Somebody speaking Spanish - almost as little as me then - said, 'I am Moshe Nassi.' I got terribly excited: it was my uncle David's son calling! He and his wife had come from Israel and were staying at a hotel in Aksaray. I immediately went to fetch them and took them to see my father. Their meeting was very emotional. My father told his newly-found nephew all the things he did not know about our family. He didn't even know that our grandfather's name was Izak, nor that he himself was named after a younger brother of his father, who had died at a young age. We gave him photographs. Moshe, on his part, told us what had happened to David after he left Romania. David crossed to Bulgaria, where he started to work on a farm and married Blanca, the daughter of a Jewish family who also worked there. They had a boy and a girl, whom they named Moshe and Nehama. They emigrated to Palestine before World War II. My cousin Moshe is exactly my age, his sister Nehama seven years younger. When Moshe turned ten, his father died. Their mother raised the children. As they lost their father at a very young age, they did not know much about his family background. I don't know how he found out that we were in Istanbul; apparently, he got our name and address from the Chief Rabbinate. A year after Moshe's visit, his sister Nehama also came and met my father. That encounter was as, if not more, emotional as the earlier one with her brother. Nehama was only three when she lost her father. When she saw my father, therefore, she clasped both his hands and held them for the duration of the meeting. Now, we keep in touch with them by telephone and e-mail.