Regina Grinberg

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Regina's favorite subject at school was mathematics. And indeed, the world that she reflects upon presents itself with mathematical clarity. This is due not only to her good memory, but also to her curiosity, her interest in the new, the unusual and the colorful. In her childhood, she would grab the camera and take pictures, capturing the unique moments that were alive to her. For me, this meeting was particularly interesting for two reasons. Firstly because the details demonstrate the interaction between three cultures - Jewish, Bulgarian and Turkish -and secondly because her life clearly shows the gradual disintegration of a very traditional, patriarchal way of life.

My family background

My name is Regina Emanuil Farhi [now Grinberg through marriage]. I was born on 23rd February 1924 in Shumen. [Editor's note: Shumen is a Bulgarian town in Northeastern Bulgaria where Jews moved as early as 1730. The town was founded in the early Middle Ages as a fortress with a village in the region of Hisarlak. In the 11-12th century it was known as Misionis. The first Jews settled in the town in 1730 with the permission of the local pasha, as Shumen was then under Turkish rule. They lived in some houses in a large yard - something like a ghetto with gates - that was locked every evening. There were four charity organizations in the town at that point in time, two Jewish schools supported by Alliance Israelite and a small synagogue. By 1905 200 Jewish families lived in Shumen, and by 1912 there were 2,000 in addition to 4 Jewish charity organizations and a small synagogue.] My ancestors are Ladino [Sephardi] Jews 1 2. My sisters, Senyora and Sharlota, and their children in Israel researched our family tree and discovered that our roots on our father's side originate in Spain and those on our mother's side come from Venice. I cannot say how they discovered this information, as I only know that my cousin Yako Farhi went to Spain to research

this.

I remember my maternal great-grandmother, but I cannot recall her name. I called her Bizvava, which in Ladino means 'grandmother of my mother.' When I was sick she came to my bed and told me stories and spent whole days beside me.

The mother of my mother, my grandmother Sara Ashkenazi [Kalmi through marriage], lived in Ruse but was originally from Shumen. We called her 'Gran mama.' She was a beauty with blue eyes and black hair. She dressed very stylishly and everything in her house was very neat and arranged with a European taste. I remember her well because she visited us very often, and every year I spent a month with her in Ruse. She was a great housewife. Everything had to be spotless; the blankets had to be starched and everything done as it should. I remember her nice big house, which was close to the Danube. It was not in the Jewish neighborhood. It had exquisite furniture, including a particularly interesting room with beautiful mirrors. The river brought a more open atmosphere into the house, compared to the one in Shumen, at least. Ships were sailing all the time, military men in elegant uniforms arrived, and women were dressed in the latest fashion. The streets were always full of people 3.

My grandmother's husband, grandfather Yakov Kalmi, rarely came to Shumen. His familial roots are in Ruse, and I remember him from my visits to that city. He was always singing songs. He was a 'sarafin' when he was young, and he got quite rich. [Editor's note: a 'sarafin' was a kind of a money dealer. He or she exchanged various currencies. At that time, in addition to banks, private individuals such as these could obtain a bank license and make such financial operations.] After the wars, namely the [First] Balkan War 4, the Inter-Allied [Second Balkan] War 5 and World War I 6, he sold lottery tickets. During the Holocaust he made notepads, working right up until his death in 1948. I recall that one day he gave me a lottery ticket and told me that I would win something. I did indeed win something.

Grandmother Sara had four daughters, Ernestin [my mother], Blanka, Sofi and Rebeka, and a son, Eliezer. The husband of Tanti [aunt] Blanka was Avram Daniel. He died when their son Leon was six months old [later Leon Daniel would become a famous theater director]. Blanka lived separately from her parents in another family house. She rented a part of the house in order to support herself. Tanti Sofi married Zhak Semantov, who had a glass shop in Shumen. Later he went bankrupt, and the whole family moved to Targovishte [a town located in southeast Bulgaria, approximately 339 km northeast of Sofia] in the 1930s. Tanti Sofi and Zhak had two children, Marko and Sharlota. Later - I do not remember when - they left for Israel.

The third daughter of Sara was Rebeka Kamhi. She died at childbirth. I do not remember the exact date, although it was probably in the 1930s. Shortly after the death of her daughter, my grandmother Sara, upset by the death, also died. I do not remember exactly when. Eliezer Kalmi, her only son, had a shop in Shumen. He also eventually left for Israel and died there. Only Tanti Blanka died in Bulgaria; she passed away in Sofia at the age of 85 in the 1980s.

My paternal grandmother, Senyora Fintsi, was born in Razgrad in 1858 and died in 1930. [Editor's note: Razgrad is a town located in northeast Bulgaria, around 375 km from Sofia. Razgrad was the site of an old Jewish municipality dating back to the 4th century, when there was a cult towards the Semitic God 'El' (synonym of Jehova). No information is available relating to the presence of Jews in the city until the 12th century. In the 13th century the first data regarding Jews settling in the

neighborhood of Varush appeared. By 1865, 9,723 people lived in Razgrad, of whom 90 were Jews. During the Russian-Turkish war the Jews from Razgrad, numbering 234, moved to Varna and Shumen. The Jews who stayed in the town moved from the Varush neighborhood to the Armenian neighborhood and the Turkish neighborhood in the southern part of town. There was one synagogue in town and one Jewish school, where Ivrit was taught. The school was closed in 1923 due to the small number of Jewish families and the lack of resources to pay the teachers.] Her family name through marriage was Farhi. Senyora was a commanding woman. She was the head of the big Farhi family because my grandfather Yakov died long before I was born. He had a ranch 15 kilometers from Shumen and raised 3000 horses there. When Stefan Stambolov 7 issued a law on the possession of land by Bulgarians, however, he was forced to sell the ranch and subsequently died of grief. [Editor's note: there is no information on this particular law, which probably concerned the Vakaf lands and those of Turks who had left Bulgaria.]

My grandparents had five sons, my father Emanuil, my uncles Avram, Yosif, Leon and Sami, and three daughters, my aunts Viza, Reyna and Simha. Avram married Regina, and they had two children, Yako and Sivi. Yosif married Mika and they had three children, Yako, Moni and Estrea. Leon married Sarina and fathered Sami and Jaklina. The fourth son Sami killed himself; I do not remember when. My aunt Viza married Sinto, whose surname I do not remember, and they had three children, Mika, Eliezer and Mati. Reyna married Mamo - I do not know the family name - and they had two children, Sinto and Viki. Simha married Baruh and they had three children, Suzana, Senyora and Nissim.

My grandmother lost her husband very early, when she was 40 years old [in 1898]. My father was 13 years old at the time. She had to be the head of the family and thus had a lot of power over her sons. I remember that when her sons would return home in the evening, for example, they would go to her and tell her how their day went. Together they solved their problems, and she told them who they should consult and where they should study. The family was very stable financially. Senyora's sons had a shop and the business was running smoothly. Our large Shumen family Farhi was thus quite well off.

My parents

It was not accidental that my mother married my father. This is an interesting story, actually. The sister of my grandfather Yakov Kalmi, Reyna Farhi, married the eldest brother of my father, whose name was Avram. He died. According to Jewish tradition, Reyna had to marry the bachelor in the family [many of the interviewees speak about this tradition among Jews. Most of them explain that, on the one hand, this rule was followed in order to keep money in the family. On the other hand, if such a marriage was not possible, the brothers had the obligation to take care of the widow and her children until they were ready to take care of themselves.]. The only remaining bachelor was my father, but since there was such a big age difference between the two, Reyna suggested that my father marry her niece - my mother. In that way the Kalmi family was sure that my mother would be supported.

My mother was Ernestin Yakov Farhi, née Kalmi. Born and raised in Ruse, she was a wonderful woman and mother. She knew three languages - Ladino, Bulgarian and French. She was a great cook. She organized her time perfectly and had time for everything. She could not only do embroidery, but also make things from satin. She could also play the piano and paint.

She graduated from the French College in Ruse 8. The teachers there wanted her to study in the Musical Academy in Bucharest [Romania] because at that time there was no such academy in Bulgaria. My grandfather Yakov Kalmi did not allow it, however, because he thought she would become a 'shafrantia' [meaning a woman of easy virtue]. Instead of leaving for Bucharest when she was 17 years old, she was thus married to my father, who was 34 years old at that time.

My mother came to Shumen from Ruse with her fashionable clothes, her refined tastes, the piano, ancient music sheets and her French books, and suddenly found herself in a patriarchal, provincial environment. Being very young at the time her wedding was arranged for financial reasons, she accepted her fate. She never acknowledged to me that the environment in the Farhi family oppressed her. She rarely shared anything and did not like to bare her soul, nor did she require us to confess our heartaches to her. Nonetheless, all her actions were infused with her own independent spirit. She fought for a long time to free her family from the dictatorship of Grandmother Senyora, my father's mother.

My father, Emanuil Yakov Farhi, and his brothers had two textile shops. At first, after the ranch was sold, the large Farhi family had dairy farms. Gradually they abandoned them - I do not know why - and started trading with textiles. One of the shops in the center of Shumen is still owned by the family to this day. The other one was sold.

My father, a Ladino Jew, had a basic primary education and took part in the Balkan War and World War I. He was kind, tolerant and always ready to make a compromise. Everyone loved him because he helped people in many ways. His fellow citizens in Shumen called him 'bai [uncle] Manoli.' He was about 1.80 meters tall, thin, and he never put on weight. He wore suits, and under his trousers he wore a red wool girdle to keep him warm in the large and cold rooms where he worked. I remember that girdle very well; it was probably influenced by Bulgarian culture. He wore it until it was all in pieces, and then he bought a quilted jacket. He balanced the family and never went from one extreme to the other. When my mother got angry because of the family - though that happened rarely - he always found the right way to calm her down. He never missed the minyan, and he was always on time for synagogue services. This was an important duty for him.

I have two sisters, Senyora and Sharlota. Senyora was born in 1915 in Shumen. She is still alive and lives in Israel. She graduated from the French College in Ruse. In 1936 she married Haim Geron, who had a glass shop. They have two children, Sami and Ernestin. In 1949 they left for Israel. Now my sister has a lingerie shop in Yafo and, although she is 90 years old, she still goes there once in a while. As a child Senyora was a very beautiful girl - tall, slim and blue-eyed. She dressed elegantly, but not extravagantly, given that our mother taught us not to strive to stand out among the others. She was very sociable, and that quality was of great help to her in the business she ran later.

Sharlota was born in 1919. She graduated from a vocational school, but I do not remember where. [Editor's note: At that period the Agriculture Ministry established several vocational schools with various profiles and professional courses. But at the same time this name was also used in reference to economy schools, later called economy secondary schools. It is not clear which kind of school is meant in the text.] She married Nissim Levi in 1942-43. They lived in Sofia and had two children, Avram and Ernestin. The whole family left for Israel in 1949. Despite the early death of her husband in Israel, Sharlota did not start working and chose to remain a housewife.

Growing up

The Farhi family, as I have said, was well off. Food was always aplenty, and we always had a lot of clothes. Given this relative freedom, everyone was able to decide how much they wanted to study. All of my father's brothers and their families lived in four old family houses. My grandmother lived in the biggest house. I remember that we also lived there at first. Then we moved into the smaller house that was alongside it, and my uncle Yosif and his family lived with my grandmother. The small house had three rooms. My parents lived in one of the rooms, my sister and I in the living room, and my eldest sister was sent to study at the French College in Ruse. We also had a guestroom. The toilet was in the yard, a special building covered with bricks. It was used by those who lived in both the big and the small house. It had separate compartments for the men, the women and the children.

When a part of Uncle Yosif's family left for Palestine in the 1930s, we went back to the big house. I remember that Uncle Yosif, who could not bear the fact that his eldest son Yako - influenced by Zionism 9 - left for Palestine instead of inheriting the family business, died shortly thereafter. With his death, that of his wife Mika in 1934 and his daughter Estrea in 1935, my family moved into the big house. I lived there until I was eleven years old.

The furniture in the small house was stylish; Vienna chairs covered with red plush, large extending tables, wardrobes and chandeliers. We had electricity installed in 1928. We installed it the same year it was introduced in Shumen, and the gas lamps remained only as decorations. There was a piano in both the small and the big house. My mother had brought with her valuable music sheets and her whole library from Ruse. She also had a lot of French books.

My mother Ernestin knew three languages, but since she communicated mostly with my father's family, she spoke mainly Ladino. My father, his brothers and later my sisters and I read newspapers and books in Bulgarian but spoke mainly Ladino amongst ourselves. We spoke with the servants, the doctor and the workers who took care of the house in Bulgarian or in Turkish, having studied these languages in the Jewish school.

My father loved reading newspapers, and our house was full of them. I particularly remember the newspaper edition that mentioned the death of Hristina Morfova 10, the famous Bulgarian singer who died in a car accident. I could hardly read at that time, nor had I ever seen an opera, but her death was discussed a lot at home and I was very impressed. I went to the opera for the first time 20 years later, when I came to study in Sofia.

Both of the houses in which we lived shared a yard. It was quite large and full of orchards, vegetable gardens, trees, vines and a large oak tree. My father and my uncles loved to work in the garden after work. This relaxed them. We also had a vineyard outside town that was looked after by a Turkish man, which enabled us to make our own wine. We also had some big dogs that I often played with.

We always had servants both in the big house [a whole family] and in the small house [one person]. Our first servants were Jews, but later, when they had saved some money, they moved away and were replaced by Turkish girls. After some time these girls were replaced by Bulgarian girls from the nearby villages. At that time it was not very expensive to have servants. The last maid we had was from a village nearby and was one year older than me. She came to us wearing

only one dress and did not even have underwear. We had to provide her with food and clothes. When it was time for her to leave, we gave her clothes, underwear and money. We gave the money to her father.

The small and the big house were in the Jewish neighborhood in Shumen, but not in the center. They were in fact at the end of town, after Tumbul Mosque 11. They were also amongst the first buildings in town, and they now have historic value. My father sold the four houses to a Russian in the 1950s after he decided to leave for Israel, but one month before the date of departure he passed away.

The historical value of my childhood homes was such that the Shumen authorities decided to preserve and restore the houses as historic monuments. The house in which we lived last and the first two houses are still preserved. Out of curiosity, I went to Shumen recently and saw that a family of Albanian origins now lives there. The toilet has also been turned into a house. A Bulgarian who spent a lot of time in Russia came with his wife to Bulgaria, and the two of them live in what was formerly our yard.

Our next house was in the center of the Jewish neighborhood opposite the Jewish community house. Behind this house was our fourth house. At that time my sisters had already married and only the three of us - my mother, father and I - were at home.

At that time Shumen was a quiet, colorful and clean town. The streets were paved and the river-bed [one of the tributaries of the Kamchia River passes through the town] was covered with stones. There were four neighborhoods in Shumen, a Jewish one, a Gypsy [Roma] one, an Armenian one and a Turkish one. Turkish houses surrounded the Jewish neighborhood. There were all kinds of professionals, including leather workers, craftsmen, merchants and tailors. My husband, for example, was from a family of tailors. One of my uncles, Sinto, was also a tailor, but after he married a woman from the Farhi family [Aunt Viza] he received money and opened a two-floor store for ready-made clothes. That was something new for the town at that time [1934- 1935].

In the Jewish neighborhood there was also a grocery and three butchers. The rabbi was mostly responsible for slaughtering the meat, or, more precisely, his assistants [Editor's note: the interviewee probably means the shochet, a trained religious person who could slaughter animals painlessly in compliance with the Torah laws]. Jews owned almost everything in the neighborhood, and we did not look for help outside of the community. Indeed, we lived in a closed world. Only the cafés were Turkish. They served coffee with white sweets while Jews played backgammon and cards. The doctor in the neighborhood was Dr. Smyadovski. If one of us got a fever, he came straight away to treat us. There were, however, no Jewish doctors. Those Jews who did study medicine eventually went to Sofia or to the other big cities. Women in Shumen gave birth in their homes with the help of midwives, who were Bulgarians. I myself was present at the birth of my niece Erna.

The Jewish municipality was led by a Jewish board. I remember that at one point my father was a member of the board, but I do not recall as to exactly when. I think the Jewish municipality collected some membership fee, but I cannot be sure. I do not know the nature of the relationship between the town municipality and the Jewish board in the town. There was a Jewish community house, which stood opposite our last house and often organized evening get-togethers and dances. My parents visited it often, and we often borrowed books from it. I remember that I once borrowed

a book by Edgar Allen Poe, but I got sick and was late returning it. [Poe, Edgar Allen (1809-1849): classical American writer, who virtually created the detective story and perfected the psychological thriller.] A man came from the community house to take it because it had some special value. The Jews in the neighborhood also had a Jewish orchestra, in which my brother-in- law, Haim Geron, played.

The family business went well until the 1940s, and no one wanted to separate from the family. Only my mother decided at some point to move away from the big house in which we lived at first. That was a real revolution. She did not want to have lunch and dinner with all my father's brothers and sisters every day and sought to have her own household. My grandmother felt very hurt after that, and the two of them did not talk for a long time. It was a real matriarchy at my grandmother's home, and even my father felt very uncomfortable in front of the family.

Regardless of that, every Saturday, we, the grandchildren, dressed in our best clothes, went to kiss our grandmother Senyora Farhi's hand as a sign of respect. We waited in line in front of her door. 'Do not come in yet,' my aunt would say, 'so-and-so is inside. Wait for them to go out first.' My grandmother would smoke a shisha when we entered. We came in, bent and kissed her hand without much talking. There was no time for conversations, as the grandchildren were many and she could not talk long with all of us. Those were the last years of her life. When I was six years old, she died of pneumonia [1930]. I remember that moment. All her daughters-in-law were standing beside her silently. I was not present at her funeral because, according to the Jewish rituals in Shumen, children did not go to the graveyards.

After the funeral there was a seven-day ritual [a ritual known as 'insieti' in Ladino - meaning seven days]. Every day the men were invited to eat boiled eggs and pastry. We ate only salty foods and nothing sweet. Later when my uncle died I remember that they brought small, low tables from the synagogue and small stools. A man, like the sexton, brought them in. We call him shammash. Every day during the week the daughters-in-law took turns preparing and serving lunch. Around the table sat only those who were grieving most: brothers, children and other relatives. Their voices were muted, their movements restrained. Someone would read the prayer and the daughters-in-law and more distant relatives brought the food. I do not remember what the ritual foods at the funerals were. After the funeral we ate neither sweets, nor meat, only boiled eggs and salty foods. There was also 'rakia' [brandy].

Our religious life

We observed all rituals during the holidays very strictly until I was seven or eight years old, that is, shortly after my grandmother's death. On Pesach and Rosh Hashanah all the family gathered in the big house around an enormous table with candlesticks, placed in the center of a big hall as big as my apartment today [100 square meters]. We, the children, would dress in special clothes. Every one of us had a chair, and we were even taught how to read the prayers in the Jewish school. We gathered around that large table not only on holidays, but also during difficult and emotional periods for the family.

Following the death of my grandmother, the life of the family did indeed change. Some people died, others left for Palestine. Gradually every family started celebrating the holidays alone, and Pesach became a holiday for the immediate family. I remember a Pesach when I was 14 years old. My father did not have a son and he was very unhappy. My mother would tell me, 'please, say the

prayer.' I knew how to read because I had graduated from a Jewish school, and my mother would give me the book to continue reading because my father tired easily; he was already 56 years old at that time.

On the whole, we had a very good time during holidays such as Purim, Chanukkah and Fruitas [11]. On Fruitas the other children and I received purses full of fruit from my aunts and other relatives. Everyone in the neighborhood bragged about how many purses he or she had received. On Yom Kippur, as is tradition, we fasted. On Purim the entire family - some 80 or 90 people - gathered in one of our family houses. I particularly remember our stay at Tanti Viza's home. We lit candles in all of the windows and waited for the masked people to come, having prepared sweets and fruit for them. Finally, they came singing and playing tambourines. I dressed in a Bulgarian folk costume that my mother had bought for me at Varshets resort [92 km north of Sofia] when we went to the mineral baths there to treat her rheumatism. We also went there once with Tanti Blanka. I must have been five or six years old at that time.

Besides the folk costume I also put on a mask for Purim. I was always angry because I expected the others not to recognize me, but they always did. Once I dressed up as a Japanese person in a kimono, which was great fun. We sang, danced and played. Rabbi Azus, who had come from Turkey and served in the Shumen synagogue, was always present at our family gatherings. He sang at every wedding and family meeting. We danced while he sang. He often joked that he had become a Farhi family member. This is what I remember most from my childhood.

On a market day Shumen was very colorful and noisy, full of people and carts. I remember that I had to bring food to my father because he worked in a shop in the center of town. I passed through lots of stony paths, taking care not to fall down and spill the food. Once a cow crossed my way and I waited for ten minutes for it to move. Finally a 'kadana' [meaning 'a woman' in Turkish] came out and asked me, 'why are you standing?' 'Well, the cow is on my way,' I said. 'Hit it!' 'How can I hit it? It would kick me back?' Then she took a stick and hit the cow. It was not difficult to understand her Turkish because we all knew a little Turkish, too. As I have said, there were a lot of Turkish families around the Jewish neighborhood, and we had Turkish gardeners and Turkish servants at home.

Going to the big Turkish bath near Tumbul Mosque was a big event, a ritual of sorts. We went there once a week. Usually we prepared a big bag specially embroidered by my mother. Everyone put his or her robe inside, as that was the fashion at the time in Shumen. A Turkish woman welcomed us in the bath and took the bag from my mother. She took us to a bed in a special room and took care of us. She bathed us. These baths lasted three hours. Very often in the middle of the room there was a round place, where it was the hottest. The women 'teliaks' sat there. [Editor's note: a 'teliak' is a person who takes care of the body of someone else, similar to a masseur or a bath rubber].

Turkish weddings also took place in the Turkish bath, and even my sister Senyora was bathed there before her wedding because there was no mikveh. [For this ritual Jewish bath, only rainwater is collected. It is used to bathe the women before their wedding. They go there with their mother and future mother-in-law, among other women after their monthly period and before they take up their family duties.] I remember that very well because I was a 12-year-old girl when my elder sister Senyora married Haim Geron. She was taken there a few days before her wedding. Everyone looked at her closely. The Turkish rubbers danced Turkish dances and in the middle they laid a table with chocolates, sweets etc. I was so nervous I could not eat anything. I remember that in the

end they gave me luxurious soap as a present. Everyone received some gift, often either soap or a perfume. I got French soap, which smelled wonderfully but was too strong for me. Unfortunately I remember nothing of the other part of the ritual, which was probably in the synagogue.

There was only one synagogue in town. [Editor's note: There is no information regarding the destruction of this particular synagogue, which probably took place after World War II when many Jews left for Israel. What is certain is that its destruction was not on purpose. It fell apart because no one took care of it.] Now it is no longer there, but I recall that it was very big and beautiful.

I was very religious from age nine to 15, having come under the influence of a very religious man who was also a distant relative of mine. His name was Kohen. One of his daughters had left for Palestine and the other was in Sofia. His third daughter was married somewhere in Vidin, and he was thus all alone. My mother made me accompany him on Saturdays because we did not go to school on that day. I remember her telling me, 'you will not waste your time with friends, you will keep him company.' His nervous system was in bad shape, and I had to be with him just in case something went wrong. He was very religious and loved the mountains. Interestingly enough, I still carry in me the desire to take care of someone, a desire that I gained during this period of my life.

I learned many things from Kohen. He acquainted me with every piece of grass, every stone, every flower and every tree in Shumen. He taught me their Latin names as well. He taught me to love nature, and he obliged me to go to the synagogue regularly. On Friday evening I was the only girl in the synagogue. And since I felt uncomfortable being all alone, I made my friends come with me. There was a separate place in the synagogue for girls.

My school years

In addition to the synagogue, there was also a private Jewish kindergarten in the Jewish neighborhood that I attended as a child. The Jewish municipality supported this kindergarten. I have vague memories of the elementary classes, but this period escapes me for the most part. At first the school also had junior high school grades, but when the number of Jews decreased these grades were eliminated. We did not study on Saturday because of the Jewish holiday [Sabbath] or on Sunday because of the Bulgarian one. We were ten students in a class. We studied mostly three languages - Ivrit, Bulgarian and French. Our teachers in Bulgarian class prepared us very well, and I did not have difficulties when I went to junior high school. My Bulgarian teacher was called Katya. Jewish women, whose names I cannot recall, taught us Ivrit. Later they left for Palestine. Our teacher in French was Adon ['Mr.' in Ivrit] Behar, who was paid not by the Jewish municipality, but by the Alliance Francaise 13.

I was always an excellent student, and I always did my homework and knew all the lessons. My mother taught me up to work hard and be independent. Every morning I got up and prepared my breakfast. My mother never prepared my breakfast for me, nor did she fuss around me while I was getting ready for school. She thought that I should take care of these things by myself. Indeed, she never shouted at us or told us what to do. That is the best thing I can remember about my childhood. My mother thought that I should develop by myself and show what I can do. She also felt that I should get what I want by myself and achieve my goals on my own.

At first I did not have any breakfast in the morning, and when she found out she gave me 20 stotinkas [1 stotinka=0,01 lev] to buy something at school. But instead of doing that, I started

going to the cinema every day. And while she never told me to stop going to the cinema, she did eventually stop giving me money.

The cinema. I was there every day. Shirley Temple, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Sonja Henie [popular film actors at that time] and other famous actors took me into another world. I was totally engrossed, and at one point I even wanted to become a dancer like Fred Astaire. Thanks to the cinema, I familiarized myself with American culture. When I went to live in the USA, I even sought these old movies. When I watched them again, they seemed very naive to me. But when I first watched them, they were something else, something different from the world in our Jewish neighborhood, in which everything was narrow and fixed and you had to live like the others. There was something suffocating about that patriarchy, in which every rumor spread very fast and everyone appeared to be watching you. My mother taught us that we should not comment on what our parents said at home, so that people would not spread rumors about us. We dressed modestly so as not to stand out, and we did not befriend boys before we gathered information about them. But that world would slowly start to change.

Every Friday we went to the synagogue. On Saturday evening our mother prepared a gravy beef soup with carrots, celery and potatoes. On Sunday we went to a restaurant in the 'Kyoshkovete' park [from the Turkish word 'kyoshk,' meaning a light wooden building] to eat 'kebapcheta' [grilled oblong rissoles]. We frequently invited my mother's relatives from Ruse to eat with us. They were beautiful women and always fashionably dressed. Next to them, we looked like villagers.

Ruse is not like Shumen. It is a European city. It was only there that I actually met Bulgarians, in fact. Once a year I visited my aunts in Ruse. Two or three times a year I would see my other aunt Sofi in Targovishte. We never went to the mountains or the seaside on holiday because my parents did not have many other friends besides our relatives. They communicated entirely with Jews and with very few Bulgarians; the Bulgarian teachers from the Jewish school, who were lovely women, were among the few.

Upon graduating from the Jewish school, I was thrust into a Bulgarian junior high school, and I suddenly found myself in a class with 40 students. The shock was enormous. When I started going to the Bulgarian school I also began going to the Orthodox church because of Mrs. Kutsarova, our class teacher. She did not like me much and made me go to the Orthodox church. Can you imagine that? On Friday evenings I went to the synagogue - I even hummed the prayer because I knew all the melodies by heart. Then on Sundays I was made to go to the Orthodox church with the whole class. When I told Mrs. Kutsarova that I had also gone to the synagogue, she said, 'I cannot excuse you, you must come with the whole class.' 'But I am a Jew,' I said, 'I go to the synagogue.' 'It doesn't matter,' she said, 'you must come with the whole class.' I did not dare to oppose her because her daughter was a friend of mine. She was a very nice girl who studied medicine.

Later, around my 13th birthday, when I went to high school, I fell under the influence of a particular group of girls - socialists. Together we became partisans, and I was totally cut off from the church and the religious feelings instilled in me by Rafael Kohen. When I entered high school, I did not want to meet with him any more. The world was changing. But even today I keep in me that feeling of admiration for nature that he taught me. I still go to the mountains and know every part of the 20- kilometer area around Shumen, which I often visited with him.

Beyond my ever-changing religious outlook, I also made my first Bulgarian friends in high school. My world started to widen. I loved mathematics and the teacher who taught it, my class teacher Kutsarova. School holidays were also new and exciting. We wore white collars and laid wreaths at the monuments of patriotic Bulgarians in Shumen. Bulgarian Revival figures were very much admired in Shumen, and we often sung patriotic songs, listened to speeches and attended poem recitations relating to Bulgarian history and culture.

In many respects, my life during this period was divided between my Jewish heritage and my Bulgarian schooling. As I said earlier, for example, I went to the synagogue on Saturdays and to the Orthodox church on Sundays. When we celebrated Jewish holidays we, the Jews, were exempt from school, but we also celebrated the Bulgarian ones. During the day I was at school with my Bulgarian classmates, while after school I did sports activities through the Jewish sports organization Maccabi 14, which I visited from the age of 14 to the age of 17. Maccabi was mostly a sports organization, and I loved physical exercises. Unfortunately, and I do not know exactly why, the organization slowly died away over the years as many of the original supervisors left for Palestine.

Beyond Maccabi there were precious few Jewish civic organizations in Shumen. There were a few Betar 15 members in town, but they were not popular and could not attract young people. There was also a WIZO 16 branch, of which my mother was a member, but I cannot say anything about this organization. I remember that we did some sort of charity project once, but I do not remember why. In my last years of high school I tried joining Hashomer Hatzair 17, but I did not like it. I thought that they were too limited. They agitated us all the time, asking 'when shall we go to Israel, when shall we go to Palestine?' Despite all of this rhetoric, not one of them left. I thought they were very hypocritical, and I subsequently stopped attending their functions.

During the time I was in junior high school I did not notice any anti- Semitic attitudes towards me. All of my teachers were very kind to me, and my Jewish origins did not influence my grades in any way. Even my high school teacher in physical education, who was a Brannik member 18, asked me to demonstrate the exercises to the other students because I did them so well.

In high school I always sat in the first row because I was short and thin. Right in front of me there was a poster aimed against Jews, but I did not think it was aimed at me. I did not feel different, unwanted or isolated until a close friend of mine started telling the whole class that Jews were bad people. I objected right away, responding that there were good and bad Bulgarians and good and bad Jewish people. 'No,' she said, 'all Jews are bad. You are the only exception. That does not refer to you.' I blushed and could not sleep for a couple of nights. Then this same friend of mine went to study in Germany, where she saw the true face of fascism. Disgusted, she came back to Bulgaria. Later, when she was already working, she apologized to me on a number of occasions and thanked me for not spreading the word about her opinions.

During the war

At that time [1939-1940] many Jews from Austria and Germany traveled to Palestine along the Danube by ship, stopping off at Ruse and then going to Shumen. They came to the synagogue and we welcomed them with food and money. We also helped organize their onward travel to Burgas and Plovdiv and on through Turkey to Palestine. My father was among those who went to the synagogue and met with them. The whole organization was in fact a secret channel, and he did not

speak in front of us about what was actually happening [from the beginning of World War II a large number of Jews passed through Bulgaria - approximately 15 000, with transit visas. They subsequently reached Palestine and the USA by ships. One of the routes was along the Danube and then to Kyustendja [Romania]. A second route went through Varna, while a third went by sea through Turkey.]. It was only later that we found out that there were concentration camps and that fellow Jews were being tortured and killed.

The world around us was changing. 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] 19. The Turks who lived around our neighborhood suddenly became very vicious and started calling us 'chifuti' 20. We were even forbidden to travel. During the course of the Holocaust my father went completely bankrupt and even lost 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 21. 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 22, as were all healthy, young Jewish men.

In 1942 I graduated from 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.

Rabbi Hananel 23, who arranged the marriage between Senyora and Rafi Kohen, also arranged the marriage of my younger sister. We were somehow related to the Hananel family. My mother shared with him that my sister could not find a husband in Shumen, and he said, 'send her to me.' My sister stayed at his place for three months. Life in Sofia at that time [1942] was hard for Jews. Their movement around town was limited, but Rabbi Hananel and his family showed my sister everything. This included the nightlife, even in spite of the curfew that existed at the time. I even remember my sister telling me that the nightclubs were open for Jews from 4 until 7 am, so that the wealthiest Jews could see the shows and give them their money. [Editor's note: the curfew was in fact in accordance with the Law for the Protection of the Nation. The Commissariat for Jewish Affairs specified the places where Jews were not allowed as well as visiting hours for those places where they were allowed to go.] It was in one such place that she met her future husband, Nissim Levi. Their wedding was subsequently held in the Sofia synagogue, and she left to live in Sofia soon thereafter. Unfortunately, I was not present at the wedding because we were not allowed to travel at that time.

While my sister was being introduced to Nissim Levi, I was falling in love with my future husband, Baruh Grinberg. Unlike my sisters, however, this was a choice that I made on my own. I had known Baruh ever since my childhood in the Jewish neighborhood. I met many boys growing up, but, acting on my mother's advice, I did not get close to any of them. In the case of Baruh, however, I researched his life and knew a lot of things about him. He was an anti-fascist hurt by the struggle, and my compassion and his views strongly attracted me to him. None of my relatives understood me, and some even tried to separate us. My mother advised me not to marry him, but I was a child of another generation.

The ancestors of my husband Baruh Grinberg were very religious people. His paternal grandfather, Baruh Grinberg, was an Ashkenazi Jew. He originally came from the town of Odessa [today Ukraine], before settling in Ruse and becoming a rabbi. His son, my husband's father, Moshe Grinberg, was also a religious man. He had a fashion atelier in Shumen with eight workers. The father of my mother-in-law Buka, whose name was Moreno Samuilov, was a Sephardi Jew born in Targovishte. He was also very religious and sometimes went to extremes in the observance of religious traditions. He knew Ladino very well and read the Bible [Old Testament] all the time. Despite all of these religious influences, however, my husband Baruh was never a religious man. He wanted to become a physicist as a child, and he and his father argued all the time about the existence of God.

In 1943 the Jews interned in Sofia 24 came to Shumen. We emptied the big house and accommodated five families there free of charge. They slept on mattresses in the big hall. Everyone had two square meters to live on, and they kept the space neat and tidy. For meals, they cooked food in a big cauldron. We decided to organize a full-time kindergarten for the children of the Sofia Jews in the 'Kyoshkovete' park, with breakfast, lunch and Ivrit classes included. I was the person who organized this.

As the war went on, I became increasingly restless. I just could not stand still. I had to do something. I was ready to go to the battlefront or become a partisan, even going so far as to prepare my luggage. Six of us - all girls - decided to go to the Balkan as partisans, but the leader of the Shumen garrison, who was a brother of one of the girls, laughed at us and said that the partisan war was not for women.

After 9th September 1944 I became a clerk in Shumen for ten months to help the anti-fascist authorities. Then I left for Sofia to study dentistry at the Medical Institute. At first I lived in a rented attic room, but then I went to stay with my sister Sharlota, who lived on Iskar Street. There I shared a room with Greti, the future wife of my cousin Leon Daniel.

Married life

Baruh studied law while working for the Shumen municipality. We loved each other very much and married in 1948, at which point I was already pregnant with my first child. The wedding was very modest and not religious. I remember that I was studying for an exam in physiology at the time along with seven or eight other students in one apartment. Suddenly, at 10 o'clock, I said, 'excuse me, I have to go out for an hour.' 'Where are you going?' they asked me. 'Our exam is in two days and you decide to go out. You cannot do that. We must prepare for the exam. It is important and 50 percent of the students fail it.' 'I'm going to get married,' I said. They were all in shock. Our witnesses were some Jewish friends of ours. None of our relatives was present.

Haim, the husband of my sister Senyora whose shop was closed during the Holocaust, eventually became completely broke. He and his family could not remain in Bulgaria any longer and left for Israel in 1949 [see Mass Aliyah] 25. My sister Sharlota and her family also soon left.

In 1949 my first daughter, Beti Grinberg, was born. By that time my parents had accepted my marriage. But while they loved their newest granddaughter, they still could not understand me. My mother always said that my life was a mess, and our relations were strained. Nonetheless, my husband and I pushed forward with our lives. We moved to Bratia Miladinovi Street and lived there with my mother-in-law, Buka Grinberg, and Baruh's brother. His name was Avram. A number of times I raised the question of Jewish holidays, but my mother-in-law did not say anything, nor did she appear eager to celebrate them. I do not know why. When Baruh and I left for the USA our life changed, and we gradually neglected these traditions altogether.

As soon as I had graduated from dentistry school, I started work as a dentist in Pernik. In order to help my poor parents, I sent them half of my salary each month. My husband started supporting his family, too, and worked two jobs. He slept only four hours a day. During the day he worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at night as an editor of a newspaper. [Editor's note: the interviewee does not want to go into details.] In our first years as a couple we could not even afford to go on holiday together because we did not have enough money. My husband had to go to the seaside for health reasons relating to the abuse he had received in labor camps during the war. He went there alone, and I went to the mountains with our daughter.

At the beginning of the 1950s my father, who was quite poor, decided to leave Bulgaria and move to Israel. He sold the family houses. Most of his brothers and sisters had already died, and the others, including their children, had moved to Israel. One month before he left, he suddenly died, and we buried him in Shumen in accordance with all religious rituals. My mother then came to live with us in Sofia. She spent a few months with us before she decided that she had nothing to do in Sofia and in Bulgaria. She left for Israel in 1954 and died there in 1958.

Although our first few years were very difficult, I was very ambitious and believed that we were creating a new, humane society. It was only after the events in Czechoslovakia 26 that I gradually became disillusioned, but that was still many years away. In the interim period I was very satisfied with my life in Bulgaria. My colleagues in Pernik and in the First Workers' Hospital, where I went to work, respected me and loved me. I never had any problems on account of my Jewish origins, and for some time I was even chairwoman of the trade union committee in the hospital.

Had I had changed my name I could have made my life even easier, but I did not do that. For the record, I want to make it very clear that no one asked me to change my name. Some Jews did so by choice, especially if they worked in public posts. I, however, was never ashamed of being a Jew, nor have I ever felt threatened because of my origins. I found my place here in Bulgaria, and, although many of my relatives went to Israel, I never wanted to follow them. This is not to say that I don't understand them. They did not find their place here in Bulgaria because they were used to living in an isolated Jewish society like the Jewish neighborhood from my childhood in Shumen.

We left for the USA in 1955. My husband was invited to work there as a diplomat, and we stayed there for twelve years. In 1956 our second daughter was born. Her name is Emilia. [Editor's note: the interviewee is reluctant to talk about her daughters, both of whom have passed away.] My children grew up in an environment in which the emphasis was not on Jewish values, but universal

ones. Through my husband's work my world also widened. I went to a lot of cultural events. I remember going to see 'Fiddler on the Roof,' which made me cry ['Fiddler on the Roof' is one of the most famous stage and film musicals, opening on Broadway on 22th September 1964 with music by Jerry Bock and lyrics by Sheldon Harnick. The musical is based on 'Tevye and his Daughters,' or 'Tevye the Milkman' by the Russian Jewish author Sholem Aleichem, originally published in 1949.]

The change of environment also changed the thinking of my children. Beti graduated with a degree in English Philology from Sofia University, while Emilia studied chemistry. They both married Bulgarians. They celebrated both Jewish and Christian holidays because they thought that it was very nice to have a lot of holidays in the house. Beti has a son. His name is Nikolay Todorov. He is an actor and a freelance director. At one point he lived in Chicago, but now he lives in Germany.

I am very happy that the state of Israel exists. I was a Maccabi member and grew up in a family of Zionists. Half of my relatives went to Israel before the state was even founded. I, however, had thought that they would create a unified state with the Arab community. We cannot just banish these people and just force them to leave their homes. It is simply not right. Look at how Bulgarians and Jews live here in Bulgaria. I thought that the Jews and the Arabs would live in the same manner, and I just can't imagine how relations between the two communities deteriorated so quickly. The more the crisis deepened, the more I got angry with the politicians. I read the book by Shimon Peres, for example, which never mentions the Arabs. He acts as if Palestine was empty when the Jews arrived and settled the land. It was not like that at all. The policy towards the Arabs was not right; now the crisis has escalated to epic proportions. Al Qaeda has appeared, while Palestinians blow themselves up to demonstrate their unhappiness. It gets worse and worse. At least that is what I think; I am just a dentist after all.

In 1989 I was in Israel visiting my relatives. They also come to visit us in Bulgaria on occasion. I was in Israel when I heard the news about the coup on 10th November 1989 27. I am pleased with what has happened in Bulgaria since 1989, even though we, as pensioners, live more sparsely. But this is life. All pensioners around the world feel neglected because the respect they felt while they worked has gone. The important thing is to have economic freedom, to be healthy as long as possible and to be able to support yourself. If you start moaning, no one will respect you.

Many of our Bulgarian friends have died, and our social contacts have gradually decreased. That is why I am happy that the Jewish Home [Bet Am] 28 has resumed its activities and restored the traditions that we had started to forget. Now we go there every Saturday. [The interviewee is referring to the 'Golden Age' club, established in 1999, where 30-40 Jews gather every Saturday. They invite famous personalities, musicians, artists, economists and politicians as guests.]

Glossary

1 Ladino

Also known as Judeo-Spanish, it is the spoken and written Hispanic language of Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin. Ladino did not become a specifically Jewish language until after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 (and Portugal in 1495) - it was merely the language of their province. It is also known as Judezmo, Dzhudezmo, or Spaniolit. When the Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal they were cut off from the further development of the language, but they continued to

speak it in the communities and countries to which they emigrated. Ladino therefore reflects the grammar and vocabulary of 15th-century Spanish. In Amsterdam, England and Italy, those Jews who continued to speak 'Ladino' were in constant contact with Spain and therefore they basically continued to speak the Castilian Spanish of the time. Ladino was nowhere near as diverse as the various forms of Yiddish, but there were still two different dialects, which corresponded to the different origins of the speakers: 'Oriental' Ladino was spoken in Turkey and Rhodes and reflected Castilian Spanish, whereas 'Western' Ladino was spoken in Greece, Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia and Romania, and preserved the characteristics of northern Spanish and Portuguese. The vocabulary of Ladino includes hundreds of archaic Spanish words, and also includes many words from different languages: mainly from Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, Greek, French, and to a lesser extent from Italian. In the Ladino spoken in Israel, several words have been borrowed from Yiddish. For most of its lifetime, Ladino was written in the Hebrew alphabet, in Rashi script, or in Solitreo. It was only in the late 19th century that Ladino was ever written using the Latin alphabet. At various times Ladino has been spoken in North Africa, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, France, Israel, and, to a lesser extent, in the United States and Latin America.

2 Sephardi Jewry

(Hebrew for 'Spanish') Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin. Their ancestors settled down in North Africa, the Ottoman Empire, South America, Italy and the Netherlands after they had been driven out from the Iberian peninsula at the end of the 15th century. About 250,000 Jews left Spain and Portugal on this occasion. A distant group among Sephardi refugees were the Crypto-Jews (Marranos), who converted to Christianity under the pressure of the Inquisition but at the first occasion reassumed their Jewish identity. Sephardi preserved their community identity; they speak Ladino language in their communities up until today. The Jewish nation is formed by two main groups: the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi group which differ in habits, liturgy their relation toward Kabala, pronunciation as well in their philosophy.

3 Ruse

In geographical terms Ruse is a Bulgarian district town in Northeastern Bulgaria located on the right coast of the Danube River at the influx of the Ruse Lom River. Population ca. 170,000 people. The town appeared during the Second Bulgarian Kingdom at the place of the Roman fortress Sexaginta Prista. The name of Ruse is first mentioned at the beginning of the 15th century. During the Revival Period it was an important cultural center and meeting place of the leaders of the liberation movement. After the liberation Ruse was the largest town of the Kingdom of Bulgaria. The ships donated by Russia established the Bulgarian 'Danube fleet and marine part'. The first Bulgarian bank and insurance company opened in Ruse. Today Ruse is one of the largest industrial and cultural centers of the country, having about 120 buildings of architectural and historic value. Near the town there is the forest park 'Lipnik' and the natural reserve 'Ruse Lom' and the bridge over the Danube connects Ruse with the Romanian town of Giurgiu and is an entrance point on the border between Bulgaria and Romania.

4 First Balkan War (1912-1913)

Started by an alliance made up of Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro against the Ottoman Empire. It was a response to the Turkish nationalistic policy maintained by the Young Turks in

Istanbul. The Balkan League aimed at the liberation of the rest of the Balkans still under Ottoman rule. In October, 1912 the allies declared war on the Ottoman Empire and were soon successful: the Ottomans retreated to defend Istanbul and Albania, Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace fell into the hands of the allies. The war ended on 30th May 1913 with the Treaty of London, which gave most of European Turkey to the allies and also created the Albanian state.

5 Second Balkan War (1913)

The victorious countries of the First Balkan War (Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia) were unable to settle their territorial claims over the newly acquired Macedonia by peaceful means. Serbia and Greece formed an alliance against Bulgaria and the war began on 29th June 1913 with a Bulgarian attack on Serbian and Greek troops in Macedonia. Bulgaria's northern neighbor, Romania, also joined the allies and Bulgaria was defeated. The Treaty of Bucharest was signed on 10th August 1913. As a result, most of Macedonia was divided up between Greece and Serbia, leaving only a small part to Bulgaria (Pirin Macedonia). Romania also acquired the previously Bulgarian region of southern Dobrudzha.

6 Bulgaria in World War I

Bulgaria entered the war in October 1915 on the side of the Central Powers. Its main aim was the revision of the Treaty of Bucharest: the acquisition of Macedonia. Bulgaria quickly overran most of Serbian Macedonia as well as parts of Serbia; in 1916 with German backing it entered Greece (Western Thrace and the hinterlands of Salonika). After Romania surrendered to the Central Powers Bulgaria also recovered Southern Dobrudzha, which had been lost to Romania after the First Balkan War. The Bulgarian advance to Greece was halted after British, French and Serbian troops landed in Salonika, while in the north Romania joined the Allies in 1916. Conditions at the front deteriorated rapidly and political support for the war eroded. The agrarians and socialist workers intensified their antiwar campaigns, and soldier committees were formed in the army. A battle at Dobro Pole brought total retreat, and in ten days the Allies entered Bulgaria. On 29th September 1918 Bulgaria signed an armistice and withdrew from the war. The Treaty of Neuilly (November 1919) imposed by the Allies on Bulgaria, deprived the country of its World War I gains as well as its outlet to the Aegean Sea (Eastern Thrace).

7 Stambolov, Stefan (1854-1895)

Politician and statesman, leader of the People's Liberal Party, member of the Bulgarian Literary Association. Born in Tarnovo, he graduated from the Odessa Seminary in Ukraine. He took part in the activities of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Committee in Bucharest in 1874. He organized the rebellion in Stara Zagora in 1875 and the following year he became head of the uprising in the region of Tarnovo. During the Russian-Turkish Liberation War he supported the formation of Bulgarian volunteer groups. After the war he was elected deputy in the Second Bulgarian National Assembly. Chairman of the Fourth National Assembly, took part in the Serbian-Bulgarian War in 1885. After the abdication of King Alexander I Batenberg he was a member of the interim government and directed the policy of the country to a large extent. In 1887 Stambolov established a new party under the name People's Liberal Party. The same year he was appointed Prime Minister by the new Bulgarian King Ferdinand I Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. He held the post until 1894. After he was deprived of power, Stambolov was slain by hired assassins in the center of Sofia.

8 French Colleges in Bulgaria

Bulgarian-French diplomatic relations date officially from 8th July 1879 when the French Consul Y. Shefer handed to King Batenberg his letters of accreditation. There were French colleges in Ruse, Varna and Plovdiv. The one in Ruse was founded before the establishment of diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and France because there was a French consul in the town from the time of the Ottoman Empire. French colleges are famous for their good education. There is no information on the number of Jews who studied in them. The colleges were usually established at Catholic missions.

9 General Zionism

General Zionism was initially the term used for all members of the Zionist Organization who had not joined a specific faction or party. Over the years, the General Zionists, too, created ideological institutions and their own organization was established in 1922. The precepts of the General Zionists included Basle-style Zionism free of ideological embellishments and the primacy of Zionism over any class, party, or personal interest. This party, in its many metamorphoses, championed causes such as the encouragement of private initiative and protection of middle-class rights. In 1931, the General Zionists split into Factions A and B as a result of disagreements over issues of concern in Palestine: social affairs, economic matters, the attitude toward the General Federation of Jewish Labor, etc. In 1945, the factions reunited. Most of Israel's liberal movements and parties were formed under the inspiration of the General Zionists and reflect mergers in and secessions from this movement.

10 Morfova, Hristina Vasileva (1889-1936)

Bulgarian opera and concert singer, lyrical soprano. Born in Stara Zagora, she received her musical education in Prague. She was an opera singer in Prague, Barno and Sofia. Besides her opera performances, she was also famous for her pedagogical skills.

11 Tumbul Mosque

The Sherif Halil Pasha Mosque, more commonly known as the Tumbul Mosque, located in Shumen, is the largest mosque in Bulgaria. Built between 1740 and 1744, the mosque's name comes from the shape of its dome.The mosque's complex consists of a main edifice (a prayer hall), a yard and a twelve-room extension (a boarding house of the madrasa). The main edifice is in its fundamental part a square, then becomes an octagon passing to a circle in the middle part, and is topped by a spheric dome that is 25 m above ground. The interior has mural paintings of vegetable life and geometric figures and features a lot of inscriptions in Arabic, phrases from the Qur'an. The yard is known for the arches in front of the twelve rooms that surround it and the minaret is 40 m high. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tombul_Mosque)

12 Fruitas

The The popular name of the Tu bi-Shevat festival among the Bulgarian Jews.

13 Alliance Francaise

A cultural and educational association founded in 1904 in Sofia as a branch of the French cultural and educational association Alliance Francaise in Paris. Its goal is to popularize French language and culture in Bulgaria.

14 Maccabi World Union

International Jewish sports organization whose origins go back to the end of the 19th century. A growing number of young Eastern European Jews involved in Zionism felt that one essential prerequisite of the establishment of a national home in Palestine was the improvement of the physical condition and training of ghetto youth. In order to achieve this, gymnastics clubs were founded in many Eastern and Central European countries, which later came to be called Maccabi. The movement soon spread to more countries in Europe and to Palestine. The World Maccabi Union was formed in 1921. In less than two decades its membership was estimated at 200,000 with branches located in most countries of Europe and in Palestine, Australia, South America, South Africa, etc.

15 Betar in Bulgaria

Brith Trumpledor (Hebrew) meaning Trumpledor Society; right-wing Revisionist Jewish youth movement. It was founded in 1923 in Riga by Vladimir Jabotinsky, in memory of J. Trumpledor, one of the first fighters to be killed in Palestine, and the fortress Betar, which was heroically defended for many months during the Bar Kohba uprising. Its aim was to propagate the program of the revisionists and prepare young people to fight and live in Palestine. It organized emigration through both legal and illegal channels. It was a paramilitary organization; its members wore uniforms. They supported the idea to create a Jewish legion in order to liberate Palestine. From 1936-39 the popularity of Betar diminished. During WWII many of its members formed guerrilla groups. In Bulgaria the organization started publishing its newspaper in 1934.

16 WIZO

Women's International Zionist Organization, founded in London in 1920 with humanitarian purposes aiming at supporting Jewish women all over the world in the field of education, economics, science and culture. A network of health, social and educational institutions was created in Palestine between 1921 and 1933, along with numerous local groups worldwide. After WWII its office was moved to Tel Aviv. WIZO became an advisory organ to the UN after WWII (similar to UNICEF or ECOSOC). Today it operates on a voluntary basis, as a party-neutral, non-profit organization, with about 250,000 members in 50 countries (2003).

17 Hashomer Hatzair ('The Young Watchman')

Left-wing Zionist youth organization, which started in Poland in 1912 and managed to gather supporters from all over Europe. Their goal was to educate the youth in the Zionist mentality and to prepare them to immigrate to Palestine. To achieve this goal they paid special attention to the so-called shomer-movement (boy scout education) and supported the re-stratification of the Jewish

society. They operated several agricultural and industrial training grounds (the so- called chalutz grounds) to train those who wanted to immigrate. In Transylvania the first Hashomer Hatzair groups were established in the 1920s. During World War II, members of the Hashomer Hatzair were leading active resistance against German forces, in ghettoes and concentration camps. After the war, Hashomer Hatzair was active in 'illegal' immigration to Palestine.

18 Brannik

Pro-fascist youth organization. It started operating after the Law for the Protection of the Nation was passed in 1941 and the Bulgarian government forged its pro-German policy. The Branniks regularly maltreated Jews.

19 Yellow star in Bulgaria

According to a governmental decree all Bulgarian Jews were forced to wear distinctive yellow stars after 24th September 1942. Contrary to the German-occupied countries the stars in Bulgaria were made of yellow plastic or textile and were also smaller. Volunteers in previous wars, the war-disabled, orphans and widows of victims of wars, and those awarded the military cross were given the privilege to wear the star in the form of a button. Jews who converted to Christianity and their families were totally exempt. The discriminatory measures and persecutions ended with the cancellation of the Law for the Protection of the Nation on 17th August 1944.

20 Chifuti

Derogatory term for Jews in Bulgarian.

21 9th September 1944

The day of the communist takeover in Bulgaria. In September 1944 the Soviet Union declared war on Bulgaria. On 9th September 1944 the Fatherland Front, a broad left-wing coalition, deposed the government. Although the communists were in the minority in the Fatherland Front, they were the driving force in forming the coalition, and their position was strengthened by the presence of the Red Army in Bulgaria.

22 Forced labor camps in Bulgaria

Established under the Council of Ministers' Act in 1941. All Jewish men between the ages of 18-50, eligible for military service, were called up. In these labor groups Jewish men were forced to work 7-8 months a year on different road constructions under very hard living and working conditions.

23 Hananel, Asher Itshak (1859-1964)

Rabbi in Sofia and later chief rabbi (1949) of Bulgaria. Born in Shumen, where he graduated from the local Alliance Israelite school and the Shumen boy's high school. He received a law degree in Vienna and participated in a rabbi seminar in Breslau. Until World War II he published a number of books, in which he popularized the Talmud and the Jewish holy books. In 1947 he became deputy chairman of the Jewish Research Institute where, alongside Eli Eshkenazi and Simon Markus, he laid the foundations of a rich collection of ancient Jewish books and documents. In 1951 the Jewish

Research Institute became part of the system of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Dr Hananel continued his research. Together with Eli Eshkenazi he published 'Jewish sources about the Balkan history 15-17th century,' edited by Prof. Angelov. He died in Israel.

24 Internment of Jews in Bulgaria

Although Jews living in Bulgaria where not deported to concentration camps abroad or to death camps, many were interned to different locations within Bulgaria. In accordance with the Law for the Protection of the Nation, the comprehensive anti-Jewish legislation initiated after the outbreak of WWII, males were sent to forced labor battalions in different locations of the country, and had to engage in hard work. There were plans to deport Bulgarian Jews to Nazi Death Camps, but these plans were not realized. Preparations had been made at certain points along the Danube, such as at Somovit and Lom. In fact, in 1943 the port at Lom was used to deport Jews from the Aegean Thrace and from Macedonia, but in the end, the Jews from Bulgaria proper were spared.

25 Mass Aliyah

Between September 1944 and October 1948, 7,000 Bulgarian Jews left for Palestine. The exodus was due to deep-rooted Zionist sentiments, relative alienation from Bulgarian intellectual and political life, and depressed economic conditions. Bulgarian policies toward national minorities were also a factor that motivated emigration. In the late 1940s Bulgaria was anxious to rid itself of national minority groups, such as Armenians and Turks, and thus make its population more homogeneous. More people were allowed to depart in the winter of 1948 and the spring of 1949. The mass exodus continued between 1949 and 1951: 44,267 Jews immigrated to Israel until only a few thousand Jews remained in the country.

26 Prague Spring

A period of democratic reforms in Czechoslovakia, from January to August 1968. Reformatory politicians were secretly elected to leading functions of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC). Josef Smrkovsky became president of the National Assembly, and Oldrich Cernik became the Prime Minister. Connected with the reformist efforts was also an important figure on the Czechoslovak political scene, Alexander Dubcek, General Secretary of the KSC Central Committee (UV KSC). In April 1968 the UV KSC adopted the party's Action Program, which was meant to show the new path to socialism. It promised fundamental economic and political reforms. On 21st March 1968, at a meeting of representatives of the USSR, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, East Germany and Czechoslovakia in Dresden, Germany, the Czechoslovaks were notified that the course of events in their country was not to the liking of the remaining conference participants, and that they should implement appropriate measures. In July 1968 a meeting in Warsaw took place, where the reformist efforts in Czechoslovakia were designated as "counter-revolutionary." The invasion of the USSR and Warsaw Pact armed forces on the night of 20th August 1968, and the signing of the so-called Moscow Protocol ended the process of democratization, and the Normalization period began.

27 10th November 1989

After 35 years of rule, Communist Party leader Todor Zhivkov was replaced by the hitherto Prime Minister Peter Mladenov who changed the Bulgarian Communist Party's name to Socialist Party. On

17th November 1989 Mladenov became head of state, as successor of Zhivkov. Massive opposition demonstrations in Sofia with hundreds of thousands of participants calling for democratic reforms followed from 18th November to December 1989. On 7th December the 'Union of Democratic Forces' (SDS) was formed consisting of different political organizations and groups.

28 Bet Am

The Jewish center in Sofia today, housing all Jewish organizations.