Adela Hinkova

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Sofia
Bulgaria
Interviewers: Violeta Kyurdyan, Dimitar Bozhilov
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Adela Hinkova is a remarkable old lady. She hasn't gone out of her apartment for many years, being unable to walk alone. Ringing the bell, you would first hear her quick 'I'm coming' and then, after a short break, the rattling of her walker, while approaching the door. In the beginning, you would be amazed by Adela's stern look and explicit speaking. But when she smiles and starts speaking, you realize what a tender and loving lady she is. And she really loves talking, though unfortunately she gets tired very quickly. Once undoubtedly an extremely energetic person, she's now seeing only a limited number of people, but she's still full of energy, she still keeps her mother's sewing machine, she regularly brushes up her memories and is eager to share the story of her life with the whole world.

My father

My father's kin is from Vidin. There was a Jewish quarter there; it was situated on the so-called Kale [Greek for 'fortress']. Only a couple of Jewish families didn't live there. There was a big synagogue in Vidin, the second biggest synagogue on the Balkan Peninsula [after the Sofia Great Synagogue 1]. Later, it was used for storage for a certain time. Nowadays it's in ruins. There were only four families from the Jewish community there. My father's kin are said to have lived there for a long time. His name was Leon Yosef Ilel. There were a lot of families named Ilel in Vidin, which means that they were a lot of brothers and sisters. He remained without a father when he was a child. My father knew nothing about his father and they sent him to be an 'argatin' [a seasonal worker on the fields helping with harvesting], as they said in Wallachia [an Ottoman Danubian Province; the unification of Wallachia and Moldova formed the Romanian State that was recognized independent in 1878] and that's why he knew Romanian very well.

Then he married. He had documents for buying an estate in 1895. He lived in that house with his family. His first wife Duda bore him four children. She was very beautiful. When she died early of tuberculosis, the youngest child was 14-15 years old. There was Grandmother Ester, my father's mother, who lived in a secluded room, but I never saw her walking around or sitting at the table. She lay on some kind of chest; she even had lice or something of the kind. I know that she was very old.

I remember my father with very little hair. He had a short haircut. His hair was a bit grayish. Even when he died at 72 years of age, he did not have white hair. He didn't have a hair prosthesis. He said it bothered him. He wore a suit. He always wore a suit; I don't remember if he had any cardigans. He wore pants, a shirt and a jacket. In the summer I don't remember seeing him without his jacket, wearing a shirt only. He also wore a bowler hat. When it got cold, he wore a fur-lined short coat. In the winter he wore overshoes, because there was a lot of mud around. I had to wash them, but the water in the bucket would freeze during the night. In the morning, he would take a wooden log and hit the ice in the bucket to crush it. And he said, 'Come now, wash yourself!' The ground in Vidin is kind of sticky, not crumbling. It stuck to the overshoes and you can't image how hard it was to wash two pairs of overshoes with freezing hands.

I remember my father as a vendor of charcoal. Village people came from the country and brought him charcoal. All villagers around Vidin were Wallachians [ethnic Romanians]. There was no Bulgarian village around Vidin without Wallachians living in it. I remember him coming home all black. He went to the shop, two people helped him there, holding one side of the charcoal sack and placing its other side on the scales. The scales worked with weights. When he returned home, my mother [Adela's father's second wife] was ready to pour him water to wash himself. There wasn't much water at that time. We didn't have water in the yard, my mother and I went to a well, which was two houses down the road. We called it Tatli Bunar – which means 'sweet well' in Turkish. Its water was very nice. So she would pour my father water so he could wash himself. I would hand him a clean shirt and a towel.

He would sit at the table and send me to buy him a bottle of mastika 2. He loved drinking mastika. The bottle was with a glass plug and I would open it to try it, but it was so strong, I wondered how he could drink that stuff. He drank the mastika with boiled eggs. They were over-boiled, which is a religious thing: if the egg isn't boiled hard enough, it's not Jewish. It's not kosher. My mother boiled the eggs with onion skins and they got brown. We all sat at the table ready to eat. My father would slice an egg for himself and an egg for us, he would give us each a slice of it and we would all wait while he ate and drank. Then my mother would serve the dinner. We all sat together at the table. The four of us lived together: I, my brother Santo, my mother and my father. The others [the other siblings] had their own families already. I don't remember if they came to visit us. I was 13-14 years old when I saw them for the first time.

My father was responsible for our moral upbringing. I don't know how many brothers he had, I know that he had a lot of cousins. He didn't go to school. As a child, he worked as a servant. He knew very little: to sign his name in Latin letters and to use some Jewish alphabet, consisting of pothooks. He had a big notebook for the accounts. He was a naturally intelligent man, able to understand and learn much about people. He knew a lot of short stories and proverbs. He was very eloquent and everyone loved listening to him.

My father was a very nice man. He loved people very much and they loved him, too. They called him Bai [uncle] Aslan the ‘Mangal Komuru’ [Turkish for ‘charcoal vendor’]. Aslan means ‘lion’ in Turkish. He knew many languages for his times. He knew five languages. We spoke only Spanish 3 at home. We spoke Bulgarian very rarely. When he went to work, he spoke Turkish and Wallachian. If he hadn’t known Wallachian, he wouldn’t have been able to do his job. Fifty percent of the people at the market, where he had a shop, were Wallachians. He also spoke the Gypsy [Roma] language, because there were a lot of gypsies in Vidin.

With his [first] wife, Duda, my father had four children: two sons and two daughters. The eldest one was Buka. In fact, her name was Joya. Joya is a jewel in Ladino, a gem. And she was a beautiful woman. Some of the children, Nessim and she, were a little bit swarthy. Buka married early and left the house. Many years after that, she visited me with her youngest son Leon; she had three sons. He was named after my father.

The next child was Nessim: ‘Nes’ means a good sign [miracle] in Ivrit. He loved studying. After my father’s first wife died of tuberculosis, Duda’s brother Jacques lived in the house. Duda’s maiden name was Suzin. Her brother was the future factory owner Jacques Suzin. He went to high school and knitted lace to earn money. And since he was very neat, he would always lay down his pants on the bed during the night, so that they wouldn’t be creased in the morning. He went to Italy to study and then he got rich and became a factory owner. When my brother Nessim graduated from high school, Jacques invited him to Italy where my brother studied finance. During his studies he met an Italian woman, who was very beautiful. They lived together and they had a girl. Then he returned to Bulgaria; we made great preparations for his return. He stayed with us for a very short time. He went to Pleven to see his other sisters and then he went on to Yambol.

My uncle sent him machines, with which Nessim founded the factory ‘Tundzha’ in Varna. He produced American and Oxford textiles there. The yarn arrived from Jacques’ other factory. Some years after that Nessim married Rozeta, who was studying dentistry, but gave it up and lived with him. She was a very beautiful woman. She was from Burgas, from a well-off family: they had a house in Burgas and she had four or five sisters. During those times if you wanted to marry, you had to have 100,000 levs for dowry. That was the norm, taking into account that the monthly salary was 3,000 levs. And every other year her father married off one of his daughters. My father was fretting, ‘Rozeta married off yet another sister, Nessim must have given 100,000 levs again.’ When Rozeta’s parents died, they left them a small house in the center of Burgas as inheritance. In its place he built a big three-story building with two apartments on each floor. This was the first nice house in Burgas; they called it the ‘White House.’ It still exists today on Antim 1st Street.

The factory was nationalized in 1931. In 1944 4 when the communists came to power, he was offered a job as a director of a warehouse. But he felt offended and declined. So he moved to Sofia in 1948. He was among the first to leave for Israel. He didn’t do well there, because he was quite old and had no money. He went to Italy to look for Jacques Suzim, who, however, had already passed away. Jacques’ son told him, ‘He left me nothing. The fascists took everything.’ And then together with Buka’s elder son Solomon, he opened an atelier for children’s ready-made clothes. But Nessim gave that up, too, and stayed at home. I felt very sorry for him when I visited him in Israel. I would feel very sad when he told me, ‘You know, I visited Santo today and saved the money for one lunch.’ He died at the age of 82.

The third child of my father's first marriage was Zhaneta. She and I had at least twenty years difference in age. She married in Pleven. There she gave birth to two children, who she named after her parents-in-law: the son Benyamin, and the daughter Zelma. Zhaneta's husband was a very nice man. His business didn't do well in Pleven and so he moved to a village, Stezherevo, in Svishtov region. There he opened a small shop and became a merchant. He treated all the people like brothers. When I turned 14, I was able to travel by myself. I got in touch with him and his family and visited them. I traveled by a steamer from Vidin and arrived at Svishtov. He came to meet me with a cart, because there were no buses at that time. So, I spent my summers there. I had a very nice time with them.

He had rheumatism and went to spa treatments. My sister would remain in the shop to work and I did the household chores. I learned to cook at that time. When the time came to go back to Vidin, he gave me fabrics to give to my mother as a present; she made robes from them. They lived there for quite some time and then they moved to another village: Aleksandrovo, in Lovech region. He lived well there, until the Law for the Protection of the Nation [5] was passed in 1941. Then he settled in Pleven.

My sister was very kind and loved by all. When she was young, she wanted to study, but Grandmother Ester didn't let her. She was still energetic at that time. I remember now what Grandmother Ester told her, 'Come on, tell your 'gosposta'...' [short for 'gospozhitsa,' Bulgarian for 'Miss']. But instead of saying 'gosposta,' she would say 'posta' which means shit in Spanish [Ladino]. And they laughed at her. My sister was a very good student and helped the other students. But they didn't allow her to study and she remained with little education. She left for Israel with her two children.

One of her children [Zelma] got married and had two children, the other [Benyamin] couldn't marry, because during the youth-brigade movement in Bulgaria, he became a brigade member and got sick. Instead of treating him, the doctor said that he had caught a cold. In fact he had tuberculosis. There was no penicillin at that time; he put on a lot of weight. He wasn't able to marry, after all. So, he worked as a bank clerk in Israel. His father died in Israel. When he went to see the doctor for his high blood pressure, he died on the doctor's couch. The son [Benyamin] often went to play roulette, when he came to Bulgaria. He also died of high blood pressure, when coming out of a restaurant. He left a large inheritance to Zelma, his sister, but she was already in an old-age home in a wheel-chair. So, the inheritance went to his cousins.

My next brother Yosef was the last child from my father's first marriage. He wasn't swarthy, he was quite fair. He was a silent man. When Nessim was in Italy, he invited Yosef to study there. Yosef spent some time in Italy, but he could neither study, nor did he manage to learn the language, so he came back. I don't know what work he did, I only remember him joining the army as a labor service man. He brought a green blanket from there. I saw this blanket around at home for a long time and we all knew that it was Yosef's blanket.

After some years I understood that something went wrong during his circumcision. This didn't prevent him from marrying a very beautiful woman, Loti, and having two children, both fair-haired like him. A girl, whom he called Duda Adela, after his mother and a boy, whom he named after his father Leon. He used to say, 'Leon Yosef Ilel, the three names of my father, are back.' But Loti thought that she had married a very rich man, while he didn't achieve much financially. He lived

with her until he left for Israel. There he divorced and married another woman. But he couldn't find a proper job there. He became a carrier at the port. He was always depressed. He died soon after that in 1955. He always had an inferiority complex.

My mother [Adela's father's second wife] arrived in Bulgaria from Greece with her parents, probably in 1912 or 1913. My mother's family lived in a number of places. My mother told me that they lived in Xanthi and Dedeagac [both today in Greece]. They lived in Turkey and after the First Balkan War 6 they lived in Greece. My mother could speak Greek and Turkish very well. She also knew Bulgarian, but not very well. She learned it when they moved to Vidin. Her father was a chazzan. Her parents educated their children well. Their son Solomon and their daughter with her husband Bentsion remained in Greece, while they came to Bulgaria with my mother, who was already 25 years old. They married her to my father, who was 25 years older than her.

My mother told me that when she went to my father's house, she found a heap of ashes in the yard: the burned possessions of my father's first wife. When she raked the ashes with a stick she found a cup handle. 'I started everything anew,' she said to me.

She arrived with one chest. We had that chest for many years at home. She kept her most valuable things there and a dress called 'bindali,' an ancient Jewish national velvet dress sewn with gold threads. I don't know if she came with that dress or if my father gave it to her as a present when she gave birth to my brother Santo. There was a tradition to give nice presents to women who had given birth to boys.

Santo and I are both from my father's second marriage. They always paid more attention to him, because he was a son, a man. The boy in our family was always much respected. He had privileges, for example, when he became 13 years old, he got more food, because he was a boy and so on.

Santo was born on 6th July 1913. That was during the war [Second Balkan War] 7, and for greater safety my father sent his wife to Silistra, which wasn't a military zone. My father worked as a chazzan there. They called their child Santo, which means blessed and health at the same time. He didn't like his name much and wanted to be called Sinto, not Santo. Ever since his childhood he had more limited interests, he wasn't attracted to science. At home he would play with the football and he often broke the windows with the ragged ball. Once my father gave him a hard beating, because he had swum in the Danube and the Danube took a number of victims every year. Soon he went to a small shop to work. He decided to marry early. Relatives of ours, married to the Paparo family, introduced him to an unmarried woman from Sofia, Eti Grinberg. Her father was a German Jew. She had big blue eyes and she was a bit older than him, very neat and hard-working, but she didn't want to live with us and so they lived on their own.

Eti had a younger sister and an elder brother, who tried to run away from fascism, feeling it was coming to Bulgaria; it was 1940 already. Fascism came, and Eti's sister, mother and brother left. The mother and the sister drowned, the brother was able to swim and survived. But the stress he experienced damaged his nerves. He remained mentally ill all his life. The state supported him financially.

In 1939 Eti and her child, my brother and my father went to an English camp in Palestine. The child was two years old then. He was born in 1938 and is named after my father Leon. Later he was

named Arie in Ivrit. Eti didn't give birth to another child. She had caught a cold while walking in pattens [clogs, overshoes or sandals, held on the foot by leather or cloth bands] for a long time in the camp and she could no longer conceive. My brother polished diamonds, which was very hard work. She didn't allow him to go out, bossed him around all the time. He spent a lot of time on that job. The dust from the polishing damaged his ears and he went deaf. He had an assistant, 'metapel,' a companion at home, a Bulgarian, an economist, who decided to stay in Israel, because the state helped and supported financially those who helped elderly people.

Growing up

I was born on 17th September 1917 on New Year's Eve, on Erev Rosh Hashanah. That's why I love this holiday so much. I had long hair when I was a girl and I asked my mother to cut it, because it was bothering me. And she did it. I don't know how old I was then. My most vivid memory is from when I was seven years old. I dreamed of going to a children's preschool, because I was the youngest one, everyone was going to school and I was left at home alone. So, the time finally came when I could go to a preschool in the Jewish school there, in the hall on the ground floor. My mother bought cotton print and sewed me a dress, of which I was very proud. A small piece of material remained and they made me a sack. They put a wooden slate, not a notebook, a small pencil as chalk and a sponge in there. I used it to draw pictures at home. I loved that.

As a child I didn't have a doll, I had no toys, only a rope to jump on and play 'eshetsi' [small bones from the front leg of a ram to play with, very smooth and painted in various colors]. When the earth was damp, we played draughts. We had no other games. When I started going to the preschool, I decided that I was too old to play with the 'eshitsi.' I wanted to hide them from my brother and I went behind the house. We had a woodshed and it had tiles on the roof. I decided to hide them under the tiles. I climbed over a chair, but on going down I fell and hit my mouth on a chopped-off tree. One of my front teeth, which had just come out, broke and went black. It remained such until I was 45 years old and I had a crown placed on it. My mouth was swollen for a long time. I couldn't eat, drink, smile, or talk. So, the winter came and I couldn't go to the preschool anymore.

Our house was on a very interesting street: one of its ends was a dead one. No one would pass along that street and a vehicle would be a very unusual sight. We didn't have electricity. We got that late, around 1922 or 1923. Until then we used a gas lamp and kept warm by using a stove built into the wall. My mother burnt wood and put its ashes in sacks. We put the ashes in the water, because it was very hard. When we lit the stove and when the smoke subsided and there was only ash, my mother would take the ash, put it in a tin near the stove and place a lid on it. My father lit the stove when he got back from work. We sat in the cold during the day and I was always moaning that I was cold. The house was old. The rooms were big and got warm very slowly. I had to clean the rooms. The floor was covered with wooden boards and I had to clean them. I have unpleasant memories of that. The rooms were big and there was a corridor where we gathered on Pesach.

There was also a small staircase, which was the place of my dreams. I sat there to learn my lessons, do my homework on my knee. There was little furniture at home: two beds for my parents, a table with some chairs for eating and a table for the flowers, which was a small and round one, with three legs. In the other room there were two beds for my brother and me, two wardrobes and a chest of drawers. My mother would hide the jam in that chest. But sometimes I would open the chest and eat the jam. One of the wardrobes was a brown one, the other with a black door, which

could never be closed. My father was a good man, but he could repair nothing. We asked a friend of ours, Liko, for help when there was something to be repaired at home.

My mother took very good care of the house. We never had carpets, but we had rugs. My mother made bands from the old sheets, gowns, and cotton clothes. My father brought threads from the market, which were the base for the rugs, then put them in a cauldron with paint. This took a long time. My mother was very neat and when she had a lot of washing up she got up at 5am. She would make a fire in the yard, would put the cauldron with the water on the fire, then she put the sacks with ash in and started washing the sheets, which were eight in number. There was a trough, in which one could fully lie down and she rinsed the sheets three times in it. There were some vendors who sold us water from the Danube, it was very smooth and we kept it in a barrel in the cellar. When I returned from school, I would find her still washing the sheets. She also put laundry blue in the washing, which gave the sheets a nice tint. She hung the washing in the yard and it froze in the winter. Then we put it inside to get dry. There was a lot of hard work to be done. My mother starched all the bed covers so that the embroidery could be seen. She made the starch and did the starching herself.

My mother did the cooking. I ate very little and I was very choosy. I loved eating bread and drinking boza 8 most of all. There was a man who produced boza: Getso the Albanian man, and who brought it to us in little pitchers. During the week we ate yoghurt, cheese, whatever we found, but not sausages, because they were from pork and there weren't any other at that time. They gave me yogurt for dinner very often, but I didn't like it much. My father used to bring meat and chicken. He said, 'Children should eat meat, so that they don't get sick with tuberculosis.' We had a neighbor, Parashkeva, who buried her two sons and then she herself died of tuberculosis. Around six people around us died of tuberculosis within a few years.

My mother was a workaholic. She couldn't sit doing nothing. She could knit and embroider with a needle. In her free time she attended to her flowers. She loved flowers very much. Her favorite flower was the dahlia. We also had lily-of-the-valley, snowdrops, hyacinths, but most of them were dahlias. I hated the dahlias and I had reasons for that. Dahlias are sown from tubers; they are gathered in the fall, kept during the winter and sown in the spring. They should be kept in a warm place. My mother put them in a crate near the stove and I was very annoyed that there wasn't enough space. The charcoal was on one side of the stove and the crate on the other. My mother had a very keen sense of smell; she could smell the scent of the flowers from afar.

There were always people at home and my mother offered them jam. I wasn't given jam, it was only for the guests. We made jam from everything: plums, cherries, mostly of plums, because there were different varieties. We had quinces in the yard. When we grated them for jam, their stubs remained. My mother cut them, boiled them, drained the water, put some jam and it became some kind of puree, which she wrapped in paper and preserved in tins. It was called 'tajiko.'

My mother made me work a lot. She didn't take 'I can't do it' for an answer. She worked a lot and made me work, too. But I also had to go to school, to see my friends so I sometimes avoided it. In 1927, when I was ten years old, they made a water pump at home. She made me save the water in a barrel for irrigation and I filled the barrel with a bucket. I filled it in and she would do the irrigation. Gradually I took up all the household chores, because they both [Adela's parents] went down ill. I went out to buy medications, I had to go shopping, light the stove, and go to school and

because of all the work to be done, I had to repeat my grade at school. My mother made me work, but my brother was exempted from that.

And so, I didn't have a strong connection with my mother. My father was calmer and told me some warm words sometimes. All those years were very oppressive for me. There's no photo from my childhood where I'm smiling, I'm always serious. Life in general was very hard.

Our religious life

At home my mother wasn't religious, but she observed all the rituals and holidays. I was born on a Friday evening. On Rosh Hashanah, New Year's Eve, my mother would make a special cake called 'tispishtil' in a special small copper pan. It was made of oily dough and sugar and walnuts were put in the middle. She always made such a cake, observed the traditions and the Saturdays.

We all loved Sabbath at home. We started celebrating the holidays from the evening and finished the next evening. If the holiday started at five o'clock, it finished at five the next day. Our building was old and we had big rooms. It was dark and the neighbors passed through the 'kapedjik' the evening before Sabbath. So, we passed through that door. [Editor's note: 'Kapedjik' is a Turkish word: There are fences between the yards, which surround the yard and the house, but their gates are facing the street. In order to avoid going out on the dark street to visit the neighbors, they make a small door in the fence and that is called 'kapedjik.']

So the evening before Sabbath, a cousin of my father and his wife came to visit us. Most of the time, we went to visit them, because the woman was a tailor and she continued working while we were there. She talked and sewed at the same time. She told very interesting stories. Her husband, my father's cousin, didn't speak. He would always fall asleep and she would tell him, 'Yosef...' – that was his name. My father would tell 'massals' [Turkish for 'stories'] and his cousin wouldn't listen to them. My father was very good at telling fairy tales and 'massals' and I learned many of them. Every one of them has a moral.

Another family, the Ashkenazi, also came to visit us. Our house was big and there were neighbors in half of the rooms. On paper, they rented the apartments from us. But when my mother would tell my father, 'Okay, but won't we take our rent?' my father would say, 'What rent?' He couldn't imagine taking money from these people. Our neighbors were the Farhi family. They weren't relatives of ours and I called them all 'visina' [neighbor]. They had children.

So, on Friday evening we would prepare, wash ourselves and dress up to be ready for Saturday. On Saturdays we didn't cook, it's forbidden to work, it's 'asur' [Hebrew for 'forbidden']. My mother usually made some sweets. The most used word at home was 'mitzvah.' She went to the neighbor's window and said, 'Take it and taste it.' And I asked, 'But what will be left for me?' She said, 'This is mitzvah!' and she gave it away.

There were special things to be done for Saturdays. Firstly, we had to buy chicken from the market. The chicken had to be slaughtered. I found the preparation for the Saturday unpleasant, because I had to take that chicken to the shochet on Thursday and then I had to carry it back dead and covered in blood and this was very unpleasant. After that my mother didn't scald it with water, it was forbidden. She plucked it, scorched it with paper and then she cooked it.

After the Saturday ceremony, there was always food and the hen was slaughtered. There was a word we used a lot and it was the key of the holiday. It was ‘chametz’ and it’s very important for Pesach. And my father would always tell us a story. He always stressed that we were Jews, which was our leitmotif in a way. He would say that we had our morality and we should observe it. Then we started eating. We always bought pumpkin seeds. Vidin was famous for its nice pumpkins: they were sweet and had very big seeds. We always prepared vegetable pickles and medlars for the winter and stored them in a blanket in the attic. My brother or I would go upstairs and fetch some for the guests. That was the most pleasant day of the week, when we were eager to gather and listen to the stories, to learn something new.

I think my father wasn’t religious, because he spent most of his childhood away from home, working as a servant. When I was born, he was already old and got sick often. But he observed all laws. During the week he would smoke two to three cigarettes outside, if it was summer, or in the corridor, if it was winter, because my mother couldn’t stand the smoke and didn’t allow him to smoke inside. I asked him why he did that only in the evenings and he answered that he couldn’t smoke at work. But on Saturdays he didn’t smoke at all. [It’s forbidden to light fire on Sabbath.] While he was reading aloud, sometimes he would skip a passage, which a very religious Jew would never do. He winked at me, because I knew Ivrit, and I saw how he skipped some passages and was hurrying to finish the story, the legend, so that we could sit down to eat. He wasn’t one of those religious Jews, I don’t think there were such in Bulgaria. There are some Orthodox Jews in Israel; we call them ‘imbabucados.’ That word means ‘something which was too much’ in Ladino. They are too pedantic in a bad sense, because one can be pedantic for the sake of his work, but they were too pedantic - to the extreme.

My father went to the synagogue only on the high holidays. He didn’t have time to go there often, because he went to work. Once, on Taanit, when we were forbidden to eat and everyone would sit in the synagogue the whole day, he didn’t do that, but went to sleep, he found that unnecessary; he had the honor of playing the shofar. I loved the Taanit very much. Usually, on Saturdays we had a chicken slaughtered. One of the drumsticks was given to my father, the other to my brother, because he was a man, and I didn’t have one. When I was a child, I ate very little and was quite choosy. So, I sat at the table, eating nothing. Then my father would take the knife, divide his drumstick and give me half of it. But on Taanit, since they didn’t eat, they gave me the whole drumstick. And that’s why I loved that holiday.

And before Pesach the whole house has to be cleaned, no crumb of bread was to be seen anywhere. The wardrobes, the rugs, the curtains were cleaned, the whole house was painted again. I learned how to paint with distemper and oil paint very early. My mother tied the brush to a long stick and I painted the outside walls. Then we would go to the town’s bathroom. I said to my mother, ‘Now, we will become Chametz, too.’ Then we boiled all the dishes in ash, salt and soap – with no running water, but only with the pump in the yard. Everything had to shine. The tinsmith came to tin the baking dishes. Pesach is the greatest holiday. We didn’t eat leavened bread, only unleavened. In Vidin we made flat cakes from it. We made the cakes without yeast; they were as hard as stone. On Pesach we gathered in the corridor. This corridor led to all the other rooms. We would gather there and listen to the Legend [Haggadah], the book being read. Then we sat at the table.

My brother would be given a towel, a napkin for the waist and they placed a loaf of bread on his back symbolizing that he was carrying the bread our ancestors ate. The bread was then used in the cooking of various things, for example dumplings immersed in eggs for the soup. Usually at least two or three families came. My father would start reading the prayer. But before that, the unmarried woman in the family would hand a jug of water to the person reading to wash his hands because it was a sin if you didn't wash your hands. He would start reading the prayer and from time to time he would wash his hands again. He would read about what troubles God inflicted on the Egyptians: 'Snakes, lizards and natural disasters' and he would repeat that on and on. [The interviewee probably means locusts instead of lizards and snakes.]

For Purim, my mother made sweet ring-shaped buns with 'alkashul' [the filling of the bun, made of honey and walnuts]. I loved them. There's a belief that these sweets should be preserved exactly for Pesach. There's one month between Purim and Pesach. They take place during the early spring. The snow had just started to melt. My mother took a big earthen jar and filled it with such buns. We had an attic full of mice and we could hear them running around. Once she made my brother climb up and put the jar there so that nobody would eat the buns before Pesach. But I loved them very much and usually I would go up, take one and close the jar again. And when Pesach came, my mother said, 'Santo, go and fetch the jar, we will eat sweets now.' Santo fetched the jar and it was empty. My mother shouted at me, 'You ate them!' and I said, 'No, I didn't, the mice ate them.' My mother was angry that she wasn't able to observe the ritual. On this holiday we give away food.

My mother would buy a chicken. She boiled it, stewed it, took some fruit and vegetables, filled the basket, put a white napkin with embroidery on it and went to give it to someone in need. That person was called 'el mirkado' [Ladino for 'bought']. This meant that we 'bought' him, that we had made a vow to help him. And my mother would bring him food on all high holidays. But that had to happen in secret. He wouldn't have to feel offended that someone was helping him. She dressed officially and said she was going to her 'kupets' [dealer]. This was a different man every year. I understood that she was going to a different person by the way she cooked the food. She was convinced that that was the way to do it, although I didn't agree with her on that.

At some point, my father started going deaf and then my brother [Nessim], who was in Italy, invited him there for treatment. He made himself a suit and left for Italy. He didn't know any European language, but he left. I suppose the dust from the charcoals had settled in his ears and disturbed his hearing. And he returned with restored hearing. He also came with very nice clothes, which they bought for him there. When he returned, he opened a grocery store. But he sold a lot of goods on credit: sugar today, oil tomorrow. He couldn't imagine turning someone away, because they had no money. So, the grocery store went bankrupt. There was a terrible economic crisis at that time, in 1929 9. He went to my elder brother Nessim, who was already the director of the 'Tundzha' factory. Nessim told him, 'You go back to Vidin, I will send you the textiles, which stick out of the loom, and they have some machine oil on them and are a little bit torn.' He sold them in his store.

There were around 15 small stores one next to the other, all rented by Jews, one of which was my father's. They were very small, three square meters each. If some fabric was left unsold, he gave it to us to sew something for ourselves. I sewed myself a blouse for my graduation ball, because I had no money to buy one. Mostly Gypsy women came to the shop and they made loose Turkish trousers from the materials. They would buy a meter and a half of the material and my brother put

on a sign ‘Shop for Textile Lengths.’

This shop was all we had. So, he worked like that for some time until one nice day a neighbor, Bay Ilia, asked him to stand surety for him. Don’t worry, he told my father, lend me 100,000 levs, and I’ll return it to you. But he lied. When the loan had to be paid, he refused to do it since he went bankrupt and every month the bank deducted 1,000 levs from my father’s earnings. My father used to have the habit of sitting in front of the store, because he didn’t have many clients. But he could no longer stand seeing the man who lied to him and left the shop to my brother.

Yes, my father was a very nice man. Once my mother’s brother Solomon with his wife and two children, Leon and Victoria, arrived. I’m not sure where they came from, Turkey or Greece, but their life had been difficult and they came to live in Bulgaria. My father found a house for them in Vidin. The daughter Victoria was in the higher grades, she was a very good student. But my mother’s brother left for Israel and was killed by the Arabs. He couldn’t find work in Bulgaria. His wife remained alone with the two children. I visited them in Israel, at that time the daughter, Victoria, had passed away and the son had made a career, he did business with Germans and didn’t want to meet us, the common people coming from communist Bulgaria.

And once when I was 13-14 years old, my father told me he had received a letter from the municipality. Some relatives from Dedeagac asked my parents to help them because they had no money at all. My father took the task to heart. So, this family arrived with their four daughters – one of them had studied in a French college and knew how to read. My father wrote to my brother asking whether he would like to hire them to work for him. And since we knew they would come with no luggage whatsoever, my father said in the municipality that the people would need some household stuff and asked everyone who could afford it to help them. So, my mother and I took the laundry basket and started from house to house, collecting buckets, rugs, pillows, a mattress, everything people could spare. We placed all that in an entrance below the staircase, which had no windows. My brother and I would say to the people, ‘For we are all Jews,’ and since it was religious to give away, everyone gave us what they could. The heavier things we put in the yard.

We loaded everything onto carts; my father borrowed a wagon for the household belongings and went to Yambol. My brother hired them there. The mother stayed at home, one of the daughters sewed bras, the father worked in the shop and the other daughters were spinners. That’s how they managed to survive. And thanks to the firm belief that if you are a Jew and your fellow man is in trouble, you have to help him. That’s the kind of man my father was!

My school years

When my parents enrolled me in the Jewish school, it was very hard for me at first, because nobody at home knew Ivrit. My brother knew a word or two, but he wasn’t interested in school. In the first grade we had a special teacher, who was also the director and also taught us gymnastics. Learning Ivrit was hard and the teacher, Mr. Koen, always said, ‘You have no textbooks, you should pay attention in class to what I say to you and you should repeat to yourself what I’m writing.’

At that time we didn’t know how to write yet and it was very hard. We studied the letters for a whole year. Mr. Koen would always give us new words. And here’s how I tried to learn them: the staircase at home had two big and three small steps. I jumped on the steps and I would say ‘I’ on the first step, ‘You’ on the second one, ‘He’ on the third one, I would go back – ‘We,’ ‘You,’ ‘They.’ I

repeated them twenty times. Once my mother shouted, ‘Stop jumping on that staircase, you will break it!’ and I answered, ‘Leave me alone, I’m studying!’

When I passed to the second grade, my brother received some cubes as a present – when you rotate them, you make a picture. He asked me to give them back to him. I got very angry and threw them at him and hit him. My parents beat me very hard for that. He got sick. I thought it was because I had hit him, but it turned out that he had mumps. I was also not allowed to go to school for three weeks. After the three weeks, my mother, who had not had mumps as a child, also got sick. So, I had to stay home for another three weeks. Because of that I had to repeat the grade. I was very sad and depressed. I had been separated from my friends.

The Jewish school had four grades, and I studied five years. When I was in the second grade my brother went down with mumps. So, I was under quarantine for three weeks. Then my mother also caught it and our teacher in Ivrit, who was also the school headmaster, decided that I should repeat the year. We didn’t have any textbooks and I couldn’t catch up with the studies at home. I was happy when I received a ‘good’ [four out of six] as a grade. I studied a lot, because I had to repeat the grade. Once the teacher asked me to read aloud and I said, ‘Please, wait for me to take my pencil.’ I had the habit of underlining what I read in order to avoid making mistakes. The children laughed at me saying, ‘Are you reading with your mouth or with the pencil?’

Then I went to the junior high school. It was close to Kaleto [the old part of the town dating back from the Middle Ages]. I was happy that now we had a different teacher for every subject. One very nice teacher in mathematics said that I was very good at calculations. I remember her, Miss Vasileva. There were a lot of Wallachian students in the town. They wore bowler hats. They teased me a lot and called me Duda [short for Adela]. They would twist my arms and pull my hair. Once the Bulgarian teacher met me and I was crying because they had teased me. He asked me what my name was. I told him my name was Adela and he said that my name was very nice. He sent me to the teachers’ room to take a sheet of paper and a pen. He wrote down on the paper that there was no Duda at the school, but Adela. Then they stopped calling me Duda and I passed the three junior high school grades as Adela. This man was an idol for me, he taught me Bulgarian, taught me to read, to write and to think.

One third of the junior high school students were Jews. We were the best students in the school. I was a good student, studied a lot and was very good at mathematics. There was also a subject in religious studies at the school, but we, the Jews, were forbidden to take that class. In the winter when we had that subject, we had nowhere to go but out in the cold. We felt very offended and sad. In the summer we went into the yard, but there was nowhere for us to go in the winter. Wherever we went, they banished us. We were five or six students: three girls and two or three boys.

I would sing all the time. I had a very strong voice. Every day my father gave me money for breakfast. Once I decided to learn to play the violin. I bought a violin and I saved the five levs he gave me daily to pay for my violin lessons. But at one point I had no money to pay my tuition fee. I was in the second grade in the high school. Then I sold my violin; I realized that I had no interest in music. I paid my tuition fee with the money.

When my brother grew up, he started buying newspapers and I read the supplements, which published excerpts from short stories, novels. I signed up in the ‘Sviat’ [World] community house.

The more years that passed, the thicker the books became. After I finished all the work at home around midnight, I had to study. Studying what? All night I read Russian classic literature. Then I read Tolstoy 10, Dostoevsky 11 and Western European literature: Sinclair and Emil Zola. I shared the room with my brother and I wasn't allowed to light the lamp, because he couldn't sleep. I saved money from what they gave me for breakfast. I bought myself a battery and read under the sheets during the night. I read using that little lamp with a diameter of five centimeters.

When I was a student in the second grade, we were about to celebrate Chanukkah in the neighborhood cinema. So, we prepared a performance, I was appointed to be first candle. My mother bought me a dress made of black velvet with a white collar. After me the second candle came on stage and then all the other five. I was very proud that I was the first one. We lit only one candle at home on that holiday. My father was more interested in having enough food on the table so that we wouldn't catch tuberculosis.

School wasn't the most important thing for me. I didn't take part in school life. My attention was directed towards the Hashomer Hatzair organization 12. I became a member at the age of 13. In the last grade of the junior high school I was given a leaflet proclaiming the establishment of a Jewish state. A committee was organized and we went to the meetings. One of the requirements was that if the Jewish state was founded, we had to go and live there. My family didn't approve of those meetings and forbade me to go there. I went there every evening, although my mother didn't allow me. We loved singing and danced folklore dances there. We were divided into groups. There were people two years older than me studying in high school and two years younger than me in elementary school. We had lectures on different topics, for example, what religion was, we talked much about emancipation.

There was no television in those times and we passed the time reading and discussing the books. But we had different views on what we had read and we argued. For example, we argued about 'Nora,' by Ibsen. We argued about the emancipation of women, whether it was right, what its limits should be and so on. These were our everyday activities. In Hashomer Hatzair, we tried to build our personalities so that we would be able to lead the others and make decisions. We, the Jews, were a bit like sectarians; we had to be, because we weren't preparing to live in peaceful conditions, we were preparing to go to Israel. There was no Israel at that time, but Palestine, which had a negative attitude towards us.

I had a friend at school, Sophie Pinkas. She was the first student in class. She showed me that life can be very different, not only those pastel rugs and no curtains. Her family was rich. Her father had a shop in the center of the town. She was very beautiful and every year they went to Belgrade [today Serbia and Montenegro] and brought her dresses. I envied her, because I didn't have such things. I saw pajamas for the first time at their place. Once I stayed at their house and when we went to bed in the evening I put on my gown and she put on her pajama. I asked her, 'Won't we sleep, what's that thing you've put on?' And she answered, 'But this is a pajama.' I also saw a gramophone for the first time there. Since her mother was afraid of leaving her alone in the house, I came to keep her company, because my father was respected and they thought that I was a serious child. They had plush curtains at home, plush blankets, and baths. Once we went on the balcony and she sat on a rocking chair and invited me to sit down, too. I declined, because I was afraid to sit on it. Afterwards, our paths went in different directions.

My other friend was Luisa. She was a member of Hashomer Hatzair. But her mother made her give it up. She listened to her, but she was very pretty and she started dating a married man. She acquired a bad reputation and that was how it all ended.

I was in the town's leadership of the Hashomer Hatzair then. But I was evicted, because we were being prepared for farmers and we were sent to the villages to do farm work. But when I started studying at university, they told me to choose between studying and farming. So, I told them that I couldn't give up my studies and leave my parents alone.

When I finished high school, my father enrolled me in the free university in Sofia. But the university was closed for reasons unknown to me, so I was transferred to the university in Varna, where I continued my studies in the same field, Economics. There I got in touch with the progressive-minded people. I felt my place was among them.

At that time, my father got sick; he had a bladder stone and was always wetting his pants. My mother spent all her time looking after him and washing his clothes. The mineral baths opened in Yambol at that time and he went there for treatment. One day he slipped in the bath. He was a very tall man and probably weighed around 100 kilograms. Nobody in the family was as tall as him. So, he fell down, lost consciousness and they poured cold water on him. He caught bronchopneumonia. A Jewish hospital had just opened in Sofia and he was transferred there. My brother was on some business trip and they called my mother and me to tell us that he was in a very bad condition. He couldn't eat. His tongue was swollen. I was very frightened. He couldn't swallow. He died at the age of 72 at the hospital. The year was 1938.

There were some debts yet to be paid, and my brother did that. My mother and I remained at home. We buried him in accordance with the Jewish ritual: we sat [shivah] doing nothing for seven days. Relatives and neighbors would come to bring us food and the people mourning would do nothing. The rabbi would come during the day to read and when he left, we would eat the food brought to us. If there was no food, my mother would sit mourning and I would make something to eat. My brother made a big gravestone out of marble for him.

After my father's death we came to Sofia, and my mother sold everything, even our water pump. It was very hard for me after my father died. I loved him very much. And we didn't have any money, not even my brother. There was help from nowhere. We sold everything we had: clothes, the sewing machine, whatever dowry we had. I didn't even have money to pay for my diploma. My sister Zhaneta gave me money for that and that's how I graduated. We rented a room. I applied for a job. I worked in an attorney's office for a whole year. I still have some knowledge in this field. He was dealing with claims against people in debt and I assisted him with the accountants.

This was an insurance company named OREL, which is still in that same building, it was then outside the town. I walked on foot for two hours to get to work. It was very cold. I arrived at work freezing, wanted to drink some tea, but my boss was looking at the clock. My salary was 2,000 levs, and a bottle of vegetable oil was worth 1,000 levs. We lived in the house of good people, but we had no money. After some time I found out that my mother went to various houses to do the washing so that we had enough bread. Our bread was a bit sour, made of maize and something else. When we cut it, it stuck to the knife, but I had to eat it, because I was working. It was a very hard year.

During the war

After a year, we were forced to move to Haskovo [in 1943, as a result of the anti-Jewish laws]. We weren't allowed to work in Haskovo. We lived in a small corridor. We put a mattress there every evening and slept on the floor. People passed by there to get to their rooms. We didn't have a man to take care of us. Men went and bought food in the black-market for their families, and we were given tomatoes to eat. I can't eat tomatoes since then. It was already in 1943, and the fascists were going to lose the war and the regime wasn't so rigid in some towns. So, my mother made me go to my sister [Zhaneta], and she herself went to Ruse, to a friend of hers. I went to my sister's village [Stezherevo]. There several other girls like me and I were taking care of the grape vines. We were paid for that. And my sister helped me and that's how I got through this. I tried to make shoes out of rope at a certain point, since I was without a job, but it was extremely hard. That was in 1944. Then I went to Pleven to work for the [Communist] Party, because I had already been involved in anti-fascist activities. But my mother and I wanted to get together, that's why we both moved to Sofia. They didn't want to let me go, because I had higher education.

My mother rented a room at a friend's in Sofia. I found one for myself, too. It wasn't a real room, but a room for the housemaids: with four doors, and extremely cold. What a life it was! Then I moved to another place, renting half a room. In 1948, we lived on my money, I worked and I was paid well. It was very hard for my mother, she wanted to go out and have a good time, because she had become a widow very early and there were candidates who wanted to marry her. She went to Israel, but my brother didn't have a room for her, he had no apartment, but lived in a very miserable place. She died during a storm [in 1949]. It was an accident. She lived in a wooden shed, which fell down during a storm. At first she managed to get out, but then she went back to get the mezuzah from the doorframe. Unfortunately, at that moment the whole house fell over her.

There were no graveyards at that time and she was buried in a soldiers' graveyard. I went to her grave five times. She's placed at a distance from the other graves and has a big stone instead of a monument. I don't know how they managed to move that stone there. Her name is inscribed on it. Now I only have my memories of her. She had her views that everything she did was right and that everything she did was for the children's sake.

After 9th September 1944 I took an active part in the party activities in Haskovo where I had been interned 13, and then in those in Sofia. I worked in the district committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party [BCP] 14 for a number of years. I have always been very serious in my work. While the other employees used to work until 6 or 7pm, I usually stayed until 1am. However, this reflected on my nervous system and I got a nervous disorder. I could stand neither phone ringing nor music playing. The doctors advised me to leave my job for a while. At that time I had just married. My husband was a military officer and he was able to provide for me. I was a very good housewife also; I never wasted money and strictly allocated it.

My husband

My husband was a silent and calm man. A military officer, neither tall, nor short, good-looking. We had been corresponding with each other before that, we had taken part in anti-fascist demonstrations together. I met him in Stezherevo; he had a friend living there who introduced us to each other. He invited me to the theater, he was very well read. But later it turned out that he was from the 'silent academy' [i.e. he didn't speak much]. He couldn't graduate from the Academy

in Svishtov. He was negligent, not trying too hard, an inert man. He did hard work and didn't mind doing household work either.

We lived like that for 30 years and raised two children. I looked after the children and did everything that was expected of me. He knew only 'no' in his life. For everything I asked him to do or buy, he said no. Let's buy a fridge – we shouldn't, let's buy a stove – we shouldn't. We already had two granddaughters, when he met an old love of his and we separated. But even nowadays I'm in very good relations with his sisters, Lyuba and Vera. He went to live with this old lover from Svishtov, but we got divorced three years later. After less than two years he died. Everything we have and we have achieved was thanks to me. I supported the children by myself.

My son [Oleg] was lazy; he didn't want to walk, only to sit in the baby carriage. When he grew up, he loved reading very much. He graduated from Medical University [in Sofia] and holds the professorship of Anesthesiology. He's an anesthesiologist now. Even when he was a student at university, Oleg was always the chairman of various scholarly circles.

My husband didn't want to have a second child. My pregnancy was very difficult. I had to lie in bed for a year. But I wanted a girl very much. My husband went to a summer camp with the army and I gave birth to my daughter [Vesela] after seven and a half months. She was like a mouse, weighing two kilograms. I cried a lot when she was born. Once I took her out on a walk in the baby carriage and a girl said to me, 'Why are you walking with that doll in the carriage?' 'It's not a doll, but a baby,' I replied. As a child she wasn't very tall, she was always sick. When she went to high school, she started growing in height. Now she's quite tall. She didn't help me a lot at home, but now she's a good housewife. She's a doctor; she graduated in medicine in Sofia, like her brother. But she's not interested in scholarly work. My daughter also had an unsuccessful marriage. She divorced and now she's looking after her child [Yulina].

I went to Israel a couple of times. I went for the first time in 1966 when I went to see my brother in Holon. He had married a German Jew, which I didn't like much. They had just had a son and performed the circumcision. The next time I visited other relatives of mine. They loved inviting me to visit and when I went there, I carried three suitcases of presents for them. They loved it when I told them about Bulgaria, because my nephews were born in Israel. During totalitarianism I didn't have any problems traveling to Israel.

It's my fault that my children weren't raised Jewish. I remember that when my son was in the first grade, he asked me what his nationality was. He had noticed that we celebrated Chanukkah and made sweets, which the other families didn't. Then I said that he was a Bulgarian, because he lived in Bulgaria and spoke Bulgarian. My children were informed about their origin, but they didn't feel Jewish.

I myself didn't observe the Jewish traditions. At the moment my physical condition doesn't allow me to cook. But people from the Jewish Home come and bring me matzah on Pesach and alkashul for Chanukkah. I receive ready-made food from the canteen of the Jewish Home every day.

In 1990 when there was a deep crisis in Bulgaria, my daughter and granddaughter went to Israel for four years. There my granddaughter learned Ivrit perfectly and graduated from her secondary education. Her knowledge of Ivrit helps her now in her work in the Historical Museum of the [Great] Synagogue. My granddaughter is very well-brought up and visits me every week.

To be honest, I don’t like present-day capitalism. It’s wrongly interpreted capitalism. Many economic problems aren’t solved in Bulgaria. I don’t accept the idea of having both very rich and very poor people. There are many such people now. Why should my daughter, whose job as an anesthetist is very hard, go and work at another place in order to pay her bills? Many Bulgarians hope that the situation will get better if we become a member of the European Union. Maybe that’s the only right way. [Editor’s note: Bulgaria became a member of the EU on 1st January 2007.]

Glossary

1 Sofia Great Synagogue
Located in the center of Sofia, it is the third largest synagogue in Europe after the ones in Budapest and Amsterdam; it can house more than 1,300 people. It was designed by Austrian architect Grunander in the Moor style. It was opened on 9th September 1909 in the presence of King Ferdinand and Queen Eleonora.

2 Mastika
Anise liquor, popular in many places in the Balkans, Anatolia and the Middle East. It is principally the same as Greek ouzo, Turkish raki or Arabic arak.

3 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.

4 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.

5 Law for the Protection of the Nation

A comprehensive anti-Jewish legislation in Bulgaria was introduced after the outbreak of World War II. The 'Law for the Protection of the Nation' was officially promulgated in January 1941. According to this law, Jews did not have the right to own shops and factories. Jews had to wear the distinctive yellow star; Jewish houses had to display a special sign identifying it as being Jewish; Jews were dismissed from all posts in schools and universities. The internment of Jews in certain designated towns was legalized and all Jews were expelled from Sofia in 1943. Jews were only allowed to go out into the streets for one or two hours a day. They were prohibited from using the main streets, from entering certain business establishments, and from attending places of entertainment. Their radios, automobiles, bicycles and other valuables were confiscated. From 1941 on Jewish males were sent to forced labor battalions and ordered to do extremely hard work in mountains, forests and road construction. In the Bulgarian-occupied Yugoslav (Macedonia) and Greek (Aegean Thrace) territories the Bulgarian army and administration introduced extreme measures. The Jews from these areas were deported to concentration camps, while the plans for the deportation of Jews from Bulgaria proper were halted by a protest movement launched by the vice-chairman of the Bulgarian Parliament.

6 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.

7 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.

8 Boza

A sweet wheat-based mildly alcoholic drink popular in Bulgaria, Turkey and other places in the

Balkans.

9 Crises of the 1930s
The world economic crisis that began in 1929 devastated the Bulgarian economy. The social tensions of the 1920s were exacerbated when 200,000 workers lost their jobs, prices fell by 50 percent, dozens of companies went bankrupt, and per capita income among peasants dropped by 50 percent between 1929 and 1933.

10 Tolstoy, Lev Nikolayevich (1828-1910)
Russian novelist and moral philosopher, who holds an important place in his country's cultural history as an ethical philosopher and religious reformer. Tolstoy, alongside Dostoyevsky, made the realistic novel a literary genre, ranking in importance with classical Greek tragedy and Elizabethan drama. He is best known for his novels, including War and Peace, Anna Karenina and The Death of Ivan Ilyich, but also wrote short stories and essays and plays. Tolstoy took part in the Crimean War and his stories based one the defense of Sevastopol, known as Sevastopol Sketches, made him famous and opened St. Petersburg's literary circles to him. His main interest lay in working out his religious and philosophical ideas. He condemned capitalism and private property and was a fearless critic, which finally resulted in his excommunication from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1901. His views regarding the evil of private property gradually estranged him from his wife, Yasnaya Polyana, and children, except for his daughter Alexandra, and he finally left them in 1910. He died on his way to a monastery at the railway junction of Astapovo.

11 Dostoevsky, Fyodor (1821-1881)
Russian novelist, journalist and short-story writer whose psychological penetration into the human soul had a profound influence on the 20th century novel. His novels anticipated many of the ideas of Nietzsche and Freud. Dostoevsky's novels contain many autobiographical elements, but ultimately they deal with moral and philosophical issues. He presented interacting characters with contrasting views or ideas about freedom of choice, socialism, atheisms, good and evil, happiness and so forth.

12 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.

13 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.

14 Bulgarian Communist Party

A new party founded in April 1990 and initially named Party of the Working People. At an internal party referendum in the spring of 1990 the name of the ruling Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) was changed to Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). The more hard-line Party of the Working People then took over the name Bulgarian Communist Party. The majority of the members are Marxist-oriented old time BCP members.