# Raina Blumenfeld

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Sofia
Bulgaria
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## My family background

My ancestors came to Bulgaria from Spain in the 15th century when they were expelled by Queen Isabella – and were accepted by the Ottoman Empire. All Jews who originate from Spain are called Sephardi. The language we speak is Old Spanish – Ladino, which is very precious, because it is spoken almost nowhere else. As far as I know, this language is maintained only in Toledo and fewer and fewer people speak it now – mainly people of my generation. The young ones don't know Ladino, because we couldn't pass it on to them, and therefore it is becoming extinct. Until 1944 [9th September 1944] 1 we used to speak that language, and I also spoke it as a child. It has been passed on from generation to generation, but after 1944, an assimilation of the Jewish population began in Bulgaria and that language 'declined'. I myself feel guilty for not having taught that language to my children. They don't understand it, and on some occasions, when my husband and I wanted to communicate something confidential to each other, we spoke Ladino.

I remember my paternal grandmother and my maternal grandfather from the time I was about 5 years old. At the beginning of the 20th century, my paternal grandparents, Israel and Reina Sabitai, had had twelve children, but four of them died from diseases when they were still infants. My father's family used to live in a yard in the Jewish quarter, known as Iuchbunar 2, and more precisely, Konyovitsa, on the corner of Positano Street and Pernik Street. This is the house where my father's family used to live and where I was born on 15th January 1929.

My father had a brother who was killed in the Balkan War [the First Balkan War] 3. One of his sisters went to the city of Plovdiv to work as a maid for a wealthy family, but the son of the landlord raped her and she, incapable of bearing the disgrace, drowned herself in the Maritsa River. Thus, four brothers and two sisters remained in Sofia, where they lived together in the same yard. Their small houses were positioned close to each other in a common yard. My father's brothers' names were Avram, Sabath and Yakov. My father's name was Yosif, although he was the firstborn son – and according to the Bible, he was supposed to be called Avram. My father was an Anglophile and I have heard that he often argued with his brother Avram, who was a Russophile. My father's sisters were called Buka, the elder one, and Esther, whom we used to call Sterina. Being the eldest of the family, my father was the most respected.

My father's elder sister, Buka, had four girls and one boy. One of the girls went to Palestine illegally in 1932-33. She was followed by my aunt's son. At that time they were forced to go to Palestine illegally, using different routes. In 1939 my aunt Buka, her husband Buko and their children Reni and Mati decided to emigrate to Palestine, too. They took their chance with a small Turkish sailing vessel, which wasn't quite stable and somewhere close to the Turkish coast it sank. The whole family drowned. Only a few people survived this disaster.

Since my paternal grandmother's name was Reina, the girls in all the families of her children were named after her. My birth name was also Reina and I graduated from high school under that name. But when I was appointed to work for the Ministry of Interior, I received documents where my name was written Raina. Due to that printing error, my name is Raina now. Despite that fact all my relatives and friends know me as Reina.

My mother's parents, Shabat and Rebecca, came from the town of Berkovtsa. My mother became orphan at a very early age - her mother died when she was 5 or 6. I don't even know my grandparents' family name. Her father remarried, but his second wife was a nasty woman who treated my mother very badly. From her father's second marriage she had five stepbrothers and stepsisters. Being a child herself – she helped to look after them and took on too much – she became a hunchback as a result of the heavy work.

## Growing up

My father, Josif Sabitai, was born in Sofia in 1900. He was a tinsmith and plumber. In 1928, a year before I was born, the winter was severely cold. Many water pipes and taps had cracked. That created plenty of work for my father and, putting a lot of efforts into it, he managed to make his fortune. And in the place of the one-roomed house, he built a house with two rooms, kitchen and a toilet inside, which was a great rarity at that time. We had hot water from a coal-heated boiler, too, which my father, being a very skilled craftsman, had connected to the stove. Four children were born in that house – one boy and three girls (including me). All the children used to sleep in the same room: my sisters and I on the bed and my brother on the divan. My parents occupied the smaller room. We grew up in such conditions and lived this way until 1946, when my brother went to France and the divan was vacated.

In 1928 my father established a Jewish society called Mitzvah Zion. This society engaged in charity and helped poor citizens of Jewish origin in Sofia. My father took part in the public life of Jews in Sofia. Together with the other well-off citizens of Jewish origin, he helped with the allocation of financial funds and different articles to his poorer compatriots through the Mitzvah Zion society.

The houses in the Jewish quarter were densely positioned – yard next to yard. Only Jewish families lived around us. There were some Bulgarian families living in the next street, and I had a very good personal friend, whose name was Kristinka. Later on, being teenagers, we used to go out together, too. Our relations [with the non-Jewish neighbors] were always very good. There were, however, such times, when Bulgarian boys teased us with the words: 'Come on, Moshe, go to Palestine!' My mother had taught me to answer: 'O.K., but you don't let us go!' I didn't like those moments, but otherwise people treated us very well. Apart from that, my mother was a very compassionate woman and she would constantly ask me to take leftovers from our food to people who were poorer than us.

Our family was comparatively well off because my father had succeeded in changing his fortune through his work as a tinsmith and plumber, and had even managed to open a scrap warehouse. The house he had built was at the corner of Pernik and Positano and for that time, it was one of the best in the quarter.

During the winters we used coal for heating and we had a shed full of coal. My mother used to give a bucket of coal to everybody who would ask her for some – she never refused anyone and always showed compassion for those poorer than us. There were many poor people at that time. The poorest Jewish families lived in our quarter. Wealthier Jews lived in the more central part of Sofia. When the Law for the Protection of the Nation [4] was introduced, the wealthier Jews had to move out of the city center, because they were denied the right to inhabit the area beyond Hristo Botev Boulevard, and they moved to our quarter.

There was a Jewish school at Osogovo Street in our quarter and one downtown – where Hotel Rila is now. Currently, a great dispute for the hotel land is under way, because the Jewish community started a lawsuit to get its property back. The building of the central Jewish school was destroyed during the bombings of Sofia during World War II.

My elder sister studied at the Jewish school until 4th grade. When my time to go to school came, my parents sent me to a Bulgarian school for reasons I never knew; therefore, I didn't study Hebrew. I went to a nursery school before going to the Vassil Levski school at Dimitar Petkov Street where I studied until 4th grade. Then I went to an elementary school at Pirotska Street. My most favorite subject was chemistry. Later on, I was interested in astronomy and read a number of books on astronomy, which I borrowed from libraries. I was greatly impressed by the fact that the most luminous star on the horizon was not Venus, but Sirius – the constellation Canis Major.

My brother Israel was born in 1923 and he is now an architect. He completed his primary education at a Jewish school. In 1946 he went to Paris as a delegate to a Jewish conference and remained there. When he was a small boy everybody addressed him with the diminutive Israeltiko. This name Tiko stuck with him and that is why we all called him by that name. The documents he was issued in France were in the name of Tiko Josiford –Yosif turned into Josiford. He has been living there for many years.

He is married and has three daughters, who are still not married even though they are of age. He has two specialties – architecture and urbanism. In order to be able to teach, he had to specialize in Algeria where he lived for ten years, and then devoted himself to his professorship. My brother managed to come to Bulgaria no sooner than 19 years after his departure, because then he was on the records as a non-returnee, who had emigrated without the authorities' official permission. He managed to come only due to the fact that his name was now Tiko Josiford, and not Israel Yosif Israilov. This is why the Bulgarian authorities could not establish his real identity. He arrived by car via Yugoslavia, with his wife and one of his children.

My elder sister Rebecca was born in 1929. She worked as a dressmaker. She got married and had two children, Mariana and Mario, who are also married and have one child each. In 1986, unfortunately, Rebecca was run over by a police car and died.

My other sister's name is Ziumbiula [Ziumbiul means hyacinth], whom we all called Zelma. She was born in 1931 and graduated from the Medical University as a doctor. For a long time she

worked as a doctor in Bulgaria, then went to Algeria where, at the same time, my brother was doing his specialization. He took both my mother and my sister to live with him. My sister lived there for some time; then she married a Belgian. Naturally she moved to Belgium where she spent ten years and gave birth to a girl. She separated from the Belgian and returned to Bulgaria. Now she is a pensioner. Her daughter had a good relationship with a young Belgian, whom she married, and now they live in Vienna. Currently [in 2002] my sister is staying with them, helping to look after their baby.

Until 1944 we used to celebrate all the Jewish holidays, as we were supposed to. We celebrated Rosh Hashanah, Pesach, during the eight days of which we could eat only unleavened bread – matzah and boyo. [In the past poorer Jews used to make bread only with water and flour, without any salt and years , this was called boyo.] No bread was brought to the house [during Pesach]. For Pesach all kitchen utensils had to be replaced. Special utensils were brought out for the holiday and taken back to the basement for the rest of the year. My mother used to do the whole preparation for the holiday. She used to make pastry from matzah and she made the famous burmoelos, sweet or salty ones, from the saturated and squeezed matzah with eggs added to it, which we had for breakfast every day [during Pesach]. My mother would go out in the yard and cook burmoelos for us on a brazier. She also used to cook leek hamburgers, which we called leek-made friticas. Everything on the table was kosher. When a chicken had to be cooked, I was sent to the synagogue where the chicken had to be killed by the shochet according to a special ritual. There was a special butcher shop in the quarter where kosher meat was sold –beef because no pork was allowed into the house.

Especially for Pesach, our house, being the largest one, was stripped of all its furniture – beds, wardrobes and so on – and all other families, living in our yard, would put a table in the empty room and gather there to prepare the meals necessary for the holiday. My father, who was the eldest, used to read the Haggadah in Ladino. We always had matzah, boyo and a special mixture, made of walnuts, some marmalade, dates and sultanas on the table. All these were mixed together and placed on a lettuce leaf. It was done for the welfare of the country, which was then Palestine. This meal was called acharosa [charoset]. When my father was reading the Haggadah a piece of matzah and boyo were wrapped in serviettes and given to us, the children, and we had to throw them over our backs in order to be ready to go to Palestine. Everybody had to eat from the meal mentioned in the Haggadah. On the following day my parents used to put their best clothes on and go to the synagogue. My mother would always put a hat on and my father, a long tallit, made of Shantung silk with the traditional black ribbons and fringes at the edges, and a kippah.

My family used to celebrate Sabbath. My mother did the shopping and cooking on Fridays. On Friday nights the whole family gathered. The traditional meals like chicken, ritually killed in the synagogue, pastry with minced beef bought from the kosher butchery, and chicken soup or meatball soup from that minced meat were served. I remember that there was even one pear on the table, my father would cut it into four pieces and would give a piece to each of us, his children. On Friday night before Sabbath and on Saturday morning we used to go the synagogue. The atmosphere on Sabbath was always more special and more solemn than on other days. The table was always rich and full of kosher food. On Sabbath my father also used to read the Torah people’s history in Ladino.

We celebrated Purim, too. We used to walk the streets masked, and the children gave performances, for which we were given money. We celebrated Fruitas 5. The first day of this holiday is when almonds in Palestine begin to blossom. I was born on this holiday. The date of the Purim holiday changes with respect to the official calendar, therefore my birthday does not always coincide with the holiday. I always celebrate my birthday on 15th January.  For Purim mothers used to tie up 40 different fruits, put them in a pouch and in the morning, when we awakened, we would all find such a pouch next to our beds. Positano was the main Jewish street at that time and there were many shops there, from which one could buy such fruits. Every family would buy fruit according to their possibilities, so that Fruitas could be celebrated.

The other big holiday is the Festival of Light or, as we call it, Chanukkah. According to the history of this festival when the Roman Empire devastated the Temple and placed their idols there, five thousand warriors calling themselves Maccabees, liberated the temple. They wanted to light a candle in the Temple, but couldn't find that special oil which had to burn. Finally they found a mug with a tiny quantity of that oil, which had to be treated in advance in order to make it burn. It happened so that that small quantity of oil kept burning for eight days and this is why there are special candelabras for this holiday and every day of it one candle more is lit to commemorate it.

On Yom Kippur nothing is eaten until sundown. The last meal before the fast is at six o'clock the previous night. I remember that we, children, did not eat in memory of all who had died for Palestine (then). We, children, used to carry only a quince in our hand, which we were supposed to only smell and we had to show our tongues to prove that we hadn't eaten anything – when the tongue was white, it proved that you hadn't eaten and that you had endured the hours you were not allowed to eat.

When I was a child I knew a lot of games, which are not played nowadays. Boys and girls used to play The King-Gateman. This game wasn't only known by the Jewish population in Sofia. Two boys hold each other's hands above their heads to make a gate. All the others line up in a queue and pass between them, singing: 'King-and-Gateman! Open the gates and let the King's army pass through! Open, close, leave only one man!' When the last word is sung, the two boys, through whose 'gate' the others pass, suddenly drop their hands and catch somebody. The last one to remain takes the place of one of 'gate-boys' and so everything is repeated on and on. We also used to play a men's game, 'jelick', we would dig a hole, put a piece of wood on top of it and with another piece of wood had to throw it out as far as possible.

When I was a child we went on holidays very often. We had to do it because my father suffered from sciatica, and every summer we used to go to the hot mineral spas in Gorna Banya [a village close to Sofia, which is now a district of Sofia]. We used to load a horse cart with our luggage, rent a room in the village and spend a month there. We went to Gorna Banya for three years, then to Ovcha Kupel for three years. At that time my mother took good care of all her four children and used to make 'chateau' for us every morning. It is made of well-beaten egg white, and then the yoke and sugar are added, all this is stirred well and is eaten with bread. I will not forget an incident, when our whole family of six persons had gathered in an alcove in Ovcha Kupel to have our meal and a woman who was a tenant in the same house, asked mother whether all the children were hers. My mother answered with a saying in Ladino: 'Your eye – in a basket!' This meant to protect oneself from bad thoughts of other persons.

## During the war

In 1939 the Law for the Protection of the Nation was adopted and all Jews had to wear yellow badges. I was already 10 and had to wear one. I remember that there was another girl of Jewish origin in the School of Economics where I studied. We both wore badges, but that was not a big problem because the other girls didn't pay attention to it.

Before we were interned, we started selling our belongings. Villagers bought our furniture dirt-cheap. We sold absolutely everything. A lot of goods remained in the house. For example, my mother had prepared a suitcase full of dowry for us, the three girls. She gave it to some acquaintances of hers for safekeeping, but we never saw it again. In 1943 we were interned to the town of Ferdinand [today Montana]. We were isolated there in a Jewish quarter and were permitted to go out for only two hours a day. Something funny happened there. My father had an employee from Ferdinand in his tinsmith workshop in Sofia – he was called Peno. This man Peno had a tinsmith workshop in Ferdinand. My father got in touch with him and he became Peno's worker. We were not allowed to work then, but my father used to sneak into his workshop to help him.

Ferdinand was a small town with a population of about 5,000. We lived in terrible conditions. Initially we were accommodated in a school with another ten families. We, children, however, couldn't feel the impact of the situation as it was felt by our parents, who strived for our bare existence. On the other hand we, the youths, led an exceptionally organized life – perhaps our Jewish gene was such – and that helped us cope with the adversities. The authorities allowed us to go out only between 5 and 7pm. We were banned from going out at any other time. We always used to get together during those two hours of freedom, organizing countless literary evenings with lots of poetry reading and songs. We didn't feel bored then – we read a lot and exchanged books amongst ourselves. I remember that there were times when I read 50 pages an hour. We had a very intensive and rich cultural life because we had nothing else to do. We were not allowed to work or to go out, and this enabled us to occupy ourselves with arts.

After some time, we were allowed to rent a house and, we rented a three-roomed village house with a family that hade been our neighbors in Sofia. The owners went to live in the barn; two rooms were occupied by our parents and in the third room our fathers knocked up two rows of wooden plank-beds, where the lot of us – six children – slept. We lived like that till 9th September 1944. Then we received a notice that our house had been sold. That notice stated the amount for which it had been sold and the taxes charged, calling on my father to receive the money from the sale. My father said that he had no house for sale and that he didn't want to receive any money.  Thus the sale of the house didn't materialize.

When we went back to Sofia around 9th September 1944, we found strangers living in our house. We filed a lawsuit straight away in order to recover possession of it. During that period we lived with one of my father's brothers, who occupied a room and a kitchen. He moved to the kitchen and let us have the room. After a while we managed to regain possession of our house, which still exists at Pernik Street. Currently this house is unoccupied. For a long time my niece lived there, but she bought an apartment and moved away. We tried to lease it, but things didn't work out, and we now prefer to keep it empty.

During the internment, Jewish men endured an incredible stress and it was their shoulders, which were overburdened with worries to provide for their families. Many young men died due to the

huge torment they were subjected to. These include my father, too, who died at the age of 47. The fathers of a number of my relatives and friends passed away young as a result of what they had lived through.

I remember that after 9th September 1944, we received aid from the Joint 6 – not financial aid, but mainly foodstuffs and clothes. We were entitled to six pieces of clothing per person and, being six in the family, we got a lot of clothes. Since my elder sister had learnt to sew, my father instructed us to take large sizes of clothes, which my sister altered to make them fit. I remember tasting margarine for the first time in my life then and we were also given chocolates and blankets. This aid started in the first years after the war and continued till 1948/49, when a large part of the Jews immigrated to Israel. During the big economic crisis in Bulgaria in the 1990s we also received considerable aid in foodstuffs.

After 9th September 1944, I became a member of the Uniform Youth Students Union and I had leftist convictions. Afterwards, I also became a member of the Revolutionary Youth Union 7. This club of this organization was at Strandja Street in our district. It was there that I met my husband. He was a member of the Communist Party, but I wasn't.

## Post-war

I met my husband in 1946. We went out for three years before we got married. I was 19 when I got married in 1948 and moved to Bratya Miladinovi Street, where my two daughters were born. Thus, my mother and one of my sisters remained in our house at Pernik Street. In the 1980s we were given an apartment, and then my mother and my sister moved to the house at Bratya Miladinovi Street.

My husband was a young Ashkenazi Jew – a German Jew. At that time it was very prestigious to interbreed, because German Jews were one step more eminent than us, the Spanish Jews, the Sephardi. My husband's name is Haim Blumenfeld. His father, who came from Romania, deserted the Romanian army during the Balkan War and found himself in the town of Haskovo, where he met my husband's mother. After they got married, their first baby was a girl who was four years older than Haim. When he was barely six months old his family went to Palestine. His mother was a machine knitter, his father, a tinsmith. They took all the equipment they needed for practicing their trades to Palestine. They lived there for six years, but couldn't adapt to life there. So, they sold all their equipment and returned to Bulgaria via Turkey.

My husband studied at a Jewish school until 5th grade. After about 40 years, when the relations between Israel and Bulgaria were re-established, somehow suddenly all his knowledge of Hebrew came back to him. Our three visits to Israel and the numerous guests that started coming here, completely restored his Hebrew and he started speaking the language quite fluently. Everybody was surprised, but Hebrew was obviously very well taught in Sofia at that time.

Before we were interned, I had studied at a vocational school for one year. Later we were denied right of education, but when we returned to Sofia, I passed the 6th grade exams [which corresponds to the 10th grade at high school in the present educational system] and a year later I graduated with a diploma. I started working as a commercial worker in shops and warehouses. Wherever I worked I have never experienced any problems due to my Jewish origin. But I felt a covert assimilation of the Jews, which manifested itself in the fact that we could not openly speak

Ladino and also in the uneasiness caused by our different-sounding names.

My husband didn't allow us to speak Ladino at home and when we had to say our names, he would always ask me do give my name first, which sounded more Bulgarian – particularly after the mistake of my name-change from Reina to Raina. His family name Blumenfeld was unintelligible for Bulgarians. We had an incident when even a medical nurse found it difficult to write his name. Despite all this I am very proud of my family name. Even when my second daughter was born and I was told I had a baby girl, I felt sorry that there was no one to inherit my family name.

When our first daughter was born in 1949 we had to name her after someone from my husband's clan. Chaldeans, however, have a tradition not to give a child the name of a living grandfather. This is why my first daughter was named after her great-grandfather on my husband's side, whose name was Hertzel. So we gave her the name of Hertzelina Blumenfeld. My second daughter's name is Zoya. She was born in 1953. I wondered for six days after she was born what name I should give her. Then I asked my elder daughter, who at that time attended a nursery school, and she said she wanted her younger sister to be called Zoya.

All my relatives immigrated to Israel in 1948/49. During the years that followed, my ties with them were very limited. My husband worked for the Ministry of Interior and for that reason his sister couldn't go to Israel. In the 1960s and the 1970s relations between Bulgaria and Israel were not very good. We had certain problems with the authorities and were summoned to give explanations. When my husband was sent to the Soviet Union to study in 1964, his sister took advantage of that and left for Israel. We were also summoned to give explanations about my brother who had emigrated to France in 1946 and was declared a non-returnee.

My husband and I went to Hungary on holidays soon after the events of 1956 8. I was against the provoked military actions even more so because I had seen very young men there whose hair had turned completely white from the horrors they had seen. Now I positively evaluate Eastern Europe's opening to the West. This terminated the division and confrontation between different societies. This change facilitated world politics.

My elder daughter Hertzelina graduated as pharmacist and now owns two chemist shops. She is well off, but is preoccupied with the problems that small businesses are currently experiencing in Bulgaria. She has to spend whole days [working] to solve bureaucratic things. Her husband is a textile engineer, but it is very difficult for him to find a job. My younger daughter is an economist. Her husband is also economist, and it was not until a few months ago that he found a job with a company for trademark alcohol. Both of my daughters have mixed marriages – they married Bulgarians. They have two children each – Zoya's sons are called Martina and Andrey, and Hertzelina has a son, Victor, and a daughter Irena. Zoya's sons observe Jewish traditions and they emigrated to Israel two years ago [in 2000]. With the assistance of our relatives who emigrated there in 1948/49, they succeeded in settling very well. They adapted themselves very quickly and learned the language. They even managed to come back to Bulgaria twice.

I retired in 1984. A woman of 55 is capable of working longer, but my husband broke his leg and I had to stay home to look after him. Before the political change in Bulgaria in 1989 our life was better. My husband had a good salary and a pension then. We had a better life, traveled a lot, and had good friends. We used to go to the movies, to theater, and to restaurants all the time. I am used to this way of life and now I miss cultural life very much. Before 1989, my husband and I used

to go on holiday very often, and when he was offered a plot of land at the seacoast, he refused to take it, because whenever we wanted to go on holiday we could go anywhere. Our elder daughter, however, got very enthusiastic about the idea of having a villa and she takes great pleasure in going to Lakatnik, where she has a piece of land and a house.

I have been a widow for two years now. My husband died in 2000. I had a very good life with him and I miss him terribly now. I live alone. Now, together with members of the Golden Age Club of our Shalom organization in Sofia, I often go to concerts and to the theater whenever I have a chance. The problem is that I have to come home quite late and with the current rate of crime this is a bit frightening. I have a friend who lives in the same block of flats as me and although she is much younger than me, we go out and come back together. I always take two invitations to concerts or theater performances – one for my friend – and thus, I satisfy my passion for cultural life. My daughter even finds that I lead a much more diversified life than her. I participate in the management of the Section 'Disabled Persons', because I am myself a disabled person. There we also have organized life. We meet once a month, deliver communications and try to go to some theatrical or musical performance. The community pays for the tickets.
I went to visit my brother in France the year that my husband passed away. My brother invited me to cheer me up because I was crushed with grief. We went to the Rossini Festival in Italy, then I visited my niece in Vienna. She took us to the synagogue twice. The Vienna synagogue is very nice, but ours in Sofia is more beautiful. The community there, however, is better. The singers in the synagogue in Vienna were very good tenors and sang magnificently. I liked it so much that when we went out, my sister, my niece and I started singing a Jewish song in Hebrew. Then a woman came to us and hugged us because we had made an impression on her – being Jews and knowing that song.

I have been to Israel three times – in 1966, 1987 and 1992. Within half a century only, Israel has turned the desert into a garden. Despite all efforts of the Jewish state, the situation continues to be depressing due to the conflicts with the Arabs. People in Israel live from day to day and do everything as best as they can, because they aren't sure if they'll live to see the next day. I think that America must direct its efforts towards terrorism in Israel, too, where terror against the population has increased lately.

My children have their own commitments. They have set up their lives well and have no time for me. The Jewish community helps me diversify my life. On Mondays and Wednesdays I attend the Health Club, where I was the bursar for a few years. I participate in the Ladino Club where I hope to regain my knowledge of that language. Next summer a meeting of Ladino speaking Jews called Esperanza will be held and I will take part in it. I also attend the Golden Age Club and participate in all events organized by it.

## Glossary

**1 9th September 1944**
The day of the communist takeover in Bulgaria. In September 1944 the Soviet Union unexpectedly 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.

**2 Iuchbunar**
The poorest residential district in Sofia; the word is of Turkish origin and means ‘the three wells’.

**3 The 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 nationalist 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 in 30th May 1913 with the Treaty of London, that gave most of European Turkey to the allies and also created the Albanian state.

**4 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 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 expulsed 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 occupied Macedonia and Thrace the Bulgarians treated the Jews with exceptional cruelty. The Jews from these areas were deported to concentration camps, while the plans for the deportation of Jews from Bulgaria was halted by a protest movement launched by the vice-chairman of the Bulgarian Parliament.

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

**6 Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)**
The Joint was formed in 1914 with the fusion of three American Jewish committees of assistance, which were alarmed by the suffering of Jews during WWI. In late 1944, the Joint entered Europe’s liberated areas and organized a massive relief operation. It provided food for Jewish survivors all over Europe, it supplied clothing, books and school supplies for children. It supported cultural amenities and brought religious supplies for the Jewish communities. The Joint also operated DP camps, in which it organized retraining programs to help people learn trades that would enable them to earn a living, while its cultural and religious activities helped re-establish Jewish life. The Joint was also closely involved in helping Jews to emigrate from Europe and from Muslim countries.

The Joint was expelled from East Central Europe for decades during the Cold War and it has only come back to many of these countries after the fall of communism. Today the Joint provides social welfare programs for elderly Holocaust survivors and encourages Jewish renewal and communal development.

**7 Revolutionary Youth Union (also called the Union of Young Workers)**

A communist youth organization, which was legally established in 1928 as a sub-organization of the Bulgarian Communist Youth Union. After the coup d'etat in 1934, when the parties in Bulgaria were banned, it went underground and became the strongest wing of the BCYU. Some 70% of the partisans in Bulgaria were members of it. In 1947 it was renamed Dimitrov's Communist Youth Union, after Georgi Dimitrov, the leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party at the time.

**8 1956**

It designates the Revolution, which started on 23rd October 1956 against Soviet rule and the communists in Hungary. It was started by student and worker demonstrations in Budapest started in which Stalin's gigantic statue was destroyed. Moderate communist leader Imre Nagy was appointed as prime minister and he promised reform and democratization. The Soviet Union withdrew its troops which had been stationing in Hungary since the end of World War II, but they returned after Nagy's announcement that Hungary would pull out of the Warsaw Pact to pursue a policy of neutrality. The Soviet army put an end to the rising on 4th November and mass repression and arrests started. About 200,000 Hungarians fled from the country. Nagy, and a number of his supporters were executed. Until 1989, the fall of the communist regime, the Revolution of 1956 was officially considered a counter-revolution.