

Avram Moisei Pinkas And His Granddaughter Irina Veselinova Sarafova



My granddaughter Irina Veselinova Sarafova and I. The picture was taken in 1988-89 in Sofia.

My ancestors came somewhere from Central Europe yet during the Ottoman Yoke here. Memoirs of an Austrian diplomat who arrived in Vidin in 1838 read that he was welcomed here by a Pinkas who was an interpreter at the Austrian Embassy in Vidin. The text also says that this Pinkas had already adapted himself to the surrounding Balkan situation and had already lost his European and Austrian 'polish'. The roots of the Pinkas family in Bulgaria start from Vidin, go through Lom and reach Ruse. In a book about the Jews in Vidin I found the name of my grandfather who was something like a street vendor. I thought he was a trade intermediary in the grain crops business. The father of the famous Bulgarian painter Jules Pascin (who lived and worked in Paris at the beginning of XX century) was in the wheat trade and I thought my grandfather worked for his company. But perhaps there is something I don't know. My grandfather moved to Ruse from Lom. He was a middle-class man - when he arrived in Ruse he bought a house from a Turk. It was probably cheap because the Turk was to emigrate and the house was an adobe. My grandfather's name was Mair [Moisey Pinkas], while my grandmother was Bea [Pinkas (nee Almozino)] - Beatrice. She was an intelligent woman. She used to read books in Ladino. At home, they spoke Spanish, but my grandfather could speak Bulgarian, too.

My mother's family came from Razgrad. Researchers of economy in Bulgarian territory of that period found the name of my maternal great-grandfather in some Turkish papers. His name was Sadak Geron and he was a guarantee to people who took loans. My grandmother told me that a long row of shops in the Razgrad's main street was owned by her father. Sadak Geron was rich and helped debtors. When the Russian-Turkish war kicked off, he got frightened and gave a bag of gold coins to each of his children, so that they would hide it. After that, he moved to live in Palestine. In old Hebrew Sadak or Sadik means 'Saint'. He moved to Palestine after the Liberation of Bulgaria.

My brother told me he found his traces there - a professor in the Jerusalem University was telling that a Sadak Geron helped him when he moved to Palestine, so that he could study and become a professor. My maternal grandfather Avram Geron was a trader - intermediary in the leather business in Razgrad. He used to travel around the villages in winter when people were sticking some of their livestock and he was buying the leather. But he didn't have good luck with this undertaking. He had three daughters and a son. After the Liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman Yoke in 1978 he moved to live in Ruse. My maternal grandmother's name was Simha - an old Jewish name, something like the Bulgarian Sofia [Editor's note: actually the name is of Greek origin (Sophia) and means 'wisdom']. She was a housewife and she couldn't speak Bulgarian - she could speak Ladino and Turkish. But my grandmother and grandfather were no longer rich - in fact they were quite poor, because as my mother used to tell me - when they were in Ruse they didn't have what to eat and my grandfather used to cook a salt of lemon with water instead of soup. They used to wear standard clothes.