

Leon And Berta Kalaora



These are my wife Berta and I after our wedding in Shumen. This picture was taken in 1944. We both wear the degrading yellow stars. We left our sponsors, Uncle Avram Farhi and his wife Mari Farhi, to have fun and we went home to prepare our rucksacks because we were about to go underground. I was sought by the authorities as an active participant in the illegal resistance against fascism and the groups in Shumen were uncovered by the police. The progressive movement was broken up. So, we were in serious danger of being caught. Then we waited for Stoian Radoslavov who was deputy commander of the Shumen partisan group. After 9th September 1944, the day of the communist takeover in Bulgaria, when he told his memories, he never forgot to mention Berta and me: 'Only three secure Jewish apartments had remained: that of the Kalaora family, of Albert Basat and of Baruh Grimberg.' In Shumen Berta and I lived in a room with no windows, three by three and a half meters. A small sagging Turkish house plastered up with mud on the outside. We did not have any money to rent another house and that one at least was in the Shumen Jewish neighborhood near Tumbul Mosque. Despite the risk, the humiliation and the poverty, there were things that brought us much joy. Such an example was Kiril Angelov, my employer in Sofia. He owned the shop in which I worked as a press operator. He was a craftsman, a very humble man. He supported me from the day we met, especially during the Law for the Protection of the Nation. He did all he could to send us money, because he knew that we were starving. Even after I married, he came to Shumen to see me and brought some things I could sell and use the money. At that time, in order to make ends meet, I dug hiding places in Shumen. The money I received was only enough to buy rice and yogurt.