

## Merkado Mois Natan In His Office In Ruse



This is my father Mercado Mois Natan in his office in Ruse around 1931-32.

My father worked all his life without a day off. He took money as a compensation for his entitled holidays so that we would make ends meet. When we were children, we were sent to our grandparents in Varna for the summer. Like my father, my mother also did not go on holiday. When my father retired and came to Sofia, we took him to a vacation home in Bankya. [Bankya is a small town near Sofia, famous for its nice air and healing properties and with its healing mineral water. There are a lot of vacation homes in Bankya. During totalitarian times the state leader at that time Todor Zhivkov had a residency there]. My mother was at a sanatorium at that time. And my father said, 'It turns out it is very nice to have a break'.

My parents were part of the Jewish community. My father was in the leadership of the Zionist organization 'General Zionists'. My mother was not interested in politics. They were Zionists, but later under the influence of [their friends] Nikolay and Olga Spasovi they started sympathizing with the communists. After 9th September 1944 [the day of the communist takeover in Bulgaria] my father became a member of the Bulgarian Communist Party and my mother remained 'non-party communist'. My parents got on very well with their neighbors. When the mother of Tosho and Boianka died, the two children were twins, my mother looked after them. They lived in the house next to ours with their father Bai [uncle] Ivan, who was a tailor. They had an elder brother Lyubo who was the age of my brother, while the twins were one year older than me. We played together. Most of my parents' friends were Jews. There was a family, with whom they were very close and when they gathered together, they laughed all the time.

They were very merry people. They were the ones who sheltered us when we were thrown out of the big house. They had three children. One of them died recently in Israel - he was a famous conductor and composer there - Izhak (Ziko) Gratsiani [there is no further information about him]. I cannot remember a lot about him, because I was five years younger than him and did not go out with him and his friends. But Ziko was the leader of the high school orchestra, he even established

a Jewish jazz band in Ruse - he was very talented from an early age. I knew his sister Mati, who was only one year older than me. Their family was very easygoing and when they gathered together with my parents, they never spoke about their problems, but they always tried to cheer the atmosphere, especially after the anti-Jewish laws were adopted.

At that time there was a variety of Jewish professions. There were rich merchants, street vendors, craftsmen, porters, factory owner such as Avram Ventura. He owned the 'Zhiti' factory, which manufactured bolts, rivets and nails. There were also Jewish workers, but there was also that very nice organization of the Jewish community 'Malbish Arumim', which raised money from the rich and gave breakfast and lunch to the poor children in the Jewish school. It was founded by the Jewish municipality. In the autumn they also bought clothes and shoes for the poor Jewish children. At that time we did not feel anti-Semitism towards us. We were very tolerant to each other. We always took part in the parades and national holidays.