

Avram Merkado Natan And Mois Merkado Natan With Their Parents Merkado Mois Natan And Rebeka Avram Natan (nee Geron)



I am standing on the bench between my parents Merkado Mois Natan and Rebeka Avram Natan (nee Geron). My brother Mois Merkado Natan is standing in front of them. The picture was taken in Ruse in 1932.

My brother and I took part in the sports organisation 'Maccabi'. On all holidays we went out in uniforms, carrying a drum and a flag. We were part of the parade as were all people in Ruse. We sang various songs - 'Maritsa Rushes', 'Quiet White Danube'- the songs all sang. Of the Jewish songs we knew about Trumpeldor. In fact, we were educated in Zionism. That was done by a Jewish nationalistic organization. There were a number of Zionist organizations - 'General Zionists', 'Poalei Zion', 'Revisionists of Jabotinsky' and youth organizations such as 'Hashomer Hatzair' and 'Maccabi'. 'Maccabi' was a sports organization. We had a very nice gym where we gathered daily and twice a week we did exercises with a gym instructor. My father was in the leadership of 'General Zionists', which was a centrist organization. The other one, 'Poalei Zion' was a leftist, social democratic organization, and the Revisionists founded by Jabotinsky (a Polish Jew) had a right orientation and were more radical about the liberation of Palestine. Each organization had its youth formations. The Revisionists had 'Betar' - they organized manifestations in the Jewish neighborhood dressed in brown shirts and black trousers. The others were 'Hashomer Hatzair' - they studied hard Ivrit and in the organization 'Ken' (nest) they spoke only in Ivrit and were getting ready for an aliyah (leaving) for Israel - to work in the kibbutzim there. And 'Maccabi' was also a Zionist sports organization - follower of the 'General Zionists'.

Apart from education, every family received the so-called steel money-boxes used to collect donations. They were called 'Keren Kayemet le'Israel' - these were money to buy land in Palestine. These money-boxes were regularly taken to the municipality, all the money was collected and sent to the Consistory. Thus, the first Jewish settlements in Israel were created - the Israeli lands were bought from the Arabs and the kibbutzim and villages were built.

Friday was a market day - my mother did the shopping - mostly fish from the Danube, vegetables, agristada [Traditional Jewish holiday dish prepared from fish with sour egg sauce, oil, salt and lemon, which is served on Rosh Hashanah.], vegetable marrows, andjinara [Traditional Jewish dish made by pickled vegetable marrows, oil, salt and wild plums, which is served on Rosh Hashanah.]. My father worked and my brother and I went to help carry the bags. Usually villagers came to the market selling their produce. I was sent to buy only yogurt from a Jewish dairy shop. My father bought butter, cottage cheese, cheese and yellow cheese from a Whiteguard - Nikolay. In 1938 some cousins of ours emigrated to Israel and left us their house, but later they sold it to another family. I do not know their names, they are from the Geron family on my grandmother' side and the house was sold through some middlemen to Nikolay and Olga Spasovi. They did not have any children. They were communists, at that time my brother also joined the Union of Young Workers (UYW) - the youth organization of the Bulgarian Communist Party. We did not have a radio because we did not have the money to buy one. But they did and we all listened to the news and knew what was going on. We discussed the developments and talking with Nikolay and Olga, my father who was a Zionist and a religious man, became a communist and a supporter of the partisans. We hid in the house some of their illegal friends.