

The Natan Family



This is the family on my father's side - Merkado Mois Natan - first on the right on the middle row. After him from right to left are: my mother Rebeka Avram Natan (nee Geron), Sultana Natan (Merkado's mother), Matilda Natan and her husband Marko Natan (Merkado's brother) with their daughter Doroty. From right to left on the upper row are: David Mois Natan (Merkado's brother), the sister Belina Mois Natan, Aron Mois Natan (Merkado's brother) with his wife Erna, Sharlota (Albert's wife) and Albert Mois Natan (Merkado's brother). On the lower row from right to left are: my brother Mois Merkado Natan, Matilda (daughter of Aron and Erna) and I, Avram Merkado Natan. The picture was taken in Varna on 1st September 1935. There is a date on the back of the photo.

My father Merkado Mois Natan was born in 1893 in Varna. Then he lived in Dobrich. He took part in World War I at the front in Dobrudzha and he was wounded there. After the end of the war he escaped from Dobrich in a carriage because the Romanians wanted to arrest him for fighting against their army. Then he settled in Varna with his parents. His two brothers Aron and Albert stayed in Dobrich even when the town was annexed by Romania. My father has four brothers. They are younger than him and their names are Aron, Albert, Marko and David. He also has a sister - Belina. My father studied until the third grade, which is equal to present-day seventh grade, and since the family was large and my grandfather could not support it, my father started work in a tobacco factory. The chief accountant of the factory was a socialist, who liked my father and taught him to do accounting. And until the end of his life my father worked as an accountant. The factory was owned by Turkish nationals who lived in Vienna. Later they closed the factory. My father was already married and my mother and he came from Varna to Ruse.

My mother Rebeka Avram Natan (nee Geron) was born in Razgrad in 1897 or 1898 - we could not find out the exact date. And we always joked with her that we could not celebrate her birthday because we did not know her date of birth. She had a primary education. At home my parents spoke mostly Spanish [Ladino], but when our neighbors came, they spoke Bulgarian. My mother knew Bulgarian because she had worked as a seamstress in a Bulgarian company and she could

read in Bulgarian. My parents met in Ruse - my father was on a business trip there and a cousin of my mother's and a friend of his introduced them to each other. They engaged, then they had a religious wedding and went to live in Varna. They dressed in clothes typical for the times. My mother says that my father was a dandy and had a Bohemian lifestyle. When they lived in Varna and my father had a job, they were well-off. He had a big salary, but when my brother was born, my mother got sick and at one moment all the money was gone, even their savings. Then they had to move to Ruse, where my uncle offered my father a job. In Ruse we were never well-off, because only my father worked and my mother was often sick. We lived quite frugally.

We lived in rented premises. We moved a lot - we changed about five or six houses. We had water, electricity and an inside toilet in every house. We usually had two rooms and a living room. We had a bathroom only in the house of Nikolay Spasov, the water-heater used wood and coals. Then we lived at the house of a Spanish consul in Ruse - a well-off Jew. After the Law for the Protection of the Nation was passed, he realized what the situation was and decided to leave for Spain. He asked my father to move into his house - it was big - four or five rooms and a big living room. That happened in the autumn of 1941. His name was Aftalion. I do not remember anything else about him because I was a child then. He locked the furniture in one of the rooms and let us use all the others. It had a big yard, it was a rich house. We did not pay rent. He only wanted us to keep his house. We spent a year there and in the winter of 1942 the police evicted us. The state confiscated the house and threw us out. My mother had burnt her leg and was lying in bed - they shoved her in a wash-tub and threw her out. We were sheltered by some very close friends of my parents'. They let us use a room with a small corridor and we lived there until October 1944.