

Mois Merkado Natan



I in Sofia in 1966.

Until my father was alive he used to tell everything about the Jewish tradition to my sons [Merkado Mois Natan and Alfred Mois Natan]. He used to tell them things, take them to the Bet Am or the synagogue. He told them about the Jewish history and the religious holidays as a way to observe traditions. Then I had two jobs - and I had classes at the Mechanical Electro-Technical Institute, so I didn't have much time. They are brought up as Jews and that's how they feel themselves. They had Jews for friends even when it was not allowed for Jews to gather in Bet Am before the changes of [10th November] 1989. They used to gather at home - because we had a big flat and they had their own rooms. I used to go to synagogue only on high holidays before the changes. I am from those few people who know Hebrew and can read prayers. Now we mark all the holidays. I go to synagogue on Friday evenings, I am there on Saturday mornings, too. Besides, I worked for four years at the synagogue - I was vice-chairman of the Religious Council. My friends are Jews and Bulgarians. There are now no relatives left with whom we may keep in touch - neither in Sofia, nor in Israel.

As far as the wars from 1967 [Six Day War] and 1973 [Yom Kippur War] are concerned and the cancellation of the diplomatic relationships with Israel - I had expected these events, because we were deep into our relations with the Arabic world, which was dictated by the Soviet Union. I am a supporter of Israel and my attitude to the Arabic problems is negative. Firstly - because the Palestine question is not a Jewish question. The Palestine question is a problem of the Arabs. In 1948 when the War for Liberation was being led, Israel was attacked by all Arabic countries. The

West Bank that was to become a Palestinian state, under the decision of the United Nations was occupied by Jordanians. Golan was occupied by Syria, while Sinai Peninsula was controlled by Egypt. That is to say that this is a purely Arabic question. It was not earlier than 1967 that Israel occupied the West Bank, expelling Jordan and winning the war. That is why the problem with those camps is artificially created - and it is quite clear for every Jew. Every time I explain these matters to somebody I say that the Palestinian question has nothing to do with Israel. It is an Arabic one because they didn't allow another Arab country to be set up from the very beginning. However, after the wars started and the diplomatic relations with Israel were cancelled, I didn't feel any change in the attitude of my friends and co-workers in Bulgaria. All the more - when I was teaching at the Military Academy we used to discuss these matters rather theoretically.

I have been to Israel once - in 1982. I gathered with my old friends there as if we hadn't been separated at all. I visited all my classmates and friends whom I used to live in Bulgaria with many years ago. Then I had relatives there - they were alive; my aunts and uncles, too. I haven't been there after that first visit, because as a poor relative of theirs I felt awkward about visiting them again. Now my aunts and uncles are dead. My wife wanted to go there very much, but it simply didn't happen. My uncle David used to come to Sofia every two years or so. We communicated through letters, telephone calls. Now I have only one cousin there, other two of my cousins are living in Ecuador, but I don't keep in touch with them. Unfortunately, I don't know any further details about them.