

## Berta Pando With Her Cousins Albert Almalekh And Naftali Dzhaldeti



In the photo you can see the youngest children in the family. I am in the middle, on the left is Albert (tanti Soultana's son. She was my father's sister.). Albert later became the husband of the famous Bulgarian opera singer Anna Tomova-Sintova. On the right is Naftali – David's son, my father's brother. The photo was taken in a studio in 1940-1942. I recall that we had to climb up a very dark staircase in order to get to the studio. I also remember I cried a lot because both of the boys had pompons on their sweaters and I didn't have any decoration. There is neither a stamp of a photo studio, nor any other inscription on the back of the photo.

We the children used to play a lot. I was together with my cousins. Aunt Ester, who used to live in the lower neighborhood, had five daughters – Rebeka, Gratsia, Sofi, Berta, Meriam. The second and the third sons of uncle Yeshua – Shimon and Israel were almost my age. We used to play all sorts of games. We liked to play 'chilik', hide-and-seek, play tag, 'long donkey', 'short donkey', we were hopping over each other. There were some vegetable gardens that were called 'bakhchi'. We were taking walks on the 'bakhchi', climbing trees, picking plums, picking mulberries...

The Toundzha River was nearby so we used to go there to wade... Our parents didn't control us at all, nobody was taking care of us... There were neither cars nor any other dangers. If a cart went by, we would jump at the back until the people chased us away. I lived with granny until I turned thirteen and started the junior high school.