

## Berta Pando In Front Of Her Granny Rika Azis's House



Here I am in front of Grand Mama's (Granny Rika) house in the Dolna Mahala (Lower Neighborhood) in 1945 or 1946. I recall that year we had taken for the first and last time some sheep to look after and I had called the little lamb Belcho [Whitey]. But later on it was slain, of course, but I couldn't taste even a single piece from its meat. I remember that they knitted a pair of trousers for me from its wool. There is neither a stamp of a photo studio, nor any other inscription on the back of the photo.

Granny Rika's house, where I used to live till starting primary school, was in the 'Dolnata' [Lower] Neighborhood, near the Toundzha River and the Shopping Street. There used to live mainly Jewish families, rarely was there a Bulgarian one. That's why that district was known as the Jewish Neighborhood and it was something like a ghetto. I can state that all our neighbors were Jews. In this lower neighborhood used to live all my father's brothers and sisters. There was also an upper neighborhood where my parents were living. The Turkish people lived in a separated neighborhood. We didn't communicate with them a lot. Their neighborhood was near the hill 'baira' (there was this hill which we called 'baira'), to the other end of the town. And the gypsy neighborhood was near the Turkish one whereas the Jewish Neighborhood was in the lower part of the town, near the Toundzha River. There were some Armenian families as well that were scattered throughout the town but didn't have their own neighborhood. In the 'Gorna' [Upper] Neighborhood, where my parents were living, used to be the houses of the well-to-do families. In that neighbourhood there were some Bulgarian families.

The people living in the lower neighborhood were very close indeed, in wonderful relationships. If you were in need of anything – advice, help, you could turn to your neighbor. There weren't fences around the houses. When we needed something – tell your neighbor this, tell him that, do you have this, do you have that... They were borrowing and lending things, they were gathering in the evenings on a little square which was in the center of the neighborhood. Each person would carry

their own chair and a conversation would start right away, they were chatting all the time. They were preparing together jam, tomato sauce called 'liutenitsa'.