

Vagenshtain Family



In this photo is aunt Rebeka's family (she was my father Yuda (Zhoudi) Behar's sister). In the front are Rebeka and her husband Raymond Vagenshtain – a tinsmith by profession. In the back are their children – Angel and Emil (on the right) Vagenshtain. The year was 1942. You can see the Jewish badges [yellow stars] on their lapels. There is no inscription on the back of the photo. There is a very pale impression of a stamp in the form of a Jewish star.

In the summer I used to go to my grandparents in Sofia. There I used to meet with the famous director and writer Angel Vagenshtain who is a cousin of mine. [Angel Vagenshtain is a classic of Bulgarian cinema. He graduated in cinema dramaturgy from the Russian State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) in Moscow. Author of some 50 scripts for feature, documentary and animation films, as well as of novels published in Bulgaria, France, Germany, Russia, and the USA. Since 1950 he has worked in Bulgarian and East German cinematography. His 1959 film 'Stars', dedicated to the fate of Jews in WWII, and directed by Konrad Wolf, won the Special Prize of the jury at the 59th Cannes International Film Festival. Among Vagenshtain's most famous films as a scriptwriter are: 'Amendment to the Law for the Defense of the Nation', 'Goya', 'Stars In Her Hair, Tears In Her Eyes', 'Boris I', etc.] He was older than me and used to keep in touch mainly with my brother as they shared common interests, but we used to be very fond of each other. Angel (Dzheki), in his turn, visited us in the summer in Plovdiv. His arrival turned our day into a holiday. My father loved him very much. I recall that when he was sentenced to death for his antifascist activities later dad got so drunk out of grief, that, under the influence of the alcohol, he was shouting: 'They will exterminate the golden youth of Bulgaria.' Together with the neighbors from the yard we hardly managed to stop him from taking the matters in his hands.