

Liza Behar (nee Benatov) With Another Woman



My mother Liza (on the left) with another woman, unfamiliar to me. There is no stamp of a photo shop. There is an inscription in pencil in Bulgarian which has almost gone blank and is totally illegible. On top of it, obviously much later, was written the year 1916 in ink, so apparently the photo was taken at that time. In Sofia.

My mother was born on 23rd January 1900. She had six siblings – uncle Haim, aunt Mati, uncle Yosif, aunt Nemka and uncle Lazar. They had an older sister Bela but she died while giving birth. According to the Jewish tradition the second oldest girl should take the place of the late bride and marry the widower. But my mother refused, she married my father instead. How their parents accepted that I don't know. She spoke Ladino and Bulgarian. She had only finished the fourth grade at the Jewish school but she was a very curious, energetic and quite intelligent Jew. She loved us very much although she never kissed us but her love was visible in her eyes. All the people in the neighborhood were very fond of her, they were absolutely delighted when talking about her. When the moment came for some pregnant woman to give birth mum would tell her: 'I'll take you to the hospital on foot.' And she took maybe about ten women giving birth for the first time to the Public Hospital and she was talking on the way: 'The more we walk, the easier your labors will be.' She was giving advice to the young mothers, she was knitting baby clothes, she was cutting out diapers.

She was an exquisite cook. I loved almodrati most of all – baked aubergine, chopped, mixed with eggs and cheese and baked in the oven. Superb...you can't imagine how delicious it was. She also prepared apio with celery, andjinara – pickled marrows, agristada – something like fricassee but with eggs and a little sugar. [Some chicken is also added to this dish].