

Victoria Almalekh And Her Friends In Varna



This is the balcony of my house in Varna. The picture was taken in the 1970s. I am on the left. The other two girls are friends of mine. I don't remember their names. There is neither stamp of a photo studio nor any other inscription.

On 31st November 1957 I started working in the Workers' Hospital in Varna, where I retired in 1986. For my forty-year length of service I have never been subject to any anti-Semitic feelings. Only once a hospital attendant, who was not a Bulgarian lady, but a Serbian one, called me a Jew.

She had come with the Yugoslavian children between 1944 and 1950. So she came with those Yugoslavian children, got married and stayed. This woman, who everybody used to call Mara-the-Serbian, called me a Jew. At that time the chief doctor of the hospital that I worked in was a Jew. His name was Hari Kaponov. I went to see him and I told him. He promised me he was going to call her but he changed my opinion by saying: 'Nurse Almalekh, it is beneath your dignity to waste your time on Mara-the-Serbian'.

I am a leftist. In my eyes capitalism is a curse for humanity. On 10th November 1989 I was on vacation in Hisar [resort] with a group from Varna. We heard on the radio that Todor Zhivkov had fallen out. I said my supposition in front of everybody that that probably was our last time together in Hisar. No one believed me then but that's what happened eventually. After 10th November my life changed totally. We got poor. I retired in 1986 after forty years of service and my pension was 141.90 BGN [around 70 EUR]. Today my pension with the widow-extra is 135.30 BGN. For twenty years I have never reached my first pension at these standards. No one can live like that. I'm pretty sure that (God forbid) such a regime should definitely lead to revolutionary changes; if these changes should be called European Union it is going to be a change. This can't continue for too long. There is no way.