

Berta Kalaora



This is a picture of my wife, Berta Kalaora, nee Isakova. It was taken in Sofia in 1946. My wife was born on 29th March 1920 in the town of Gorna Dzhumaya, present-day Blagoevgrad. After she finished high school in Gorna Dzhumaya on 24th May 1937 she went to Kyustendil to live with her sister Buka Haravon, nee Isakova, who was seven or eight years older than her. Buka was married to Samuel Haravon, who worked as a tinsmith. Berta could not stay and live with her step-mother, whose name I do not remember, because they did not get along well. Her step-mother was also a Jew, but she treated her very badly. But Berta's father, Yako Sabetay Isakov, was a very nice man. He made quilts at people's houses. He could barely make ends meet. In Kyustendil Berta lived only a couple of months, because the Haravon family was also very poor. Then she came to live in Sofia where she worked as a librarian in the Jewish community house at Lege Street. She lived at the place of Raina Mayer, who now lives in Shumen, since she married in Shumen during her internment there. Berta lived miserably at that time. She weighed hardly 45-46 kilos. She ate

lentils, rice and tomatoes in a restaurant. I also went with her to this restaurant on Tsar Kaloyan Street near Stamboliiski Blvd to check if she was eating well. At that time I worked as a press operator, and I had no problems at my work place because of my origin neither before nor after the Holocaust. After 9th September 1944 Berta and I came back to Sofia. At first, until 1947 we lived with my parents on the last floor of the 'Shalom' building. At that time this building was also used as a police hospital for people wounded or tortured by the police. They were treated only to have strength to endure torture again. For a while after 1944 I worked as director of state trade companies such as 'Stroyamatmetiz' – the name is an acronym of construction materials and metal products – ironware –, 'Shoes and Clothes' and 'Home Appliances.' Berta, who worked in the trade union commission before 9th September 1944, which was illegal then, continued to work at first in the City Council of Trade Unions and then in the Central Council. At first she worked in the human resources department and then she headed the organizational department. After 1949 she became editor-in-chief of the 'Trud' newspaper which propagated the communist ideas.