

Mois Merkado Natan



Here I am in Sofia in 2000.

The democratization of the country after 1989 had a negative effect on me. The way we live here now is the worst that ever happened to Bulgaria. We live in an insecure society. People are scared when they come back home from somewhere - people are afraid even when they are in their own homes. Because of that criminal deed, that Bulgaria has never experienced before. I'm speaking not only about the socialist period, but also of the times before it when we were wearing yellow stars and were in conspiracy activities. Even then we felt safer than we feel now. There was order in the country. Now - this democracy that we are now living in is no democracy at all, it is rather DAEMONcracy. And if I have to explain this situation to myself - it is perhaps because there hasn't been such a phenomenon in the human history before. We know how capitalism stems out of the feudalism, how capitalism became socialism - but this phenomenon - from socialism to go back into capitalism we experience for the first time here. [Editor's note: A reference to the perception of History along the lines of Marxist ideology. According to dialectical and historical materialism, official and exclusive in Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe before 1989, the structure of society is in continuous development in the scene or World History, starting from the primitive prehistory, reaching the most developed and socially advanced Communism through the stages of Antique Slavery, Feudalism and Capitalism.] I call it DAEMONcracy because of the daemons - because people live in fear. Its is a stressful situation.

After 1989 my life didn't change much with regard to the Jewry. I get on well with my wife on these questions - she has lived with Jews. But I feel that now the anti-Semitism is stronger than before. I can see the books on Slaveykov Square [the largest open book market in Sofia]: Hitler's 'Mein Kampf', the books by Volen Siderov [Bulgarian journalist, radical nationalist, and Holocaust denier. Among his publications are 'The truth about the six million Jews' and 'The Boomerang of Evil'.] and others. However, these are separate books - people do not share these views and feelings. I have always said that there wasn't any anti-Semitism among people in Bulgaria. There were certain instances - sometimes they were provoked, sometimes they were paid, but as a whole they were marginal cases. However, the instances of anti-Semitism are instances of anti-Semitism. The publisher of 'Mein Kampf' in the Czech Republic was sentenced to four years of imprisonment. I think that every country deserves its Jews. After the changes from 1989 in Bulgaria a certain impetus to the Jewry was given, but the initial excitement of not being choked has passed and now the life takes its normal routine. The club 'Golden Age' was set up, and we meet with friends, acquaintances. [The Golden Age club was formed in 1999. In the Bet Am there are separate programmes for people of different age - this is the club of the elderly people] There is also a club where one can study Ivrit, Ladino - these are nice things. I receive aids - from 'Joint' I receive a small sum on heating - it is around 20 levs. [20 levs are equal to some 10 euros]. The Swiss organization helps us, as well as this 'Claims Conference'.

However, there is another thing - as if something in the mentality of the local Jews went wrong together with these changes. All of us here lived intensive lives, we had certain positions in the society, we were respected. Now we came to a situation to wait for somebody to help, because we live in need. This has its influence on our psychics. We are asking each other - did you receive this, did you get that? Earlier we could manage it with our own strength somehow. For example, when I bought the flat I started working more intensively, I developed projects, I had private students. Deeply in our hearts we cannot accept that we are living out of aids. On the other hand - the repressed by the socialism got between 20 and 50 levs in additional monthly pension, whereas before that the active fighter against the capitalism and fascism received such bonuses. And what should one say - have we, the Jews, not been repressed? We are the most repressed people: from 1941 to 1944 we had to wear yellow stars, there was a curfew hour, many houses were destroyed during the process of internment.