

Nissim Kohen's Father Mihael Kohen In The Jewish Neighborhood Iuchbunar



This is a photo taken in the Jewish neighborhood Iuchbunar. At that time people sold vegetables on two-wheeled carts and the vendor passed along the streets and offered them to the people. Some people have gathered around such a cart on the photo. In the background the man with the hat, who is fifth from left to right is my father Mihael Kohen. The others are neighbors from our street. The photo was taken in 1938 in Sofia.

I suppose my paternal grandparents Nissim and Amada Kohen were born in Sofia. It is interesting that they were first cousins. That was allowed by the Jewish tradition. They lived in the Jewish neighborhood in Sofia - Iuchbunar. Most of the Jews lived there. I also come from Iuchbunar.

My grandfather's house was on 12 Slivnitsa Street. Later the street was renamed to 7 Gyueshevo Street. Our house was made of adobe and at first it had only one room and an entrance hall. Later another room was added as well as another extension, which was the house of my uncle Rafael Kohen. My father's elder brother Eliya Kohen also lived in that yard. His house was the most solid one. My father Mihael Kohen took a half of one of my grandfather's rooms and enlarged it. He also built another room with a small entrance hall where he lived with his family. There were some inconveniences. The toilets were outside and we had no running water inside. There was a tap on the street which we used. We had electricity. Later we had running water in the yard, but not in the house. The street, on which we lived became all muddy when it rained. And so did most of the streets in the Jewish neighborhood.

Our neighbors in Sofia were mostly Jewish families. On our street 'Gyueshevo' there were Bulgarian families too. Most of the people were traveling salesmen and Bulgarian families. There were a number of grocery stores, some barber shops, cafes and pubs. Iuchbunar was like a hotel for many people. They came here only to spend the night and spent all the day working as salesmen, or workers in factories and tobacco warehouses. Almost none of the Jews in Iuchbunar worked as

clerks on a state or municipal position. I do not remember knowing such Jews, except for a cousin of my father's who became a director in the Bulgarian Post. I started work as an electrical technician, but after an illness I experienced, I started work in a trade company. After the adoption of the anti-Jewish laws I went to work in the enamel factory producing dishes.