

Matilda Nisim Miuhas And Matilda Buko Lazar



This is a picture from the 1920s of my mother's sister Matilda Nisim Miuhas and Matilda Buko Lazar, the wife of my mother's brother Buko Lazar, in Kiustendil. They are wearing Jewish dresses made of purple velvet and silk embroidery, draped with a scarf. Aunt Matilda Miuhas took care of me as if I were her daughter, and she was a great support after my mother went to Israel in 1949. She also helped me care for my daughter, Beti. When my daughter was a child, I had to work, so Aunt Matilda looked after her. Aunt Matilda even used to go to the meetings of the parents' committee in my daughter's school. Aunt Matilda was very religious. She observed all the Jewish rituals. Her husband used to go to the synagogue regularly. They both spoke Ladino, and my daughter learned a little Ladino from them. Thanks to my aunt and uncle, I did not have to explain to my daughter what it means to be Jewish. My father was a soldier during World War I. He was born in 1900 and went to the front when he was 17. He was a captive in Italy for a year and a half. That is where he learned a little Italian. He also spoke Ladino, Hebrew and Bulgarian. My father loved to sing, and he really sang very well. He, my brother and I used to sit on the bed in the bedroom on Sundays and sing songs from songbooks. My father sang songs in Ladino. The texts were very romantic. I was 15 when he fell ill. He was bedridden for a year and a half. He died of cancer in 1947 in Sofia. My brother and my mother went to Israel in 1949. It was very hard for Mordohai in the beginning because he did not know the language. I stayed in Bulgaria. I married Josif Kamhi. We met in 1943 when we were interned in Kiustendil. I approved of my relatives going to Israel. I also wanted to go there, but my husband insisted on staying here. His brother had died as a partisan and his mother had died in a concentration camp, so he didn't want to part with his sister. After the war, I worked in dressmaking factories. My husband studied in the mechanical and electrical technical institute in Sofia and became an electrical engineer. Life was calm in the 1950s. Our salaries, homes and work became more secure. That is why I value that period so much. After the political changes in Bulgaria in 1989, life became harder for my family. Everything we had built

and fought for started to fall apart. I value Eastern Europe's opening to the world. History goes on. We had capitalism, then socialism, and now a democracy. Life goes forward, and that is how it should be. Changes are natural, but they are very hard for us.