

Yosif Faivel Fridman During The Law For Protection Of The Nation



This is my father Yosif Fridman wearing the disgraceful yellow star. The picture was taken shortly before we moved to Asenovgrad. As a matter of fact, Dad was not sent to a forced labor camp, because of his advanced age and old Jews were not sent to such camps then. Besides, he was lame and he didn't have Bulgarian citizenship but the so-called Nansen's citizenship. Which meant - he had certain civil rights, but he was a citizen of the USSR. This was the main reason he emigrated almost immediately after 9th September 1944 [the day of the communist takeover in Bulgaria], because the Nansen's citizenship was canceled as such and he was deprived of all civil rights, although he was married to a Bulgarian Jew.

My father Yosif Fridman was born in the village of Luninets, Minsk Region [Luninets is in Brest region, Belarus] in 1897. Unfortunately, I know nothing of other possible children of my father's parents; neither can I say if he had any siblings. As far as I know, my father was a soldier in the Russian army and took part in the October Revolution in 1917. He fled from Russia most probably in the period between 1920 and 1922. I can't remember anything else about that. My father died in Yagur in 1961.

I should mention that this Nansen's citizenship was helpful but at the same time, it was a handicap. Because my father was a cobbler, but he couldn't practise his profession here, as he was not allowed to. That's why my family led the poor life of nomads. Dad worked everything he could do - he used to make bars of soap and sell them. Furthermore, he was always on the go and we, a family with many members, travelled together with him. We helped each other. For example, the

bars of soap were made at home. We mixed the ingredients, boiled them and then we cut them in bars. I remember all of us, including my mother, taking part in this important activity.

How did we earn our living during the Law for Protection of the Nation? My brother Ruben was an electrician and he often went to the nearby villages to practice his profession, although it was forbidden; he used to take off his yellow star before that. Of course, the villagers could give him away to the authorities, because his activity was against the law [Jews could work only in the field of manual labor, thanks to which they could earn something for their living.] But they didn't do that. Moreover, my brother often brought home wires. In these cases, all the family gathered, including the children, enthusiastic for the work - we made of the wires elements (some kind of insulators) - that we painted after that. These wires were again for the villagers, when there was a place to be supplied with electric current. Sometimes my father made walnut oil. We all gathered for such cases again, opened the walnuts, then we milled them, heated them to a certain temperature in a big pot or a 'paila' [dialect Bulgarian word meaning big flat baking dish] we put the substance in a press and it was only after that that walnut oil was produced. My father used to sell this oil to Bulgarians. But not at the market (because the authorities would have immediately caught him) - he sold it directly to individuals. That is how we earned our living.