

## Reyna Lidgi On A Sunday Walk



In the photo, in the second row, from left to right are: Nisim Beniesh - my mother's brother, my mother Elvira Lidgi and my father Buko Lidgi. In the row below are Loty (Sarah) Beniesh - Nisim's daughter, I and Sarah - a daughter of my grandfather Itshak and his second wife Dzhamila. As a matter of fact Sarah is my mother's sister. The photo was taken in front of Sofia Synod. In the background you can see the cathedral monument 'Alexander Nevski'. We are on a Sunday walk and the photo was taken with the self-shutter of my dad's camera on a tripod. He was an amateur photographer. On the back there is a handwritten inscription in pencil: '20th June 1932.'

I remember Sofia from 1935-1936. It was a small, relatively clean town. I have most vivid memories of Dondukov Street, where now is the Sheraton hotel and TZUM [Sofia's Central Trade Center] - the so-called Largo [the St. Nikola Passage was situated there]. [The Liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman yoke in 1878 took place when Sofia was in an extremely miserable state as a town, as an object for communication and esthetics. The population amounted to approximately 20, 000 people, who used to live in about ten quarters with narrow, dusty and muddy streets. One of the first tasks of Sofia Municipality was to give start of the building of a new Sofia. For this purpose famous foreign architects like Kollar, Grunanger, Mayerber, Schwanberg, Yovanovich were invited. For a short period of time they built the beautiful buildings of the Synagogue, the Parliament, the Military Club, the Phoenix Insurance Company and so on. Some Bulgarian architects like Lazarov, Nachev, Fingov, Nichev, Yurukov, Marichkov, Torniov, Milanov, Koychev and others, also contributed to the construction of the new face of Sofia. Dondukov Street is situated in the central part of Sofia, the so-called Largo. The buildings in that part of the city were designed in the so-called Wagner-style (Secession). Some Renaissance elements were included in them too. In the

monumental buildings, the architects had made an attempt to include details from the old architectural tradition; they achieved colourful effects, typical of the Byzantine-Bulgarian architecture from the Middle Ages. The old churches in Nessebar served as models. An example in this respect is the building of the Central Public Baths.] It was a nice, paved street, there was a tram moving on it. There were confectionaries; Tachev Cinema was there. In the bookstore 'Chipev', in that same street, my father would often drop in to buy his favorite pens, which he used to collect. Opposite the bookstore was the butcher's 'Dokuzanov' where they sold fresh sausages, still hot, steaming... The ham was very tasty. I was often sent to do the shopping at St. Nikola market place [now TZUM], which was situated between the Central Public Baths and Dondukov street.