

## Margarita, Matilda, Bouko, Bouka Selanikyo



I, my brother Bouko, my mother Bouka and my sister Matilda. She was a beauty, a heavily built woman. I'm nothing compared to her. And that's why mum married her quickly when she was 17 years old so that she wouldn't marry a Bulgarian because she had a lot of suitors. The photo was taken in a street in Plovdiv. The year was 1944. There is neither a stamp on the back of the photo, nor any other inscription.

My mother Bouka Bokhor Kohen (1892 - 1961) was a strong woman and an exceptional person, a heroine. She was swarthy with long black hair and big black eyes. She remained a widow at the age of 25 - alone with three children. She didn't have education, she was self-educated and learned alone to write in Spaniol. Later, when we moved to Plovdiv she used to write letters to our relatives in Gorna Dzhumaya in Spaniol. I can't write in Spaniol, I can only speak. My mother could write - I don't know how she had learned. I remember that at home we had an old bible in Spaniol and Ivrit. That was probably mama's textbook. Probably grandpa - her father helped her with her studies. I had even asked her to teach me to write but I memorized only a few phrases with which I could inform her I was OK in my letters.

When she remained alone she started sewing in order to make a living. That formed her behavior to a great extent. But for her cleaning was never that crucial as it was later for my mother-in-law. We were cleaning together - my mum and us - the children - once a week. For her the main concern were the children. In order to be near us all the time and look after us she invited all the friends, acquaintances and classmates here at home. She created good atmosphere and mood. Our house was always full of people. But I can't say she had a lot of friends, she just didn't have enough time, to keep her own contacts, conversations and visits. She was able to sew and to do manual labor but not for the fun of it - she used to scrape a living. She sewed our clothes too. She was cooking very well. I learned recipes from her that I later prepared for my husband.