

Leontina Arditi And Her Grandmother Beya Arditi



This is a photo of me with my rich grandmother Beya Arditi, nee Tadzher. The photo was taken when we went for a walk in Sofia in 1941. My kin that came from Italy and settled in Ruse, northeastern Bulgaria, was my father's family. All of them had a strong sense of humor. They played the guitar, the mandolin; they used to sing Italian songs and speak Ladino. They were dark, emotional and swarthy like the Spanish. In Ruse the Arditi family had a very severe argument. I don't know the reason, but it was about money, I suppose. That's why one part of the family ran away as far as Pazardzhik, southwestern Bulgaria. I'm from the Pazardzhik branch of Arditi, while my relative, Elias Canetti, my father's cousin, is from the Ruse branch. Granny Beya, my father's mother, was married to a very rich Jew, the banker Aron Arav, in her second marriage. They owned

several huge houses, each one with several floors. They had Persian carpets, wonderful expensive furniture and a piano. They also had many cats. They had a housemaid and a cook at their place. The cook's name was Berta and she felt pity for my father, because he wasn't allowed to live with his mother and his stepfather, and was treated like an orphan. He had been sent to live in the basement, so he grew up around Berta the cook. The family spoke French, which was considered an aristocratic language at the beginning of the 20th century. Even later my mother, who was of humble origin, used to feel humiliated because she didn't speak French and this language was spoken in her presence. My maternal grandmother didn't like much my other grandmother because she had abandoned her child.