

## Linka Isaeva With Her Family



This is a picture of me, my husband Albert Isaev, my grandson Svilen, my daughter-in-law Yordanka and my son Valeri. The photo was taken on Christmas Eve in Sofia in 2000. It is our tradition to celebrate holidays in our closest family circle. My children were raised as Jews, but they are married to Bulgarians. They know everything about the war and what happened during the Holocaust. We celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Pesach. I celebrate Christmas with my son's family. We don't celebrate Easter. We keep the 'gastronomical' side of the Jewish traditions, and I have even handed them over to my daughter, who is also a master of Jewish specialties. Perhaps 70 % of my circle of friends are Jews, but I have always had friends among Bulgarians, too. I keep good relations with my cousins in Bulgaria, especially in Sofia. We meet at least once a week with some of them. After 1989 we felt great relief. In the years after that many things concerning political rights and freedom, democracy as a whole and our way of living, became quite clear to us. It can't be simply be said that this change was only for the better. The feeling of spiritual liberation was later followed by economic difficulties. As to our Jewishness, our life has definitely changed because there are more and more varied activities organized by the Jewish organizations in Sofia. We are pensioners and have a lot of spare time that needs to be filled. We found the resources for that within the Jewish community. We often visit the Jewish People's House in Sofia, where we meet our friends. A lot of people from abroad have also recalled that we are Jews. All our relatives in the West, who have never thought of keeping close relations with us, contacted us after 1989. Every summer they come here from all over the world, and it makes us remember that we are Jews. I didn't visit Israel before the collapse of communism in 1989. I went there once afterwards. My husband didn't join me. Nobody forced us to terminate our relations with our closest relatives there, yet a certain self-restriction existed for sure. I rarely kept in touch with my relatives in the West, and they also avoided contact with us. Except for that one discharge in 1956, I never had the feeling that I was refused promotion because of my Jewish origin. My husband even had a leading position at the Institute of Soils. He became director.