

Rene Gershon As A Student



This is a student photo of my sister Rene Efraim Levi and her class in the elite local school 'Mission laic Francaise' in Salonica. They had a year and a half to graduation, but some of her classmates weren't able to finish it.

My sister is the third from left to right (standing in the second row). This photo was taken exactly a year before we were interned from Greece to Sofia for being foreign nationals, in 1938. Eventually that saved our lives.

My sister played the piano. She was seven years older than me and studied music and singing from an early age. I remember that there was music playing at home all the time. Either Caruso would be heard from the gramophone or my sister would be singing and playing.

My sister was a very gifted woman. She wasn't only charming and beautiful, but also smart, artistic and musical. She also spoke many languages. But she was unfortunate, because when our whole family moved from Salonica to Sofia in 1939, she hadn't completed her secondary education yet. She had been studying in a private French school in Salonica, which was very distinguished. She wanted to become an aero-engineer. When we were banished from Greece for being Bulgarian nationals and went to Bulgaria, she already had a boyfriend: Eliyau Shlomina, a Jew, whom she knew from school. Unfortunately, he stayed in Greece. He joined an illegal partisan group who saved themselves from the Germans by escaping to the Balkans. But they failed: we learned that after 9th September 1944, the authorities in Greece caught and executed them. They were all Jews from Salonica.

I remember when in the fall of the fateful year of 1939 my family had just got on the train to Bulgaria, my father noticed a ring on my sister's finger. 'Eli gave it to me,' she said. My father said, 'Do you know what that means?' 'If I hadn't known, I wouldn't have taken it,' she said. It was later that she learned that her boyfriend had been shot. At that time a distinguished Sofia bachelor

became close to her. His name was Isak Gershon. Being an 18-year-old Jew, he was mobilized to labor camps. He escaped twice from his camp, to go to Pazardzhik where my family was interned and meet his beloved. My sister and Isak Gershon later had three children. But that happened in Israel where they immigrated during the Mass Aliyah in 1948. .