

## Berta Pando With Her Mother Fortunae Dzhaldeti



Mum and I in the park in Yambol in 1942. At that time dad was in the forced labour groups [during Holocaust]. There used to be that enormous park in Yambol, surrounded by the Toundzha River. I remember that the ribbon in my hair was made of paper that could stretch because the photo was taken after a celebration on 24th May [the day of Slavic script and culture]. Mum came to this celebration and decided we should be photographed. There was a photographer in the park who used to take photos. There is a stamp on the back of the photo of 'Photographer Orlov - Yambol'.

In 1942 I enrolled in the Jewish school and I studied there until the fourth form. It was situated just between the Dolna and Gorna Mahala [Lower and Upper Neighborhood], next to the synagogue. It was in a large, beautiful building. There was a separate room for every class. In each class there were between 20 and 25 children. In that same 1942 it was turned into a police department and the school was moved to two rooms in the synagogue. The rumour had it that a lot of people were tormented in that police department. Some people had seen the police officers covered in blood. It was an absolutely horrible situation. On the new premises there were two classes in each room and usually two or three kids had to sit at one and the same desk. The first and the second form studied together in our room. And it was the staff room as well. There were three teachers. I can't recall the name of the first one, Miss Rashel and Mr Leon. The teacher, whose name I can't remember, was teaching Hebrew, but I couldn't learn anything in that language. Miss Rashel was teaching Algebra, Art..., Mr Leon - Bulgarian. I didn't have favourite subjects. I remember some of my friends' names - Ancheto, Amada, Stela, Izako. I didn't use to be a brilliant student, I was

somewhere in the middle. I didn't participate in any clubs.

During the Holocaust my father's job became totally rudimentary. He was forbidden to practise it - both the dairy products and the meat fingers - and he gave away all the tools and vessels (grills, big pots, basins) to a neighbor - uncle Angel, who used to be a friend of my father's. Angel wanted to take all these objects, hide them and pretend that he had bought them. He gave everything back to my dad after 9th September [1944]. The shop was closed but not seized. I can't say if dad was made to pay taxes for it.

Dad was mobilized into the forced labor camps. I can't say exactly where he was but he used to go there early in spring and returned in late autumn.