

Aron Alkalai's Father Nissim Alkalai From The Time When They Constructed The Water-Conduit From The Rila Mountain To Sofia



This is a photo of my father Nissim Alkalai from the time when they constructed the water-conduit from the Rila Mountain to Sofia. That was in the 1930s. My father is the first down on the left .

My father had a small cantine there and prepared food for the workers. I do not know the other people on the photo.

My father Nissim Alkalai had a lot of jobs. He had a hard life. At one point he was even a bartender and a cafe owner. When the water-conduit for Sofia was being constructed, he had a small canteen in the Rila Mountain. He cooked for the workers, who were around 150 people. But my father was a very good man and often gave them food on credit. That is why, he did not get rich from that job. There were some Italians who owed him a lot of money. At that time our house was mortgaged. My father had taken a loan from the Jewish bank 'Bratstvo' [Brotherhood] to buy the house, in which we lived. My mother told me that once my father threw in the stove some papers issued to him by a judge and with which he had to collect the money he was owed. He had won a trial against the people who owed him money, but at the last minute he reconsidered. My mother asked him why he was throwing those papers in the fire. He answered that the people had no money to pay him back.

For example, one of them had only one cow. If he took it, what would the man have to eat? So, my father was very considerate about the others. The fact that there were five of us and our house was mortgaged was in the background. Because of that nobility and kindness my father was much respected man. He had a lot of friends among the Bulgarians too.

My father was a cashier in the Jewish bank 'Bratstvo' in the years around World War II. It was a local bank governed by the Jewish municipality in Dupnitsa. In 1941 under the Law for Protection of the Nation the bank was closed and my father was left unemployed. I was in the labor camps then, but when I was at home I tried to do some work to help them - as a cobbler or in the tobacco warehouses.