

Simon Gringras



This is a photo of my eldest brother, taken in a kibbutz in Palestine some time between 1922 and 1925.

He had various names: Simon, Zygmunt or Symche - in his Polish and French papers. Simon went to Palestine, in 1921 or 1922, I think.

It was a well-known fact that an awful lot of lads from Jewish families tried to dodge their draft, and they used various techniques.

I remember that there was even the technique of starving yourself and drinking black coffee. Simon was probably a Zionist, or maybe he was draft-dodging. Later on he was in some kibbutz, he contracted malaria, and then he turned up in France.

He worked in a cinema, but towards the end of his stay in France he was the owner of a cinema. He had a certain interest in painting - I remember a drawing of his: a man in prophet's robes sitting on a huge boulder, a sunset, and behind him desert.

My brother from France was betrayed and ended up in Auschwitz. I don't know, but apparently the woman he lived with, a French woman, turned him in, or so the rumors had it. That cousin of mine, Czarny, met him in the camp in Auschwitz.

Czarny went through several camps and coped admirably, but my brother gave in very quickly and turned into what they call a 'musulman' [camp term for a person who lost the will to live]. And he died.

On a monument in Paris are the names of several hundred Jews deported to the camps, and Symche Gringras is listed.