

Szulim Rozenberg's Brother Ksil After His Return From The Gulag



This photo of my brother Ksil was taken after he returned from the labor camp in Russia.

In 1945 I got a telegram, that they put Ksil away for 10 years 'after Henryk [Erich] and Wiktor [Alter]' - which meant for Bundism. He had been speaking at the funeral of a friend's father who'd died and they arrested him.

In 1946, at the Bund camp in Bielawa [60km south of Wroclaw], I met Zenia. And back in Lodz, then working for a tailor's co-operative - I was a buyer and a seller - I met her again, walking back to her student dorm with her friend Lena. I kissed Zenia, shook hands with Lena, and Zenia says: 'She used to work in the embassy in Moscow.' So I say to her: 'I need you - I've got a problem for the embassy. Can I come and see you today?' Because all the time the thing with my brother Ksil was upsetting me. I come, I started telling her of my brother, and she started writing letters. She was a very practical girl.

In 1948 the witch-hunt against the Bundists started, for its links with the Bund in America, because the Bund in America is against communism. And they told us the Bund had to be shut down and we had to go over to the workers' party, PPR. When we heard that, we made a meeting of the Zukunft Central Committee and the Bund Central Committee separately, and we decided we were leaving. [A faction of the PPR aligned with the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (CKZP) was attempting to break up the Bund from the inside. In 1948 part of the Bund joined the PPR, creating a faction of

the PZPR aligned with the CKZP. Most of those who didn't agree with the fusion with the PPR emigrated to France]. And groups started being organized to emigrate. Before that I'd never thought to leave, because I was waiting for my brother Ksil to be released from the camp. On 15 May 1948 my brother Ksil came back from Russia. I'd gone to buy flowers, and the train came in, and Lena saw, this old man walking along, holding some dirty sack on his back, and Lena says: 'Isn't that your brother?' It was my brother. And I took him to a friend's house, we took a tin bath and put him in that tin bath, washed him, and I had brought with me the clothes I had worn at my wedding. And he was a different man. No-one knows what happened to Ksil's first wife. When the war started, they fled from Nesvezh [today Belarus, 50 km east of Baranovichi] and on the way their child wouldn't walk; he couldn't carry it, and they split up. She said: 'They won't do anything to me, I'm a blonde.' And she disappeared, and he married again in Russia, Jentel Rubin. Jentel Rubin had already been with a husband, and already had a daughter - she had her years, she was from 1909, and that was 1945, so she'd had time to have her first child.

When there was the decision to leave Poland, there was a group of 6 of us, and we went to Katowice [290 km south-west of Warsaw]. We were to go in the night, over the border, and in the morning we were in Prague. I went with my wife, my brother Ksil, my friend who I lived with after the war, Leon Krolicki, and there was also one of the editors of the Folkszeitung with us, a writer and historian, Mordechaj Bernsztajn. From Prague we had to go to Germany. And we went by train to the border, and from the border by bus to Feldafing [Germany]. We stayed with private people a few weeks in Feldafing. And we went to Ulm and from Ulm there was a group that was going to Paris. And we arrived in Paris on 22 August 1948.

Ksil died at 89, and his sons studied at a university in Israel and then came back to Paris, and he works here as an engineer in information technology.