

Jakub Ekert



This is my husband, Kuba (Jakub) Ekert. The photo was taken in Warsaw in the 1960s.

Kuba was born in Vienna in 1919. At home, among the family, he was called Majer Jankiel, but his birth certificate said Jakub. He had a brother, Josef, who was six years older. The family of his mother, Olga, nee Rothbard, came from Bolechow; the family of his father, Ozjasz Ekert, came from Stryj. They were traditional Jews; the mother did not wear a wig, but the father went to the synagogue every week, prayed, and raised his children in the same way. At home they spoke Yiddish, but they all were fluent in German as well, since they lived under Austrian partitions.

When I met Kuba in fall 1944 it turned out he and his brother were saved from the family. Repatriations already started at that time. We signed up with Kuba and his brother. We left in April 1945 and made our way to Cracow. In Cracow we went to the appointed gathering place in Hotel Polonia, near the train station. It is a very big hotel and many people stayed there until they were assigned an apartment or a room in a shared apartment. Everybody was looking for work. In that hotel I met many of my pre-war acquaintances. We got a temporary room, quite decent in fact. We had no money, and the hot soups handed out daily to the repatriates helped a lot.

Kuba enrolled at the Academy of Mining and Metallurgy, where a Polytechnic Department was created. That meant, among others, that he got free soup at school. What's more, he and the other students got occasional employment doing cleaning jobs in town. They were very badly paid, but still that was a start. And anyway, that was such a happy time that we didn't even worry that we had no means to support ourselves.