

Esfir Dener With A Group Of Former Political Prisoners



This is me, Esfir Dener (the first on the right) with a group of former political prisoners after the release from the camp. The photo was taken in Nyrob settlement Perm region in 1956. The first man from the left is doctor Koretskiy sentenced to 25 years for falling in love with a young Romanian girl in 1945 and staying behind in the hospital. He was kept in a special camp where all prisoners had numbers. After Stalin's death those camps were dismissed and he was sent to Nyrob. The second from the right is Stanislav Kerzhner, an economist from Melitopol, sentenced to 25 years, served five years and was released after Stalin died. His wife and daughter were visiting with him. I am wearing the first dress I had made for me after I was released. On 5th March 1953 Stalin died. I don't know whether his death and Purim happened on the same day. But anyway, in my childhood Purim was in March. And this was the happiest Purim in my life! When I got hold of a Soviet newspaper with a photograph of Stalin in the casket I kept it for a long time like a relic. I remember that Hitler committed suicide on 30th April and in the same way I remember that Stalin died on 5th March. They are both the same kind of evildoers for me. Looking at him in the casket I felt pleased that he had died. I met with so many wonderful people in the camp - there were masses of political prisoners sentenced for no reason. In 1954 my term came to an end and I was released from the camp, but I still had to serve an indefinite exile. I could not leave Nyrob and I stayed there to work in the office. I was accommodated in a little room with a stove. In 1956, at the Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev denounced Stalin and this had a direct impact on me - in 1956 I was released from exile. I was happy that they released me and I obtained a legal passport! My God! That's still the most precious thing I have in my life. It was summer. I had a piece of a red polka-dot staple fabric. I designed a dress and took the fabric to a dressmaker to make a dress for me. I was walking in the street wearing this dress, when I saw the chief of the camp. He said, 'You look like a strawberry. Look, let's go to the cinema. No guns or dogs! Don't be unforgiving. Whatever there was there was.' I said, 'Remember this, man. I shall never have anything to do with

somebody who convoyed me at gun-point'. And I went on. I must say people treated me very well in the Ural. There was no anti-Semitism. I was a labor and salary engineer in repair shops in Nyrob and then I moved to Zlatoust in Cheliabinsk region.