

Arkadiy Redko



I had this photo taken, when I was on military service in Germany, and sent it to my sister Asia. This photo was taken in 1946 in Germany in Frankfurt an der Oder. I joined the army in June 1942. In late 1944 we came to Poland. The attack on Berlin began in April 1945. Those were horrific battles. Our attack lasted few days and we incurred great losses. However, this was all we could do - and we won. This was the last big battle. I was near Berlin, when the war came to an end. On the early morning of 9th May we heard on the radio about the victory. This was such holiday! There was a festive meeting in the regiment. Everyone, even strangers, kissed each other, talked about the end of the war and the life at the front. We went to Berlin, and I and my fellow comrades signed

on the wall of the Reichstag. Our peaceful life began. After the war I served in Germany for five years. My year of recruitment to the army, 1942, meant that I was subject to demobilization in 1950. During my service in Germany I was aware of the events in the USSR from magazines, newspapers and the radio. In 1948 the campaign against 'cosmopolitans' began in the USSR. I knew about this from newspapers. Almost every issue of the newspaper published an article about Jewish scientists, artists, writers or poets accused of incredible things, even of their efforts to destroy the USSR. I couldn't believe those people were against the Soviet power and Stalin. Sometimes I bumped into names I knew, like Lev Kvitko [25](#), a Jewish writer, and others. I was sure they were innocent and couldn't understand why they were referred to as cosmopolitans. It wasn't just me, a 24-year old guy, but also older people who had no doubts about the truthfulness of what the papers published. I had an ambiguous attitude to this: I could not believe that the people whom I had known and respected were guilty and I couldn't distrust Stalin. Jews were blamed for everything; it was like there was an entire Jewish conspiracy. I didn't experience any change in attitude towards me in my regiment, but I sensed that the attitude towards Jews on the whole had changed.