

Saul Askenazi Together With His Front-Line Comrade



This photograph was taken in May 1945 in Berlin:

several months after the unconditional surrender of Germany. We are together with my friend Alexey. I remember nothing more about him, whereas he helped me very much in my life. Here I'll tell you about it.

In 1946 I got demobilized. And in the USSR I had nobody and nothing. I did not know how to start the new life. I wanted to go to Leningrad. But Leningrad was a closed city: people were allowed to go there only if they had been born there or had work there.

My front-line comrade helped me to get to Leningrad having sent me an invitation. His name was Alexey and I do not remember his surname.

What is ridiculous: when I arrived in Leningrad, I did not find him there. His neighbors told me that he had fallen in love with a girl from Tadjikistan and had urgently left for her. He even left no address.

So I had no opportunity to thank him for his assistance. It ensured my coming to the city, which became my home very soon. You remember I thought that I would remain Wandering Jew for ever.

Really, nobody waited for me, nobody was pleased with my returning. I was alone both in the city and in the whole world. I understood it, but at the same time my heart was pleased that I was alive.

I fought against Hitler, I would have fought against that bastard on the side of any country. Step by step I realized that the country on which side I fought, was my native country.

So on 14th August 1946 I appeared in Leningrad. And on 16th August entrance examinations at the College of Foreign Languages began. I sent my documents to the French language department.

The most difficult examination was composition. My Russian was very poor. Only regarding round oaths, I had no match. There I was worth an academic status of professor. But unfortunately entrance examinations required different sort of knowledge.

And one very beautiful girl wrote that composition for me. Don't look at me that way: you see, now I am old and bald, but 60 years ago I was rather handsome.

Moreover, I was a front-line soldier! That is why she herself suggested to do it and did it. And the rest examinations I passed myself and got very good marks.

I became a student. But the College director told me 'Your knowledge of Russian language will not permit you to study in our College. I allow you to study till the first session.'

Here I'd like to tell you that during years of my study in that College I got only one good mark, all the others were excellent. It is interesting that that good mark I got for military translation.

Guess why: because I had to translate into Russian. It was ridiculous, taking into account that I had finished war in the rank of captain-translator.

It was very important for me to be an excellent student, because they received 25% higher stipend. And I could rely only upon myself. I lived in a hostel. My stipend (even increased one) was not enough for living.

I earned money additionally: worked as a docker, helped to carry books in libraries, etc. And I was an excellent student. I had time for everything.

At that time I had a feeling (more likely subconscious) that I was living not only for myself, but also for all my family members.

I graduated from the College so successfully that acquired the right of teaching not only at schools, but also in higher educational institutions. It was written down in my diploma.