

Leon And Berta Kalaora



This is a photo of me with my wife Berta after 9th September 1944, the day of the communist takeover in Bulgaria. Our first free spring. In 1943, while Berta was still in Kyustendil, I worked in my third labor camp which was in the town of Lovech and later it was moved to a neighborhood 4 kilometers away from Lovech. There I kept in touch with villagers from the nearby villages, who had radios. I visited them to listen to the news from the front. I also kept in touch with some partisans. Some of the men in the camp bought cheese from the villagers. The great opera singer Bitush Davidov was also among them. I was released from that camp in November 1943. When I left my third labor camp, I hurried to go to Kyustendil to see Berta instead of going to Shumen first to see my parents who were interned there a year earlier, in 1942. I was traveling in the train with the husband of Buka, Berta's sister, with who she lived there. His name is Sami Haravon. We were both in the same camp in Lovech. I did not wear the obligatory yellow star at that time. I only had my mobilization documents which all people in the labor camps had. The conductors realized that my star was missing, but pretended they did not see that. I was very lucky that no policemen got on the train. I do not know what would have happened to me if they had arrested me. When I went to Kyustendil, Berta told me that she could no longer remain in this town, because she was in danger. She had become a member of the illegal District committee of the Workers' Party. At that time the future professor Simcho Aladjem led the youth movement in the party; he educated the youth in the spirit of communism. His father was a glazier and he inherited his business. One day the police in Kyustendil asked him to come to repair some windows. At that time I was at a labor camp. While he was placing the glass sheets, a policeman approached him and started asking him about Berta – who she was, why they met etc. He lied right away that they were close friends, because their meetings as members of the Workers' Party were illegal at that time. Then he told everything to Berta and she told the party secretary Ivan Nidev. When I came back from my third camp, he advised me to do everything I can to get Berta secretly out of Kyustendil. Berta and I discussed this complicated situation and decided that it was high time we married. And during those days one had to have a serious reason to leave a town with the permission of the authorities: a funeral, wedding or birth. And now we found a reason to leave the town. We went to Shumen

where my parents were interned and married there on 1st March 1944.