

Lilyana Kirilova Pinkas On The Construction Site Of The Family Villa, Near The Village Of Staro Selo Around Sofia



This is my wife, Lilyana Kirilova Pinkas (her maiden name is Mandicheva), on the construction site of the family villa, near the village of Staro Selo [Old Village] around Sofia, 1987-88.

We graduated in 1953 and we had to fulfill our military duty as candidate-officers at the military school in Kyustendil. When we came back in August, we were called by Slavcho Vasev [a journalist and one of the people in charge of the cultural issues at the Ministry of Culture] - and he sent us to Dimitrovgrad to form a theater there. So I set off for Dimitrovgrad. I married in the summer of 1954. My wife was then studying industrial chemistry in Sofia. We knew each other yet from the Sofia period of the Mayakovsky club. She, Lilyana Kirilova Mandicheva, was one of the singers at the club. In the middle of the theater season (1954-1955) I left Dimitrovgrad and came back to Sofia where I couldn't find a job. Ivan Bashev, who was then Minister of Culture, did not allow Albert Angel to hire me at the Selski [Village] Theater, situated in the Sofia town center opposite the Sofia University, because I had left the Dimitrovgrad Theater.

So I stayed unemployed for a year. After that I was employed with the Selski Theater - we were traveling around the country and I could send money to my wife. It was like that until 1959 when I told her I was not going to play again for the Selski Theater. It happened that Vili Tsankov [famous Bulgarian stage director; at that time director of the Burgas Theater] let me join the Burgas Theater company, where my friend Leon Daniel was the stage director. Leon had assigned me a nice role in

'The Death of Sisyphus', but I came late from Israel where I had gone to visit my mother and brothers. My mother, sister and one of my brothers moved to live there in 1948. In 1949 my eldest brother (who was married and had a child) emigrated there together with my younger brother who was studying here mechanical engineering. He continued his education in Israel.

My Jewish origin was not an obstacle, because I haven't put much emphasis on it. When Bulgaria cancelled its diplomatic relationships with Israel I attended a gathering where a lot of bullshit was said - but what could one do - you had to listen. My daughter was not allowed to go to Israel when she graduated from the high school - they were afraid she was to marry there. But when she got married in Bulgaria she was allowed to go there together with her husband. It happened before 1989. We hardly brought her up in accordance with the Jewish traditions. Now she lives in America together with her two daughters. Her ex-husband is in Sofia and works as a tradesman. They got divorced. She is now looking after her children and he is looking after me. We haven't observed the Jewish traditions. We may have eaten matzah from time to time. I have occasionally visited the synagogue.

My life hasn't changed much after the democratization process that started in 1989 - I don't work any more, so I can't feel the unemployed man's worries. Now I read books and I have a group of friends - we meet with the brother of Dragomir Asenov - he is an expert at the oncology institute in Sofia - we have been friends with him yet from our childhood years in Ruse. Every Friday I have dinner with Leon Daniel, we just have a sip and talk. There is another Jewish family I visit. My wife died at home of cancer. The 'Joint' association used to pay some money for the medicines. My pension is 160 leva [around 80 USD]. I rarely go to the synagogue and Bet Am. I have received aid from the German 'Claims Conference' - they paid around 7,000 EUR in three installments. I still have from this money and I don't waste it - I bought the land lot of the summer house in Staro Selo village, and I went to America to visit my daughter - and I think I can still count on some of this money for two or three years.