

Akub Fischbein After WWII



This is my father, Jakub Fischbein. This picture was taken at the end of the 1950s or at the beginning of the 1960s by a professional photographer in Warsaw. My father was the chair of the local Jewish Committee in Walbrzych between 1946 and 1949. It was an organization in which Jews gathered to help other Jews. At the same time my father made many enemies, because he tried to persuade Jews not to leave Poland. He argued they should stay, because Poland was going to be a different place. After the Kielce pogrom in 1946, however, I'm not sure how many there were whom this argument would stop from leaving. Everybody who could, who had some family, who found sponsors, thought about emigrating. My father constantly preached internationalism to me. I remember in 1952, personal IDs were being issued for the first time. Up until then we had no documents. My birth certificate or its copy arrived with an error, most likely caused by the clerk's haste or a simple mistake. My name on it was Rena Fischbein. "Dad" I said, "we have to correct his, one syllable is missing." I'm telling this story to show how paranoid my father was after all. He

glanced at me and said, "You know what, let's leave it like that. Maybe Rena sounds better than Regina." He didn't say out right that Regina Fischbein sounds rather unambiguous [i.e. explicitly Jewish]. So that's how I became Rena. From 1952, all my documents say that. My parents moved to Warsaw at the beginning of 1950. The party [PZPR] suddenly remembered my father. At first, my father worked for NIK [Supreme Chamber of Control, which controls the activity of all state institutions] in the Department of Personnel and Training. Then he worked at the headquarters supervising Construction of Housing for Workers. After he worked at the Agency for Peace Uses of Atomic Energy.