

Haim Rivkin



This photograph of my brother Haim Rivkin was taken in 1951 in Gomel. When my brother Haim, born in 1920, left for the army, he asked me to sing the song 'Our armor is strong and our tanks are fast' for him. He listened to me and cried. It happened on 27th May 1941. In April 1945 our family got to know that Haim was in Buchenwald I'd like to tell you about the destiny of my brother Haim. His military unit was sent to Western Ukraine or Western Belarus, I don't remember exactly. I remember, that he had mentioned Ossovets Fortress, where they were located. My brother hadn't been attested yet, when the German troops captured that settlement. The commanding officers offered the soldiers to run away. Haim was captured by the fascists. He borrowed the name of his Russian friend Sergey Maslov. He didn't look like a Jew. As a prisoner of war, he was taken to the

concentration camp in Buchenwald. Haim said that every year on 12th December, he exchanged his portion of bread for a cigarette. He smoked that cigarette in memory of me. 12th December is my birthday, and that was the way he congratulated me. Among the Russian prisoners there was a person, a scoundrel, who blackmailed Haim. He used to tell him, 'I know a lot about you.' But none of the prisoners betrayed him. In April 1945 the prisoners were transported from Buchenwald to Dachau. On the way Haim and two of his friends broke off the floor in their car and escaped from the moving train. Later, while roaming around, they ran into a Soviet military unit. At the beginning of May 1945 we received a telegram from Haim saying that he was alive. We immediately informed Isaac, who was a commissar of the regiment. It turned out that the commissar of the military unit, where Haim was caught, was Isaac's friend. He helped Haim, and Haim managed to avoid examination by the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs. In September 1945 he was demobilized. He returned to Gomel, and there security services started to call him for night interrogations, trying to find out how a Jew had survived in a concentration camp.