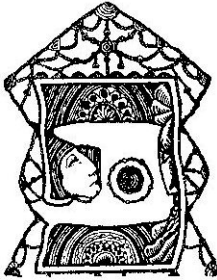


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Just like Josef, Rywka had also awaited their meeting with mixed feelings. She told [him] about her life, but Josef sensed that there was something unsaid. In her words, in the manner she became pensive while recounting her experiences in the French village of Villon, something had been left out. Yes, she was hiding something from him. Josef was [now] already anxious, that he had actually been open and sincere in telling her almost all his hitherto experiences.

Nevertheless, it appeared they would somehow live together, forgetting all that had previously been. The grief over their own [family members], and the great tragedy of the millions of annihilated Jews, of which they only learnt with all the details following the victory over the German barbarians, seemed to bring the two of them back together, and to some extent dispelled the estrangement between them.

Josef went to work. Rywka became a lady of the house, cooking and cleaning the home and, for a time, it seemed to Josef that now, in the late summer of his life, everything would fall into place and receive a meaning, a new content to continue life. He would work and devote himself to communal activities. He would forget everything.

[But] from time to time, many doubts would assail him. Rywka's frequent silences and her thoughtfulness were to him such as he had never seen with her before, in the years when they had been together. He suspected something. Had she perhaps left behind someone in France, for whom she was yearning so intensely? Or was he mistaken, and it was just the agony and grief she was feeling over her deceased relatives in Poland? And furthermore, had he then the right to inquire, ask and be suspicious? What about himself? What about Miriam, who was hoping for him? Perhaps Rywka was actually thinking about her, Miriam, even though she inquired nothing as to her whereabouts? Was she living here in New York, or was she in another city?

Oftentimes, it would actually vex Josef that Rywka never mentioned Miriam's name. She was indifferent to everything Josef had told her, from his sham marriage to Miriam to his divorce from her. Indeed, his life was one big tangle.

As a consequence, he embedded himself even more into his work for the book of his hometown and in the relief work to support the Surviving Remnant¹ - the few Jewish survivors, who still found themselves on the accursed German soil, and whom it was necessary to rescue from there, and see to it that they reached either the Land of Israel or America and Canada.

* * *

¹ [TN: Term used in the Yiddish and Hebrew literature in ref. to Holocaust survivors.]

After being in New York for a couple of months, Rywka fell ill. She needed to undergo an operation - more suffering, sadness and grief in the desolate rooms. Rywka's being in hospital broke Josef. The good friend Mirl never left Rywka's bedside. Every day, she came to the hospital, even utterly neglecting her own household duties.

During these days of Rywka's hospitalisation, Josef went through the seven lairs of hell. He felt that he was running out of strength.

"God", he thought, "Haven't I been through enough in life? Haven't I suffered enough? How tragic is the entire life of men! Haven't I suffered enough before making it here to this free country? And now, when I'm prepared to make my life whole, set up our tent and try to forget everything, Rywka had to fall ill".

In his heart, Josef prayed Rywka would get better. He was enveloped by a pity for her life. All the years of his life with her passed before his eyes - Warta, Paris, Warsaw, their little daughter Sure'le, her death, and her lonely little grave in the Parisian [Jewish] cemetery. A dark destiny had accompanied him all these years.

Rywka recovered.

After leaving the hospital, she travelled to a place of rest in the mountains, to recuperate from the serious operation. She returned in good health. Josef breathed a little more freely. In his heart, he was prepared to renew his life with Rywka and make it all good. Perhaps the little tranquillity and happiness he had already so strongly longed and yearned for all his years would [finally] come to the two of them.

However, it seems it was not Josef's destiny that Rywka should live the rest of the years with him. Josef gradually noticed how Rywka became more talkative. Her frequent silence was interrupted and, in her conversations with Josef regarding the political situation in the world, her voice became filled with anger and vexation. From day to day, her words regarding America, England and France became ever more acerbic and full of reproof.

It appears that already there, in the French village with her French friends and under the influence of her friend Léopold, she had become all the more left-wing [viz. communist] oriented. Naturally, she wished to conceal this, knowing Josef's world views, and especially after the experiences he lived through during the Second World War in the Soviet Union, on his way to America.

* * *

The first clash, which Josef and Rywka had following her recovery, and which deeply upset Josef, was during a conversation concerning the Erlich-Alter tragedy, the two beloved leaders, who were innocently murdered by the Soviet judges - the "heirs of socialism".

"I don't believe all the lies the *Forverts* writes there!", Rywka exclaimed angrily.

“What do you mean, the *Forverts*?”, Josef retorted. “The news is [also] all over the English press and leaders of the Labour movement here are trying to find out why and wherefore they were killed. How could you say such a thing, Rywka? After all, you knew them well - they were your friends, just as they were mine. Do you really believe Erlich and Alter helped Hitler, may his name be obliterated?”.

Rywka said nothing. But Josef did not relent and, again, he started, “After all, the same thing could’ve happened to me - I was [also] in their hands”.

“Well, [you] would’ve been lost!”, Rywka said calmly.

Josef was shocked by her cold-blooded response. He went into another room and sat down to write his memoirs for the book of his townspeople. But he was unable to pick up the pen in his hand. He was upset by what Rywka had said, and her hatred towards anyone who dared utter a negative word about Soviet Russia. And, that evening, he had to leave the house to walk about a little - perhaps he would regain his composure in the fresh air outside.

Josef wrote his memoirs. On one occasion, he asked Rywka if she wished to read the manuscript. “I’ve already read your clever words regarding the Soviet Union”, she replied to him.

Josef looked wounded. After a while in silence, Rywka said, “When you’re at work, I sometimes look at the pages you write. I don’t mind what you write about your childhood, the Tsar and the revolutionary years - that’s not bad. But your opinions on Soviet Russia are the same as those of all the fascists! I’m ashamed that my husband should actually think such things of the country that has helped liberate the world from fascism!”

Josef felt as if an abyss had opened up before him. The alienation, which had always been between them, grew once again. Rywka would never argue, and seldom took part in political questions. The words, which now came out of her mouth, were the ones which she heard in the New York leftist centres, with which she had become very close lately. Every time she came from a Communist function, Rywka would go on and on about the sheer miracles. Here, they had spoken of the Red Army. There, she had heard a lecture on America and Russia and the comparison between the two countries. And, here, [about] the future of the new Soviet man, who would be a model for the world.

There were clashes between Rywka and Josef, and even with the friends who came to visit Josef. Rywka also quarrelled a little with her old friend Mirl. And, on one occasion, Rywka truly pained everyone with her remark - “You American Jews have done very little in the war against fascism. You haven’t brought any sacrifices at all, in comparison with the underground fighters in France.”

Josef came back at Rywka, “There, in France, you went through the same experiences as did every Jew who was hiding. Why didn’t you go out and join the underground fighters? You obviously couldn’t - so don’t reproach others!”.

Rywka's face reddened. "And you, the big hero, why did you flee the Soviet Union instead of joining the Red Army?"

Rywka did not like America at all. She did not have a single good word for the land that had become the place of refuge for all sufferers and the persecuted. She had a particular hatred for the right-wing Labour institutions - the Socialists and Bundists - due to their opposition to the Communists, with whom she was now associating.

Just at that time, Josef was working in one of the Socialist Labour institutions. He was happy with his work, because there he could accomplish more and show more initiative. It oftentimes seemed to him that he was in Warsaw, not in New York. In the organisation, where Josef was now working, he came into contact with Jewish writers and Labour leaders. Through them, he also accomplished much for his *landsleit*, as well as for the Surviving Remnant in Germany.