

Meer Kuyavskiy With His Friends



The picture was made in Lodz in 1942 during charity dinner, arranged as per order of Judenrat of the ghetto to raise money for the ghetto canteen. This is I standing to the left with a yellow star on my jacket. The third to the left is my brother Benjamin Kuyavskis wearing a cap. My pal Itsik is sitting in the first row to the right. He was a very sweet and brave lad. When he walked out of ghetto, he took the yellow star off and many people took him for Pole. I do not know what happened to him. The girl in the center is the neighbor. She perished during one of the actions. Eliash Kravetskiy is standing to the left. He was in the concentration camp. He is currently living in Tel Aviv, Israel. I met him in Israel. Eliash, who is living in his own house in the heart of Tel Aviv suggested my moving in his place for good. We were bonded by ghetto past, which is stronger than friendship ties. Next to me is a lady, who was housed in our apartment, when ghetto was established. I do not remember her name. One lady Franya managed to keep that photo, but cut the place, where she was in the picture. She was afraid if someone found the picture, she could be shot, but she managed to take the picture out of ghetto and save. Franya lived in Canada after war and died in the 1990s. I got it in many years after war when I was in Israel in the 1990s. At that time I met the son of one of my comrades from ghetto. He kept it like an apple of his eye and then gave that photo to me.

On 1 September 1939 fascist German unleashed Second World War by attacking Poland. The first two days Molotov-Ribbentrop treaty was effective, allowing people to abandon Poland via Soviet Union borders. Large groups of fugitives got together on the boarder. Elder brothers went there. They tried to convince parents that all of us should leave together. My parents were rather elderly and it was hard for them to go in nowhere, leaving the apartment and things that they have got by blood and sweat. They also could did not let my brother and I go either as they did not know what might have happened with us. It happened so that on the first day of war we parted with Moishe and Isaac as we stayed in Lodz.

In early 1940 ghetto was founded in Lodz. Our Zhidovska street was inside the ghetto. There were Jews from cities there as well. First everybody thought that everything would be OK. Judenrat was established in ghetto consisting of prominent Jews, which was supposed to take care of people

there. My brother and I had odd jobs at the sewing factory. Ghetto was surrounded with barbed wire. There were armed guards at the gate. Very soon we understood that the life there could hardly be called living, it was a bitter existence. None of its inhabitants knew what the next day had in store for him.

We are what we could get. We got some kind of gruels by food cards. At times we got semi-rotten vegetables. We were given tainted horse-flesh for couple of times. My mother was very ingenious and could concoct some dishes for us. These were horrible years, nevertheless it was my adolescent and part of my life. There were good days as well. I had friends, with whom I had a good time. I worked at the factory and gradually I became a tailor, which became useful in my life later on. In spring 1942 I and some more young people were called in Judenrat. We were suggested to make a charity dinner, and the money raised there would go for canteen for ghetto inhabitants. Strange as it may be but we managed to succeed in that- verses were recited, Jewish and Polish songs were sung and of course dancing. Those ghetto inhabitants who still had money attended that evening. There were cabmen, ladies of the most ancient profession etc. All collected money went to the fund of the future canteen and some people even gave their ration there. I have one very precious thing- the picture made during that evening.