

Samuel König With His Friends Izaak Kamcha Nad Ecia Apfelbaum



This is a photo of me and my friends from Mielnica Podolska: Izaak and Ecia. The photo was taken at that time when I came back to Mielnica after the War, so in 1946. Dawid Szternberg took this photo in his own studio. He ran such studio after the War.

I was demobilized in 1946. I came back to my town, to Mielnica Podolska. And I was ill before that. I would perhaps serve longer but because of my health, my lungs, I was released. And everybody headed for their hometown. So did I. But I already knew nobody was there. In the summer of 1945 I wrote to my town, to the town council, or sovyet. It turned out they gave my letter to Dawid Szternberg who had stayed in Mielnica. He and his sister survived. Had anyone else survived? No. Just the two of them. And so I got a letter from him saying my family was all gone. There was nothing in it about the circumstances of their deaths. They had all been killed, that was all.

I didn't have any place to go anyway so I returned to Mielnica. When I got there the townspeople told me all the Jews had been deported to Borszczow by the Germans on one summer day in 1942. They made them walk the 20 kilometers to Borszczow. A ghetto was created there for the Jews from all the surrounding towns. They kept them for a week or two, hungry and cold, and later herded them into railcars and sent to a death camp somewhere. I've never been to Borszczow. I don't know the town. Besides, Dawid knew everyone was dead. They were gone from Mielnica without a trace.

I stayed in Mielnica for two, maybe three months. I stayed with the Szternbergs. I wasn't doing anything. I had been demobilized, they granted me the disabled soldier status, I waited for the repatriation transport to take me to Poland. My house still stood there but I didn't even try to get in. Nobody lived there, those gentlemen occupied it, the NKGB. Narodny Komisaryat Gosudarstvenoy Bezapasnosti, National Commissariat for State Security.

Mielnica had changed during the war. It was damaged. All the little houses, the poor Jewish houses surrounding the market square, right, had been burned by the Germans. You could see the absence. Normally before the war you wouldn't have seen the Dniester river because of the buildings. In 1946 I could see the bank of Dnestr, so something had vanished. The better houses, those worth something were surely left. Other thing was, there were more poor people I think. They lived in shanties, in adobe shingle-roofed huts. I left with the first repatriation transport.