

Lejb Perelmut In Hospital



This is my father, Lejb Perelmut in hospital. The photo was taken in Bialystok, in 1940 or 1941. My mother, Estera Perelmut, sat near his bed. I don't remember why he was in hospital, he must have been ill, he wasn't that young, and he worked hard. I don't remember, what hospital it is, probably a Soviet hospital. I don't know who the other woman in the photo is, it may be a nurse, but I'm not sure now. I have got this photo thanks to my two aunts: Mania and Ania, from Moscow. I am in possession of many pictures that were saved by my family in Moscow. And it happened because my parents would send many pictures and letters to them before the war broke out. And all those pictures were saved. The ones we had in our home in Bialystok got lost, naturally. After the war I found out that my two aunts kept our family archives. I was really happy to get those precious things back. In 1939 my parents left Lublin and they were back in Bialystok, on Kupiecka 7. This was a house almost next to the gate of the ghetto, from the side of Lipowa Avenue. I stayed with my parents and my younger sister, Dina. My older sister Fania, who got married, was living in Lublin, in our old apartment on Lubartowska 61. Because I had been convicted in the past, I could argue with the authorities about why my father couldn't get a job. He was an accountant. And father was over 50 years old then. I went, I think, to the secretary of the committee - part of the Soviet authorities in Bialystok, and I said: 'Why in the hell can't Father get a job?' 'Because, you know, older people?' And I said: 'What, are they supposed to die? He's a professional.' And I won. He got a job. We didn't expect the war. Several boys and girls went to Lublin across the border and brought my sister Fania with her husband and child back to me. And they stayed with us. It was a very difficult period, because the winter was hard, there was nothing we could use for heating the house. It was a three-room apartment, two large rooms and one small one you had to pass through to get to the other ones. My room was above the entrance to the house, it wasn't heated. Father worked as an accountant. Mother stayed at home, my younger sister was at school and the older sister and brother-in-law worked. And then there was the night when the first bombs fell on Bialystok. Because I had survived 1939 walking from Bydgoszcz to Warsaw and then to Bialystok I immediately understood this was no drill, no lightning, but bombs. So I quickly gathered all the tenants on the 1st floor. I took my bicycle, because I rode like mad then, I had an excellent bicycle, semi-racing bicycle that I competed on, wooden rims? I went to the party secretary. He was sitting

up there, he lived in the attic of a wooden house. I shouted to him: 'War!' and he replied: 'Are you crazy?' But I was right, it turned out it was a war.