

Cywja Waserman



On this photo, you can see little Cywja, she was the daughter of my sister Chaja Waserman (nee Elencwajg). She was born in 1940, this picture was taken shortly before she was killed together with her mom. I have no idea how I got this photo, probably my sister managed to send it by post. I remember the beginning of the war in 1939. On the ninth day of the war the Germans dropped firebombs on Miedzyrzec, burned half of the town. It was then my friends and I agreed it was time to run. The Germans were close, and we, as communists, would be the first to die. The police had us in their files, so they knew each one of us. And so we ran. One of my friend's parents had a bike shop, so he took a bike, and everyone had something, a few shirts. And we went, on foot, towards the Russian border, and that was like three hundred kilometers. To the old Russian border! We

chose the side roads, going through villages, avoiding the towns. And the Germans were close on our heels. Anywhere we entered, we'd hear the Germans kept advancing. And in the end, on the last day, when we arrived at the border with the Soviet Union, they told us the Russians had entered. Because it was after the 17th of September. It turned out we had covered too many kilometers. We stayed for a while in the town and when we heard the Red Army was heading towards Warsaw, towards the Vistula, we went back to Miedzyrzec. It was, I think, October 1939. Because we had spent some time in that town, Dobrowice, with the Russians. We went by train to Brzesc. There were no trains from Brzesc, so we went the rest of the way on foot. When I arrived in Miedzyrzec at the turn of September and October, I met my mother and my brother at home. My sister got married in 1939 and lived somewhere else, but also in Miedzyrzec. The Russians stayed in Miedzyrzec for ten days. I heard the Jews raised the triumphal gate to welcome them on their arrival. But then a Russian officer, a Jew, warned us that Miedzyrzec had been awarded to the Germans and the Russians would withdraw. Which is what happened. Having spent ten days in the town the Russians withdrew beyond the Bug. My sister was the first to flee, to Brzesc. Then she wanted to go back, but couldn't because they arrested her and sent a hundred kilometers east, to Baranowicze. I never saw her again. She died with the other Jews when the Germans came in 1941. I learned later the Germans dug out mass graves out of the town there and shot all the Jews. My sister had a little baby girl, Cywja, whose photo I was presented with by some miracle, and who died with her mother.