

Rywka Friedman



This is my sister Rywka Friedman. The photo was taken in Kovel in the 1930s. On the left you can see the photo gallery in the window. This is window of the studio of the photographer who took this picture. There were three children in our family: Regina, Rywka, and I. I was born in 1913. Regina was two years older than I, and Rywka was ten years younger. Rywka was a fantastically gifted girl and I had a friendlier relationship with her than with my elder sister, with whom I had frequent quarrels. When I was returning from Russia on a troop train that passed through Kovel, I asked my commanding officer for leave of absence and went down to the town to look for the remains of our home. It was 1944. I hadn't had any contact with home during that entire time. I had sent letters to my family from several localities, but I don't know if they arrived. And now I was on my way to Lublin. I walked through a ruined town; the house in which I used to live no longer existed. I found one acquaintance, a Jewish woman who had gone out of her mind. She was walking round talking nonsense. She had had a little child who had started crying terribly when they were hiding in some bunker; several dozen other people were hiding there as well, and they suffocated the child. Nine people survived from the entire town; out of 18,000 Jews. I came across a girlfriend of my sister's, a Pole; she gave me several photographs. She told me in detail how it had been done. I learnt about the torments the Jews had gone through, how they had been put behind barbed wire. During all that time, Marysia, that Polish girl, had been meeting with my sister in secret. My elder sister, Regina, married a 'byezenets', a laryngologist from Warsaw, his name was Fryde. She was pregnant, about to give birth. My younger sister was in hiding outside the ghetto; she was at a very good place, somewhere with a Polish family in Kovel. But when she heard that the Germans had surrounded the ghetto and taken away everyone to be shot, she left her hiding place and went to join her mother and sister. Mom and both my sisters were killed.