

Self-Defense Group In Dzisna



This is a photo of the self-defense group in Dzisna. Men from this group were perceived as strong boys, who assured the safety of the city, a kind of civil police group. My uncle Abraham Solowiejczyk was the leader of this group. The photo was taken in Dzisna in 1905 and comes from the memory book about my home town. Uncle Abraham was a well-known and respected man in the area, because he was a trader and a fisherman. He died in the ghetto in Dzisna in 1942. There were no anti-Semitic incidents in Dzisna really. It was like this. There was the gymnasium, so usually all kinds of anti-Semitic moods would come from there, they had these organizations. But the community was strong, there were self-defense groups. There were firefighters and there were also some, so-called strong boys. And when they knew something was going on, they'd try to calm everyone down. So there were no real pogroms. There were incidents, for example when they were conscripting boys into the army, the village boys, Poles and Belarusians, would get drunk and get into trouble. And they were dangerous. But those who did not want to go to the army and who were starving, they were peaceful. And nobody wanted to go to the army. Jews didn't want to either. Before the war, it was like this, they'd choose whom they wanted in the army. You had to be tall enough, weigh enough, you had to be healthy. The boys had to be healthy and fit. And those who didn't want to go, would starve themselves on purpose, so they would weigh less.