

Mieczyslaw Weinryb In Bashkiria



This is a picture of me (sixth from the left) with a group of my colleagues in a manufacturing shop in Bashkiria. The photo was taken about 1944. I lived in Vladikavkaz from 1941. In 1943 my friends from Warsaw found out where I was and sent me a letter inviting me to Bashkiria, where they lived at the time. There were more Poles there [in fact Jews from Poland], there was even a Society of Polish Patriots, which said there was a chance to go back, so I got myself permission to move there. To do that I had to lie a little in the papers. I wrote that my friends were actually my family. They promised that they would support me in Bashkiria and that I would have work there. I was on good terms with the director of my company, so he issued me a permit to leave as well. It was all a bit risky because the NKVD monitored the whole procedure, but it worked. Once again I traveled on goods trains, this time to the Urals. The Society of Polish Patriots was for the most part made up of Jews from Poland. In Bashkiria I met engineer Slobodkin - an architect from Warsaw - and other people I knew. I was made director of production in the manufacturing shops owned by the Society of Polish Patriots. We sewed clothes and made shoes. For a while I lived with a family, and after that I had my own room. The climate there was very harsh. We wore felt boots. Sometimes the buran, a blizzard, would pass over, during which you couldn't leave the house because you could freeze to death - something like a wall of ice and snow flew at you. Towards the end of the war news started to reach us from Poland. Some people left. When they came back we asked them, 'Well, and how is it with bread, what kind of rations?' They said that there were no rations, that goods were in the shops on the shelves and you could take as much as you wanted, that there were even cakes there. But we had become so used to the reality of life out there by that time that we didn't believe them, we simply couldn't imagine it. We left in fall 1945. After a few weeks traveling in goods trains I arrived in Lublin.