

Testaments of Jews from Shavli

Siauliai (Shavli)

Siauliai was a large city in Western Lithuania. On the eve of World War II, there were approximately 5360 Jews living there. During the four days between the German invasion of Siauliai and its capitulation on June 26, 1941 1000 Jews succeeded in fleeing eastwards. A further 1000 Jews were murdered by the Germans and Lithuanians in the first two weeks of the occupation. At the end of July 1941, a ghetto was established in Siauliai, its Judenrat headed by Mendel Leibowitz.

The SS took over the running of the ghetto in September 1943, and it was transformed into a concentration camp. On November 5, an *Aktion* (round-up) was carried out, and 574 children and hundreds of the elderly and crippled were sent to their deaths. The last Jews in the ghetto were deported to the Stutthof camp in Germany in July 1944. Most of them perished.

These two testaments were found on the site of the ghetto. They were written on the eve of the ghetto's final liquidation:

11 July 1944

Document!!!

"On leaving the ghetto and taking a step between life and death, I left behind me a few photos of my nearest ones in the hope that somebody would find them while digging and searching in the earth, and that this person would be so kind as to transmit them to one of my relatives or friends in America or Palestine, if there will still be any of them left. My name is Frieda Niselevitch, born in Vaiguva.

To my dear and esteemed father, Nahum Zvi Niselevitch, my sister, Shoshana Stein, her husband, Miha-Yehuda Stein, and other relatives in Kelme who have remained alive; to my dear niece, Esterl Stein, in Zhagare. I embrace affectionately my dear ones who will receive this document, may they know that I have remained alive so far, the only one of the family, about the others I

do not know anything. My dear Mamale I saw for the last time in prison, of my brothers Simhe [and] Aizik Meir Niselevitch they were in Ponevezh before the war.

I send my greetings to my Jewish brothers who have remained after the Inquisition, may they be devoted sons to our fatherland, the Holy Eretz Israel”.

Frieda

Siauliai

Document

“We declare that on July 7, 1944 the order for the evacuation of the ghetto of Shavli was issued. We want our names to be known for the generations to come:

Shmuel Minzberg, son of Shimon of the city of Lodz (Poland)

His wife Reisele, née Saks, of Vaiguva

Her sister Feigele Saks

Friedele Niselevitch of Vaiguva, daughter of Nahum Zvi

We do not know where they are sending us. In the ghetto, 2000 Jews are waiting for the order to leave. Our fate is unknown. Our state of mind is terrible.

May the Kingdom of Israel arrive soon, in our days.”

Shmuel Minzberg

Source: Yehudit Kleinman and Reuven Dafni (Eds.), *Final Letters from the Yad Vashem Archives*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1991, pp. 126-128