

## Samuel König Present Picture



This is me. The photo was taken here, in Jewish community in Lodz, in 2005. I don't remember who took it.

After the World War II I worked as an accountant, I mean as a head accountant, bookkeeper, and cashier. Three posts, one person. Head accountant was an important person, financial vice-director. I earned well. Even though the state farms in the country did not compare to the co-ops in the cities. You didn't earn as much as in a city. Well, but you had your own garden, and free boarding, and free milk if you had a wife and child. So my family and I didn't have to worry and were able to save some money.

I don't know if I ever had any political sympathies. While in the army I wasn't yet smart enough to realize what I wanted. Everyone wanted the same thing as long as politics were concerned. You were a member of the Komsomol then - of the Soviet Communist party. I became a member of the Polish United Workers' Party after the war, in 1963. But that was not because of my political sympathies. Nor views. A guy I was dependent on, damn, influenced me, I don't know, how to describe it, he kept saying, 'Join the party, join...' and so I did. But I haven't regretted it, no.

I've never personally experienced anti-Semitism. Well, no such thing ever happened around me. I remember that story from our town, Mielnica Podolska, I was 10, 11 maybe. A whole Jewish family and their Ukrainian housekeeper were murdered. The head of the family was a landowner. The two Ukrainians who committed the crime were workers on his farm. They were caught. They were hiding in a potato pile for three days but the police eventually found them. I know they were tried and sentenced, but I don't remember the ruling. I saw the funeral of the Jewish family and the

Ukrainian woman. The procession was huge, the whole town came, right. But was it anti-Semitic? Maybe simply a robbery. Damn if I know. I also remember the Kielce case. In 1946. I was not yet in Poland at that time, I learned about it here but years later. They say there were lot of incidents like that but I just heard about them.

I became a member of the Jewish community only recently. It's been three, maybe four years since I started getting to know the people and socializing in the Lodz Community Center. I have a nice garden there, in Cieladz, by my house. I was once here in Lodz and people told me there's a canteen here, at the Center. I had lots of string bean. I filled two sacks with it, 20 damn kilograms altogether, and dragged them to the canteen. And I left it for them to eat. Then I did it again. Later I had some black radish in the garden, it's a Jewish specialty, you can prepare different dishes from it. You can grate it, salt it, add some oil or fat, right. Personally I like it. I think it was very popular in my town, Mielnica Podolska. I grew that radish expressly to bring it over here. And that's how I've met here two or three people of my age.

I was never a religious person. And I still can't say that of myself today. I haven't been to a synagogue for years. I didn't have any contact with that. I don't know, somehow I managed without it. I've been living in Sieradz for 42 years and I've never been to the synagogue in Lodz. And there was a synagogue in the city. Nowadays I come and pray. But not everyone in a church is totally devoted to religious issues, right. I'm close to neutral in that aspect. After so many bad experiences it's hard to imagine there's someone up there leading us, and leading us wisely at that. He's supposed to be there to help people, right, and to lead them in the correct direction. There were so many religions throughout the centuries and people were always fighting, killing, murdering each other in cruel ways. Sometimes a beast dies in a more humane way than a human being.

My life today is absolutely normal. I'm not alone. I have neighbors. I have good relations with all my close and more distant friends. Lately I'm spending more time here [in the Community Center]. I come to Lodz on various days. I always try to attend the Friday and Saturday services. My wife is in Cieladz now. She's been here with me twice, I think. Whenever it was possible to spend the night in the Center, I had a decent place to sleep. Nowadays I have my own tiny room here, in the former cloakroom. It's rather shabby in here, but when I stayed in the house Center's Day Care House the conditions were great. So I sleep here and go to the service in the morning.

When I look back on the past, on the Israeli wars, I think the creation of the state Israel had to be that way. Well, those people deserve to have their own place on Earth, at the very least because of its tragic past. And what's more, it's a land historically connected with them.

It's hard to tell if I regret anything in my life. Maybe if I'd stayed in the kibbutz in Bytom and hadn't gone to the gardening school in Slupsk, I would have also lived in Israel now? I would have had to go there if I'd stayed with that group. Today I'd even like to go to Israel but I don't think they need old people like myself.