

Berta Kamhi And Donka Dimitrova



This is a photo of my mother Berta Kamhi, nee Koen, and my sister Donka Dimitrova, nee Kamhi. It was taken in Kyustendil in 1943. On 27th May we received the notice that we were to be interned to the town of Kyustendil. I think that someone came to tell us that in person. At that time we wore yellow stars which showed that we were Jews. I had been wearing such a star since 1940. If we had not worn them, we could have been sent to a concentration camp. We were allowed to keep our houses but most of the Jews sold away their possessions. We arrived in Kyustendil by train and we were accommodated in the Jewish school. We slept on the floor on blankets which we brought from home. We ate from a big cauldron where they prepared some food for us. Shortly after, I started work. At first I was a waiter in a cafeteria for the meager sum of 20 leva a day – the price of one loaf of bread. Each evening the interned Jews gathered in the Jewish school and once I was told that I could go and take part in the digging of a river path, which was much better-paid. So, I started working there. The first day I was so tired, I could hardly walk. Then I got used to it and even dug much more than the others. At the beginning of June 1944 our whole family was interned to Pleven, the Kailuka area, where a concentration camp had been built. We were shut in a wooden shed. They put it on fire during the night and my mother was burned alive. My mother had a long dress which got stuck between the boards of the house and she could not get out. I tried to pull her out, but I could not. We were released on 21st August 1944. We went to Pazardzhik first, to Liza's place. Liza was my mother's sister. My father was sent to a labor camp in Enikioy. My sister and I waited for our father and our brother to return. My father came back at the end of August 1944 and we celebrated 9th September 1944 there.