

Danuta Mniewska

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Poland

Interviewer: Maria Koral

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Mrs. Danuta Mniewska lives in Warsaw in a new apartment building. Despite the broken leg she had suffered several months earlier, she gave me the impression of a very vigorous person. She emphasized, she never liked to sit idly. During our meetings, she told me her life story in a colorful and moving way, particularly the wartime events. Mrs. Mniewska appeared to be a cheerful person, always ready to altruistically help other people, and she is a committed member of the Jewish war-veteran associations and social and cultural clubs. She remarked on several occasions that she has never made her Jewish descent a secret.

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My family history

I know nothing about my great-grandparents. My paternal grandparents lived in Grabow, in Leczyca County [some 50 km north-west of Lodz]. My grandfather's name was Josef - not Josek, but Josef - Mniewski. Grandmother's name was Frajda, nee Tajfel. She was born in Wloclawek [some 100 km north of Lodz] and came from a wealthy and educated family. Several of her relatives completed university studies - there was a dental surgeon, an architect - so that was a 'better' family. As for my grandparents - they certainly weren't white-collar workers. I don't know what they did, it was all a secret.

My father was born in Grabow in 1900. His name was Benjamin, and his parents called him Benjumo, the Jewish way. I know from family accounts that his two elder sisters, both in their teens, I suppose, died of influenza. To save my father, his parents went with him to the rabbi. The rabbi told them to dress him in white, and that was how he had to be dressed until the age of three. His parents obeyed that very scrupulously. I don't know those sisters' names, no one spoke about that. Death was generally something that you didn't discuss with children.

My father had his parents twisted around his little finger - the two daughters had died, and he was the youngest one, so he did what he wanted, he was like sacred. My grandparents wanted him to become a rabbi, but that of course was out of the question - he rebelled awfully. Didn't want to wear those robes, dressed the civilian way. But he certainly had a bar mitzvah. He studied at home with private tutors. I don't think he ever tried to pass the high school finals, he didn't need it - he didn't even think about higher studies because he married early.

It was in Grabow my father met his future wife, my mother. I have no idea what their wedding was like. His parents were strongly opposed to the marriage, but my father was terribly in love with my mother. She was a poor girl and my grandmother didn't want her beloved son to marry a girl without dowry - she wanted a princess for him. And the ladies disliked each other, disliked each other terribly.

My mother was born in Lodz in 1901. Her name was Ewa Ryza. Her parents were Grandfather Israel and Grandmother Mala; I don't remember her maiden name. I think they came from Lodz, though I'm not sure. It was a beautiful story, their marriage, I learned about it years later and I was moved. My grandmother was an orphan and when she was just ten years old, and my grandfather was eleven or twelve, they got engaged. Afterwards, when they were about to marry, people started telling my grandfather, 'Come on, drop it, you don't have to. You promised, but you don't have to. She's a poor girl, she has nothing.' And he said, 'What?! Not only is she an orphan but I'm to do such harm to her, humiliate her by abandoning her this way?' And he married her.

My grandparents had six kids: three daughters - the eldest one was Cela, then Ewa, and the third one was Bela, and three sons - Maks, Josef, and the youngest one, Szoel, or Szolek. All, I think, were born in Lodz. During World War I, my mother moved with her parents and relatives to Grabow, because it was a small town and life in Lodz was rather hard. And they spent the war there. I don't know what my grandparents did in Grabow.

That was where my parents met each other and got married; I think it was in 1922. My sister Helena was born in 1923, and I was born in 1925. My name was Gusta, or Guta. But when I was still a child my parents started calling me Danka [diminutive for Danuta] and it stuck. When I was two years old, my parents moved from Grabow to Lodz. They had a contact there, because, as I understand it, my mother's parents and their children had already gone back to Lodz. My mother no longer wanted to live in Grabow after they had all left.

My father's parents stayed in Grabow. They were recluses, didn't keep in touch with anyone, or no one wanted to keep in touch with them. They were completely alone - an old man and an old lady. Grandfather had nothing to do with those Jews from Grabow. Why were they so reclusive...? I don't know how they earned their living, I was a small child, I didn't pry, didn't ask - I wasn't interested in that at all. I know my father helped them a lot.

In Lodz we lived in a Polish neighborhood, because there were more Poles than Jews. Not in one of those ghettos there, like Baluty [a poor, predominantly working-class neighborhood inhabited before the war mainly by Jews], but near Hallera Square, on 1 Maja Street. People used to say 'pasa Szulca' before the [first world] war so I suppose it was 'Pasaz Szulca' [pasaz - here: street]. It wasn't downtown - it was somewhere between downtown and the suburbs. We lived in apartment #71, in a three-story tenement house, quite a decent one. The landlord was a Jew named Zdanowski. The barracks of the 28th Kaniowski Rifle Regiment were right next door, so many officers lived in the area. And many Germans. It was a very beautiful street - lined up with wonderful chestnut trees.

My parents had two rooms with a kitchen on the first floor. There was electricity, coal-fired tiled stoves, a toilet. A servant who lived with us slept in the kitchen. She was Polish, her name was Regina Kus, a young girl; she may have been eighteen or nineteen. She came from the countryside and stayed with us for a couple of years.

My parents were both very handsome. My father had a somewhat Semitic look, he wore glasses and had a crooked nose. He was a very intelligent and wise man, but he had no specific profession. In those days, Jews took up whatever occupation they could. I know there was a period when my father had a halva factory in partnership with one Mr. Liberman. I remember both: the name and the guy - a small, plump individual. I visited the factory once - I don't remember where it was - a large factory room. I guess they operated for some two years, but then went bust. Mr. Liberman went to Argentina and my father was left with the debts to pay.

Then my father worked as manager at several large houses in Lodz. My father was a great guy, a wonderful man. He was a very active Zionist, a member of the Hatechija party [Editor's note: no information on a party of that name could be found]. That was for grown-ups, and the youth organization was called Hanoar Hatzioni [1](#). I know it was a conservative party - not the revisionists, not Jabotinsky [2](#), but the center-right. I don't know when it was founded, who was the leader. My father went to party meetings but I don't know where they were held. I never met any of his fellow party members. He subscribed to the periodical Haynt [3](#), which was in Yiddish. He spoke Polish, Yiddish, Hebrew and fluently German; he was familiar with German literature.

My mother was lovely. Lively, cheerful, liked by everyone, very vigorous, and she liked to work. She ran a colonial store, a grocery. It was a single room, on the first floor, in the same house on 1 Maja Street where we lived. The servant, Regina, helped her.

My mother loved to party, she went to dance with her friends to the Tabarin. It was a dancehall at Narutowicza Street, in fact, it was still there for many years after the war. My mother had a wonderful voice, so much so that when some guy once heard her at some charity ball, he approached her and said he would pay for her education, that he would take her to Vienna so that she could study at the conservatory there. But she was a married woman and my father said no. She wasted such a wonderful, strong voice - a soprano. She sang Polish and Ruthenian songs at home, I don't remember precisely what. She had very many virtues, but as far as the intellectual ones go, she had none - to read a book, or even an article in a newspaper...

My mother obviously went to a Polish school as a girl, because she could read and write Polish. We spoke Polish at home. But when talking to my grandparents, my parents switched to Yiddish. My maternal grandparents called her Chawcia [Polish diminutive for Chave]. They spoke poor Polish, understood everything, but speaking was a problem. Those were people who had attended the cheder, received Talmudic education. I understood Yiddish but I spoke Polish to them. I remember this funny episode with my grandfather: I may have been eight or nine years old. My grandmother sneezed, and my grandfather kept waiting. Then he uttered, 'When Grandmother sneeze, Granddaughter do nothing?'

When my grandparents came from Grabow, they moved into an apartment at Zeromskiego Street. Then they moved to 1 Maja Street because an apartment at #73, next door to us, had been vacated - a very modest one, just a room with a kitchen. My grandfather had a house finishing business, had employees, craftsmen, and they finished newly-built houses - wall painting, windows, that sort of thing. Grandfather didn't look like a Jew at all - had a gray beard, blue eyes. In fact, all the relatives from the maternal side, as I remember them, were very handsome, not Semitic-looking at all. Fair-haired, blue-eyed.

Grandfather wore a Jewish-style peaked cap, and at home, I think, he wore a yarmulka. He had a tallit and went to the synagogue, of course. My grandmother was small, petite, very delicate. My grandfather did everything - carried her wigs to the hairdresser, cooked fish in aspic every Friday. If there was a high holiday, we went to my grandparents'. Above all, for Easter [Pesach] - I remember the seders, the solemn dinners. Then the sad holidays - the trumpets [Rosh Hashanah]. From time to time we went to them for the Saturday chulent. I remember the Feast of the Booths [Sukkot]. I liked it very much, I wanted to eat in that booth because it was so nice, so much greenery. The booth stood in the yard, against the wall.

I don't remember any special holiday dishes. Of course, my grandparents kept a kosher kitchen. I know that when they visited us, they never touched anything - they didn't trust my mother with respect to kosher food. Because my grandparents lived very close to us, the official version was that we separated dairy from meat, but in fact no one paid attention to that in our house.

For the holidays [Pesach] there was matzah, not because it was ritual food, simply because it was a delicacy. Handmade, round and thick. There were many Jewish bakeries in Lodz at every corner. And there was a rabbi who made sure the right kind of flour was used and there were no pieces of bread anywhere.

For the high holidays, like Judgment Day [Yom Kippur] or New Year [Rosh Hashanah], my parents went to the synagogue to pray for the dead. My father did so very reluctantly, he was an atheist, but he did it for my mother. And my mother did it for her parents. A mezuzah hung on the doorpost, Grandfather wouldn't have otherwise entered such an apartment. My mother loved her parents - God forbid offending them in any way! She lit the candles on Friday night. I remember she always embraced those candles, then covered her eyes with her hands and sighed. And when she sighed, I would cry.

We didn't celebrate any other holidays at home; there was no need, because we always went to my grandparents'. The other grandparents, the paternal ones, who stayed back in Grabow, I didn't know well. There was some contact between my father and the Tajfels, his maternal-side relatives. I remember that once his cousin from Wloclawek visited us who was very keen to get married. I remember that girl because it was a sensation for us - to arrange a marriage for her. But I don't think anything came out of it - she didn't find a husband.

Growing up

For a year or a year and half I went to a kindergarten at Gdanska Street. I may have been four. The place was co-ed. Two ladies ran it, in Polish. I was the lead actress, as various shows were staged - a prince came, the princess died, etc. - and I was always the top of the bill. I also remember going with my mother to see Little Red Riding Hood; that was a major experience. It was at the Scala on Srodmiejska Street [presently Wieckowskiego], where the Nowy Theater was after the war. They staged shows for kids to make some money. And the girl ran away from the wolf, ran around the whole house, and the wolf behind her - there was screaming, there was crying, I huddled up against my mother, screaming as well.

My father was a stay-at-home, a very calm man. He sat at home with us girls. The children didn't bother him at all. My sister and I quarreled all the time. She didn't want to play with me, I didn't want to play with her. I remember periods when my father read me stories from the 'Ogniwo',

which was a magazine, partly in Hebrew, partly in Polish. It featured beautiful, deeply moving stories for children. My sister wasn't interested. I'd sit on my father's lap and he'd read those stories to me and I'd listen, holding my breath. If there was something sad, I'd cry, and he'd stroke me on the head - he loved it when I cried because it meant I was a sensitive, good child.

Later, when I was able to read myself, I had a couple of beloved books - The Paul Street Boys [by Ferenc Molnar (1878-1952), Hungarian writer], all those Rodziewiczowna novels [Maria Rodziewiczowna (1863-1944) Polish author of highly popular romances and novels of manners].

At the age of six I went to elementary school, at Zeromskiego Street. After a couple of days they moved me to second grade because I could already read and write well. I hadn't studied before, but I could. And that ultimately proved my misfortune, that destroyed me, that ease - because I didn't feel like studying at all. I went there for two years, I think. When I was to go to fourth grade, my parents moved me to the school where my sister went - at the corner of Zielona and Zakatna Street, which was later renamed to Pogonowskiego [in 1936]. Zielona was a rather long street, running from the Hallera Square, I think, to Piotrkowska [Lodz's main street]. On the way it crossed Zeromskiego, where my grandparents lived, and there was the so-called green market there - an open-air market, and then those streets across: Gdanska, Wolczanska, Kosciuszki.

There were some 40 of us in the class, only girls, only Jews. It was a Polish-language school, the only difference being that we didn't go to school on Saturdays but instead on Sundays. I remember we started every day by singing 'When the Lights of Dawn Arise' [religious song with words by poet Franciszek Karpiński, (1741-1825)]. That's how it was, we knew it, I don't know whence, but we had it in our blood. Let alone the fact when Marshal Pilsudski [4](#) died in 1935, there was massive national mourning - we all wore the black ribbons.

My sister and I went to a ballet school. Actually, ballet school is too serious a word; the place had no official qualifications. It was called the School of Dance and Arts. The classes took place in a rented room somewhere, I don't remember where. I was eight or nine years old at the time. My sister was good at it and I wasn't. From time to time a show was staged for the girls to demonstrate what they had learned, the parents were happy that they had such talented children -everything was alright.

I went to gymnasium automatically - upon completing six grades, when I was 13. It was the Eugenia Jaszunska School at 18 Poludniowa Street [presently Rewolucji 1905 Roku Street], on the other side of Piotrkowska, not far from where we lived. The classes started at 8am and ended at 2pm, there was no school on Saturdays. The students - only Jews, thirty-something girls in the class. The building was a tenement house, a three-story one, I think, which had been converted to a school. That was the kind of school that the average man could afford.

The headmistress I remember as a very old lady. The deputy headmaster and math teacher was called Cyrusz. Mr. Jackel taught German - a great teacher. There was also Hebrew and religion, unnecessarily, because we tormented the teacher so hard I actually pitied him. His name was Hurwicz. He had to earn his living and here no one wanted to even think about Hebrew and religion, we teased him terribly. It was complete mockery, really.

I really didn't like to study. I had to be given private lessons. My sister was the same. We were in the same class because I skipped one grade in elementary school. Our father always complained,

'We're paying so much for your education and you don't want to study.' It was thirty zlotys a month. When you had two children to pay for, it was a very substantial expense.

You also had to pay for the private lessons, of course. The coach taught us everything, she was our distant maternal-side cousin, Regina Milichtajch. A very talented and diligent girl, she completed the renowned Ab Gymnasium at Zielona Street [Jozef Lajb Ab (1863-1941): educator; founder, owner and headmaster of the Girls' School of Commerce, converted 1918 into an arts- oriented Girls' Gymnasium, named after him from 1931, and awarded official gymnasium status in 1938]. Jewish kids went there, but all the classes, of course, were in Polish. Regina was a great student, and her parents were poor. So it meant a lot to her to be able to earn the extra few zlotys.

I always liked to do what I felt like doing. I was deeply involved with theater. Performances were staged at school, and there was also a cinema fans' circle. I was in charge of that and I remember I went to the Capitol movie theater at the corner of Zawadzka Street [presently Prochnika] and Zachodnia, to ask the manager to give us a discount. It made sense for him to admit some kids and he gave us a free ticket for each ten so we all went to that cinema, to all screenings. We loved those actors, after all: Tyrone Power [(1913-1958), American actor], Greta Garbo [(1905-1990), Swedish-born American actress].

When I was still in elementary school, eight to nine years old, I joined the Gordonia [5](#), simply a home-inherited tradition. I wasn't there long, a year and half, but I remember everything very vividly. My sister joined too. It was a scouting organization. On Zeromskiego, in a tenement house, there was that big room. Attendance was usually quite high - some thirty kids, boys and girls. We sang Hebrew songs, recited poems, danced the hora [6](#). There was talk about Palestine.

The elders, who ran the whole thing, may have been some 20 years old. They organized summer camps, rented barns from peasants near Lodz, and we slept on hay, on straw. It was a beautiful period. I remember the stalking game - there was a flagpole and you kept guard. And when it was my turn to keep guard with another boy, I started crying, I got terribly frightened bad people were coming because I heard that heavy breathing. In fact, we both shivered and held hands. We eventually raised an alarm and then it turned out it was just cows. We were so frightened, we didn't know all that. It was wonderful.

In the summer we went to visit my grandparents in Grabow, always by bus - there was no other possibility. There was a privately-owned coach company, or a few, and they operated buses that departed from Lutomierska Street in Lodz. The route was Ozorkow - Leczyca - Grabow [towns 20, 35 and 50 km north-west of Lodz]. It wasn't far but you rode for some two hours. In Grabow, the bus arrived at the market square, opposite my grandparents' balcony. Grandfather always stood there and waited for his little darlings.

I didn't like to go there, somehow I wasn't attracted to them, I didn't have anything to talk about with them. They loved my sister very much, the first grandchild, I was in the background. I remember Grandmother, I see her in my mind's eye. An old woman, like all ladies - when I was a girl, I saw her as old even when she was just 40. She wore a wig, kept kosher. Grandfather wore a Jewish-style cap, but I don't know where and how he prayed.

They had a nice apartment, a room with a kitchen, on the second floor. And there was a balcony, the only one in the whole market square, in Grabow's sole storied house. There was no running

water; I guess the shabesgoyim brought it from outside. I remember the stairs, sprinkled with yellow sand so that it was clean. And on the first floor a grocery, a general store in fact: this and that... The owner's name was Mrs. Stankiewiczowa. Once or twice a week there was a fair in the market place, many peasants came. So it was a kind of half-town, half-village, the true shtetl, very many Jews lived there, chiefly tanners. I know there was a Jewish cemetery. I remember that if there was a funeral, we weren't allowed to go there; we weren't allowed to watch - only from afar. All those small towns looked the same, I was always extremely fond of them.

I remember one summer, in 1935 or 1936, I spent with my mother in Busko Zdroj [health resort some 160 km south-east of Lodz]. I went there with my mother only, as her chaperone, so that she always had someone to accompany her. We lived in a boarding house. One night I woke up and my mother wasn't there. I burst into tears - where is Mama, where is Mama?! My mother, it turned out, had gone to a dance but told the woman next door to come to me if I woke up. I remember that because it was a terrible experience.

Two or three years before the war my mother launched a boarding house of her own near Glowno [town 30 km north-east of Lodz]. It was a summer-resort area, dachas [7](#), boarding houses, in villages like Nowy Ciechocinek, Stara Ciechocinka, Nowe Zakopane, Nowa Ciechorajka, but how the place was called where my mother had the boarding house, I don't remember. It was a single-story house, or a villa, with a dozen or so rooms. During the season my mother lived there, I think. She had employees, because you had to cook, you had to clean, you had to serve the food. Young married couples were the typical clientele. I didn't tell Poles from Jews at the time, but I guess it was for Jews. The business was in operation until the war, in fact, it only started picking up steam.

What was happening in Poland in the 1930s [8](#) hurt us terribly. I remember in Lodz, in the house where we lived, also on the first floor, there lived a young married couple - very nice people. His name was Saul Jerozolimski. He had a wife and a little baby girl. I liked them very much, and they liked me too, so it was a mutual affinity. And they emigrated to Palestine. It may have been 1935. I don't know what happened to them. They exchanged letters with someone from our house, perhaps with my parents too, and once they wrote it was being hard for them. My parents never thought about going to Palestine, they had no money for that. You had to have some foothold there - a job, a house. I don't think they would have gone to a kibbutz - my father would have agreed, but my mother would certainly have not.

My mother's brother Maks and her eldest sister Cela lived abroad. It was a romantic story with Uncle Maks, I learned about it only later. He had a fiancée and they even bought the rings, all that stuff. But in the meantime he fell in love with his cousin, Pola Milichtajch, who was related to Regina Milichtajch, my private teacher. In fact, I don't think the cousin loved him, but he loved her very much. And they made an agreement - he kidnapped her and they went to Germany, it was back in the 1920s. Their three daughters - Bella, Ruth, and Hanna - were born there.

Bella was two years older than me, and Ruth and Hanna were a tiny bit younger. They came to Poland, to Lodz, from time to time because they had families here. It was always a feast, there were gifts, each child got something. I spoke Polish to my auntie and uncle, they spoke Polish well. And with the girls I spoke German because, as a gymnasium student, I had already developed a basic knowledge of it.

They lived in München-Gladbach [presently Mönchengladbach]. They owned a very elegant fur store - a corner building adjacent to three streets, so it was a really large store. Besides that, they also owned a textile factory. And because Uncle was mad about girls, which was actually public knowledge in the family, one of his employees in the factory accused him of flirting with her. And in 1935, I think it was, he got a year and half for 'Rasseschänden' [German for: defilement of the race], was one of the first prisoners of Dachau [9](#). After a year they made him an offer: if he agrees to leave Germany immediately, they'll cancel the final six months of the sentence. He accepted that gladly, got released, and came to Poland, to his family.

His wife, Aunt Pola - Paula in Germany - stayed back to run the business: the fur store, the factories. Uncle spent several months in Poland, then left for Italy, for Milan. There he started settling down, his two daughters came to him. And Aunt wound up all her businesses to cash in. The mayor of München-Gladbach helped her to leave. In 1938, my aunt and her eldest daughter were expelled to Zbaszyn [10](#). My father went to pick them up and together they returned to Lodz. Aunt Pola was a vigorous, very wise person - in August 1939 she secured a passport with an entry visa to some South American country with the right of transit through Italy. And there she met her husband and her daughters.

Back when they were still in Germany, my mother's and Uncle Maks's youngest sister, Bela, stayed with them for a couple of years. I think she studied there, worked, I don't know exactly. I remember when she came back from Germany - smelling of the West - all elegant, beautiful. In Lodz she got married. His name was Feliks, I don't remember the last name. They lived in Lodz on Sienkiewicza Street. I know they had a store selling citrus fruit, that kind of thing, but it didn't do well. It wasn't a successful marriage. My grandparents virtually couldn't bear the sight of him because of his inability to provide for her. The family hated him, and he virtually prohibited Aunt from seeing us. Perhaps they loved each other in their own way... They had a lovely daughter, Hania, much younger than myself.

My mother's second brother, Josef, also lived in Lodz. I don't remember where, I don't know what he did for a living. He had a wife named Lonia and two children - a boy named Mietek and a girl, whose name I can't recall. They were more or less my age, a difference of a year or two at most. Our aunts and uncles spoke Polish to us and their children, though of course they knew Yiddish, and to my grandparents they spoke Yiddish. I also remember that all of my mother's brothers played violin.

My mother's eldest sister, Cella Grajman, emigrated with her family in the early 1930s to Palestine. Her four kids had been born in Poland: Rachel, Szmuel, Bracha - my age - and the youngest one, Salomon; they called him Salek. Uncle went first. Later, when Aunt joined him with the kids, it was very hard for them, as they had nothing to live on. Their kids, in their teens, joined the Haganah [11](#).

Around 1937 my grandparents with their youngest son, Szolek, joined them in Palestine. It was very hard for them there - Grandfather suffered from anemia. Szolek dreamed of staying and begged his parents, cried like a child, for them to let him stay, that he would settle down somehow. Grandfather didn't want to agree - Szolek was supposed to take over the management of his business in Lodz. And so my grandparents returned with their son in 1938, returned to Poland...

I didn't experience any anti-Semitism before the war. But you heard things. I remember when the pogroms took place, in Przytyk [12](#), there was talk about that, people were scared. Then, when the boycott of ritual meat [13](#) came, I was already a teenager, I may have been twelve years old, so I understood certain things.

I also remember my grandfather telling me a story - he had that house décor business - about the daughter of the owner of one of those big houses who one day came home - they had a beautiful apartment - and, following one of those anti-Semitic affairs, started throwing out, breaking all those crystal vases, shouting she didn't need all that, she didn't want to be a second-rate citizen. She was roughly my age and I was greatly impressed - such courage, and she was right, after all, why consent to such a life when you can arrange things quite differently.

In 1938, when all Poles marched towards Zaolzie [in October 1938 Poland annexed Zaolzie, an area in northern Czechoslovakia inhabited mostly by ethnic Poles], and there was a huge demonstration, it all started, of course, with the beating of Jews. So I was close to all that. And later, we didn't even want to think about that...

During the war

My father was heavily involved in the Zionist organization, so when the Germans marched in [German troops occupied Lodz on 9th September 1939] and started arresting people - Jews in the first place - my parents decided to go to Czestochowa [large town 100 km south-west of Lodz], to their friends, Mr. and Mrs. Szymkiewicz. Those were friends back from Lodz, they used to live on the same street as us. A mixed marriage, him a Jew, her a Pole. He was a violin player at the Lodz Philharmonic, she was from Czestochowa. And so in December 1939 my parents closed down the store, locked up the apartment. Everyone was fleeing from Lodz, because Lodz was very dangerous.

I remember, when we stood in a queue for bread, for butter, the first one to be taken from the queue was myself, my sister was the last one, and my mother they didn't touch at all - she had great looks. My sister is also a blonde, I was dark. [Editor's note: the harassment by German soldiers of people with Semitic looks was an early form of persecution even before ghettos were created]. And so we left, for three or four months, we thought, because after three months the war was supposed to end and we would return to Lodz, return home. So my parents took only the bare necessities, just to manage somehow. We left with my grandparents, on the same wagon.

Mr. and Mrs. Szymkiewicz rented an apartment for us, a studio, in a working-class neighborhood called Rakow, in the suburbs of Czestochowa, near a steel plant. I don't remember the street name. We lived together with my grandparents. That was just to wait out - there was no electricity, only carbide light, water in the yard. My parents were selling out the things we had taken with us. In fact, everyone lived off petty trade. There was no work, unless you were a young man and joined the Jewish police [14](#). Well, doctors, craftsmen - tailors, shoemakers - they had work.

A Polish woman lived next door to us, was a very good neighbor. When she bought pork fat, she also bought for us - me and my sister - and made lard, so that we could eat, because butter was expensive, meat was expensive. And that small pot of lard always stood in her kitchen - we'd take a slice of bread and go to Mrs. Nowak. We liked that very much. My grandparents probably guessed we ate pork, but didn't want to show they knew. They surely ate only kosher, that wasn't difficult,

because they ate little, and only simple foods.

We weren't allowed to go to school. But there was a lady, Ms. Skapska, who had been displaced from Poznan, and she taught me and my sister English. I loved her because she was a great teacher. She was able to keep your attention, and I was making such great progress - my orthography was excellent, my pronunciation was excellent. She was enchanted with me, I was enchanted with her. But one day she came to us and said, 'Listen, I'm scared. I need the money, of course. So please, don't be angry with me, but I'm scared.' And that was the end... Then came some other teacher - but it wasn't the same, I no longer felt like learning English.

I had very many friends there, Poles, of course, because there were virtually no Jews [15](#). We were all roughly the same age. We went to the church for service, that was where young people met. And so I knew all the ceremonies - how to cross yourself, how to pray, how to sing. As far as religion was concerned, I was able to go to the Aryan side right away.

And life was getting tougher. Aunt Bela came with her husband and daughter to join her sister and parents. They didn't live in Czestochowa but in the vicinity, the place was called Gidle, I think [a small town 30 km north-east of Czestochowa]. Her husband had a job - I don't know whether it was a German company - in any case, he operated a special tractor of some sort. They really lived from hand to mouth there. Then we lost touch with them.

My parents corresponded with my mother's elder brother, Josef. As soon as the Germans moved in, he left Lodz with his wife and kids and went to Tomaszow Mazowiecki [40 km south-east of Lodz, 100 km north-east of Czestochowa], where his wife's family lived. My parents and Uncle Josef wrote letters to each other, because Jews weren't banned from using the postal service.

One day we had to sell a fur coat. Uncle wrote to us from Tomaszow that he would find a buyer there but first he needed the fur coat. There was no one to take it there, we all wore the badges [13](#) by then, there was a death penalty for Jews for riding on the bus or train. I was almost 15 years old and I said, 'I'll go, I'm not afraid. I'll take off the badge, borrow a school ID from a friend of mine and I'll go to Tomaszow. I'm sure I'll do well.' My parents debated for a long time. Finally they packed the coat into a suitcase and on a Sunday morning I went by train from Czestochowa to Piotrkow [75 km north-east of Czestochowa] where I changed to a bus. I felt very grown-up, that they had decided to rely on me at all, that I would carry out such an important transaction, and that as a Jew - so it's part adventure, part being of help to my parents.

So I'm in Piotrkow, having to wait for a longer while for the bus to Tomaszow. And at some point there sits next to me a boy several years older than myself - very nice, very handsome. It's nice, and he says, 'Have you already been to mass today?' And he offers - there's a church nearby, he lives opposite it - to take my suitcase and we'll go to mass. I wasn't afraid to go into a church because I knew perfectly well how to behave. I gave that suitcase to him and started thinking to myself: 'He is able to tell from my eyes, everyone knows Jewish girls have dark and sad eyes. Or perhaps he is a thief? I can't return home without that coat, if I don't have it, I'll have to commit suicide. So not only will my parents lose the coat, they'll also lose their child...'

I'm standing in the church, praying to God - no matter which one - and my only prayer is 'God, let all this end happily.' After mass the boy comes along with me to carry that suitcase. He says, 'Give me your name and some address so that I know who you are, so we can keep in touch somehow.'

So I gave him the name and address of the friend from whom I had borrowed the ID. I returned home all proud, didn't say a word to my parents about that encounter. And a couple of days later that friend comes to me and says, 'What have you been up to again? Do you know I've received a love letter?!' It was from that boy... Those were the small tragedies of small kids - I was 14 and a half and thinking about suicide...

In 1941 all Jews from those suburbs around Czestochowa were ordered to move to the ghetto. We took up residence at Dreszera Street, near Joselewicza. It was a large house with annexes. We were allotted two kitchens by the Judenrat [17](#). In one annex were my parents; in the other were Grandfather, Grandmother, me and my sister. It was living in terrible, cramped conditions, living in constant fear.

I told my parents I'd go to the hospital to apprentice as a nurse. The provisional hospital was in a two-story building on Przemyslowa, and it was the only hospital in the ghetto. I know from other people's accounts that before the war the Jewish hospital was in a completely different place, in Zawodzie, I guess - a large, wealthy, very good hospital financed by the Jewish Community [today's L. Rydygier Hospital at Mirowska Street in the Zawodzie neighborhood, built in 1908]. But during the war I knew only the one at Przemyslowa. And indeed - I went there, gave people injections, washed the patients. Then I worked in the operating room, pouring the rubbing alcohol, tying up the aprons.

It sometimes happened, if someone was very rich and they had to operate him, that they brought professors from Cracow. I remember professor Zubrzycki [January Zubrzycki (1885-1969): obstetrician, gynecologist], professor Glatzel [Jan Glatzel (1888-1954): surgeon, author of new operating methods, propagator of modern surgery teaching], I think also Achmatowicz [Leon Achmatowicz (1894-?)], a great surgeon, an ethnic Ukrainian, and a sworn Jew-hater. The ghetto hadn't yet been closed. The full-time doctors were, of course, all Jews.

When I remember that hospital, it's really hard to believe that in such conditions it was so clean, so tidy. One of the directors was Doctor Jerzy Dobrzynski. They kept us on a short leash, we knew what to do, we learned a lot. Then came my sister, our parents had told her to find something to do. I, two years younger than her, was always the first to learn something. But the real reason why I worked there was a doctor, Mr. Rozenowicz, whom I was mad about - we were all infatuated with him. In any case, I remember working at that hospital as something that gave me a lot.

I remember that there, in the ghetto, my grandparents still celebrated the Jewish holidays, the religious Jews kept us together. One time Grandfather asked Uncle Maks, with whom my parents were in contact by mail, to send that sort of lemon from Milan - it was called the etrog [for Sukkot]. And indeed, it arrived. To this day I remember the address to which my parents wrote to Uncle in Milan: Via Frati Bronzetti 1, Milano.

It was 1942, May, June. One day my father received a letter from his parents in Grabow. I see him turn completely white in the face and I hear, 'How is this possible? Have they gone mad?' And my father starts crying, it was the first time in my life when I saw him crying. It turned out that they had written a farewell letter: 'By the time you'll be reading this, we'll be gone. The trucks are already waiting outside. We'll all be gassed.' A group of Jews came to us then. The elders were horrified, the youth laughed, didn't believe it. But that letter was the first sign that something horrible was taking place, because until then there was talk, there were fears, but nothing specific

had so far happened.

Then came to us my parents' friends, came on their own with an offer to give shelter to me, my sister and my mother - but not to my father because he had Semitic looks. And my father said, 'You won't go anywhere. We're young, we're healthy' - they were barely above 40. 'If they take us to a camp, we'll work. We're staying together'. And he didn't let us go.

Then came the 'Bekanntmachungen', announcements, that the residents of this or that street were to line up on the street on this or that day at this or that hour, take food provisions with them. Someone came to us and said, 'Something incredible is happening. There are fifty cars, 100 people in each. At some point the Polish railway personnel get off, the Germans get in. Some hours later the train returns completely empty, clean. What happened to those people - five thousand people...' Panic starts - some believe, others don't. Someone fled from a transport, came and said, 'Save yourself...' People were going mad - started building shelters for themselves, underground bunkers. Sodom and Gomorrah.

When the rumors started we were going to a camp - no one yet knew it was a death camp - people started preparing bags of biscuits for the way. You bought bread, on the black market, I guess, sliced it and dried it. And then you kept it in a kind of pillowcase, to ensure ventilation. But people probably never got to eat that bread because they took it for the bleak hour, to the camp, where they were immediately killed.

It's the first day of the deportations, 22nd September 1942, and our street has been named. It's terribly hot, and my mother is pacing the room in a warm coat - up and down, from the door to the window, like a lioness - and trembling. My father still had some money, some gold rubles, so he gave two to my sister and two to me, sewed them into the sleeve of my jacket. And he said, 'Remember not to touch it. You can touch it only if you need to buy bread or to save your life. And go to the hospital, you'll be safer there'. And I flew out of the apartment. Quite like in those Chagall [18](#) paintings - simply flew... How can you bid somebody goodbye if you know you won't see them again... We already knew for sure at that point that it was death coming.

And suddenly I'm at the hospital. There's this doctor, Rozenowicz, 19 years older than myself, whom I was infatuated with, like a young girl. He came from a very good family on the distaff side, the Markowicz family. He studied medicine in Italy, after which, in 1938, I guess, he passed the Polish exams in Poznan, so he was a rightful gynecologist. And he tells me, 'Danusia, doctors can save their family members. I want to marry you. The rabbi lives on this and this street'. He couldn't go with me because he had just undergone an ulcer surgery, so he gave me his ID or passport and a declaration saying: 'I, Bronislaw Rozenowicz, want to take Miss so-and-so to be my wedded wife'. And so I went.

I didn't even know how to address the rabbi. I'm telling him, 'Listen, sir, I want to get married, he can save my life as a doctor. I'm begging you, this has no legal significance whatsoever'. No, he cannot do it. I'm starting to cry, and he says, 'Well, okay, but let your mother come to me'. I say: 'How can my mother come to you? I don't know whether she's still there...' And at that point I remembered about the coins sewed up in my sleeve. He took them and issued the document. And that was when my friendship with God ended, something died in me.

I returned to the hospital. I was already calm; I was a doctor's wife. There were many people there, above all doctors with their families. And my sister. The whole thing didn't last longer than two weeks because the liquidation of the Czestochowa ghetto went very swiftly. [Editor's note: the operation of removing Jews from the so-called large ghetto lasted from 22nd September to 6th October 1942].

The last day was such a horror one can never forget it. There were some 80 patients in the hospital - adults and kids, infants too, because there was a maternity ward there, it was the only hospital in the ghetto. I remember the terrible yelling, 'Raus! Raus!' [German for 'Get out!'] - The way they did it. Three trucks came. The doctors from outside the hospital got aboard with their families and they left. Shortly afterwards they returned - the Jewish cemetery was nearby, they were killing them there. Then another dispatch - the patients able to walk, the personnel helped them come down. Those were taken to the cemetery too. Then the bed-ridden ones, who had to be taken down to the courtyard. There the Germans told the doctors to give them a shot of morphine. Several young doctors refused. They were immediately executed, and when the rest saw they had no choice, they started giving them those injections.

Not all patients fell asleep quickly - they lay there, breathing, still alive. And the Germans told the staff to strangle them with towels - wrap a towel or blanket around their neck and pull at both ends. Then, whether they were still alive or not, you had to throw them onto the truck. There were three or four newborns - warm, just taken away from their mothers. And up they landed on that pile of corpses, like a bag of potatoes... The last transport also went to the cemetery. And that left us, the staff - 20, 30 people - doctors, nurses, orderlies. We were taken to the 'Umschlagplatz' [German: transit point, originally the place in Warsaw from which Jews were transported by train from the ghetto to the death camps, here used as a category] where the selection took place. My husband, I and my sister were young and healthy, and we went to the right side, to life...

The labor camp in the small ghetto [several streets in the north-eastern part of the liquidated ghetto] had already been set up. It was the oldest Jewish quarter in the city, ramshackle houses; I don't know how people lived there before the war. A tiny camp - an enclave - surrounded by barbed wire. There were Jewish and Polish policemen, several Germans, the Ukrainians of course too. We secured a room in the loft of a two-story wooden shack and we were all three there.

At first the work was to clean the deserted neighborhood - you had to tidy things up, people needed for lodgings. Besides, the better things were being sent to Germany, so we segregated them, cleaned the apartments. That was a good job, we worked inside, and it had already gotten cold - it was mid-October. There was running water in those apartments, you could wash yourself, cold water, of course, no one dreamed of hot water anymore - but it was still a luxury. Besides, if you needed to change your underwear, you simply picked something from the things that had been left and changed.

You could also find something to eat - some biscuits, a bit of flour, some groats. Upon returning from work we received a plate of soup, even with pieces of horseflesh, and a bit of bread - there was a kitchen in the camp. In fact, food wasn't a problem there. I remember, for instance, when Jews, in collusion with the German guards and the policemen, brought a calf into the camp - dressed it in a coat, took it under the arms and brought it in. You could also smuggle in food for money or if you knew the right people.

There were supposed to be 4,000 people there, but there were more. Children and old people sat hidden in various hideouts, all those tiny shelters. In the same house where we lived, locked up in a room, my husband's aunt and uncle, Roman and Gienia [Genowefa] Markowicz, were hiding. Their two sons worked in the camp - Lucek [Lucjan] and Bolek [Boleslaw] with his wife Bronka [Bronislawa]. Their niece, Mirka [Miroslawa] Markowicz, was also with us in the camp.

Uncle Roman Markowicz was a very wise man. Before the war, he owned a textile factory in Bielsko [130 km south of Czestochowa] - very rich people. One day, at the camp, he told me that I had to change my job and join the column of those going to work on the Aryan side, so that I was in touch with the Poles. The point was to secure false papers for us [19](#). There were groups of people at the camp that worked at the Hasag [20](#), the Rakow [steel plant], the Czestochowianka or the Peltzery [pre-war textile factories, working for the German military industry during the war]. And so I joined one such group, of some 15 people, who worked at a large square at the outskirts of Czestochowa where the rubbish from all over the city was being brought.

Our job was to separate rags, glass, paper from that rubbish - it's called recycling these days. The company running that was called Ravo. We weren't guarded by Germans but by Ukrainians, Latvians, and the 'saulis' [Lithuanian for 'riflemen', a paramilitary organization that collaborated with the Nazis during the war]. The work was very tough, and it was already severe winter, but the square was where all the trade took place. The Aryans came to us - some produced false documents, others brought food, still others bought dollars from the Jews. And indeed, I secured those false IDs - I still had one of those gold coins my father had given me.

Uncle's various employees also came there - it was the only place because they weren't allowed to enter the camp. Uncle put great trust in his manager, Mr. Pastuszko - he was his 'banker.' And rightly, because he was a very decent man. Another one, Domzal, a young Home Army [21](#) soldier, took money from the 'banker' guy and brought to us. Uncle started thinking about setting up some hideout on the Aryan side; that eventually we'd have to escape from that camp. He asked a worker from his factory, Mrs. Siminska, to find someone who for money would prepare a hideout - a shelter.

The one who agreed to do it was called Klimczak. His wife was opposed to it, was afraid - they had a five-year-old daughter. A little house was bought in his name on the outskirts of the city, a neighborhood called Piaski, beyond the Jewish cemetery. He was to organize everything there, build a room for eight people. The house was now his property, and after the war he was also to receive a two-story house in Czestochowa and two building lots.

At the end of November the shelter wasn't yet ready, we were still in the camp. And one night I return from work to the so-called home and there everyone's crying, wailing. There was a raid; they were looking for people hiding away. Uncle and Aunt hid somehow, but Bronka, their daughter-in-law, and her mother were gone. Someone told us that two dead women lay by the fence. It was a frosty night, the moon shone, you could see everything. Bronka's husband and his brother crawled up to the wire. And indeed, they lay there. They buried them. They return home and it turns out the IDs are gone. No one knows what happened to them, whether the Germans took them or the Jewish police, the Polish police... Or perhaps Bronka and her mother took them before they ran away? So Bolek and Lucek return to the fence, dig them up, but find nothing.

Within a couple of hours we had to organize an escape from the camp. That wasn't a problem - you simply joined a column going outside. There were no Germans there, only Polish and Jewish police. Aunt, I and Uncle and Aunt's niece, Mirka, went to Klimczak's apartment. There was only one room there, the door was always open, no one bolted doors in those working-class apartments - if the neighbor wanted to enter, she simply entered. And we were hidden in a 'done' bed. During the day we had to lie flat under the eiderdown, you weren't allowed to move. During the night we went out. And the men and my sister went to the house that had been bought, pretending to be the foreman's helpers. That may have lasted some two weeks.

Then Uncle and Aunt hid with Domzal's father, and we set up in the shelter. The place had been prepared quite decently, three young people made the design. Both cousins completed technical studies before the war, Bolek in Belgium, Lucek - I don't know where. The house had some 90 square meters of floor space, a kitchen, two rooms. One of the rooms had been shortened, and the missing space was the shelter - a tiny room, 6 square meters. A three-level bunk bed, three people per level. You latched the door from the inside, and outside was turpentine, shoe polish, various kinds of chemicals so that when the dogs came, they wouldn't be able to nose out people. And a tiny narrow corridor where you had to squeeze through sideways.

In the daytime we sat in a room with a view of the road, far from the window, and kept guard, so that if someone went through the gate, we'd raise an alarm and - down to the hole. In the night Klimczak slept there with his wife. We stole power from a nearby pole, had electric heating. We also had a radio - Domzal's father had brought it, even though listening to radio was punishable by death. Klimczak's father, a simple old peasant, but of great decency and goodness - a wonderful man - brought us food.

I remember Uncle tried at the time to make sure we had as many such hideouts as possible, where you could flee in the case of an emergency. He paid someone to prepare another such cache, I don't remember in which part of the city. One day he said we needed to go there to check whether anything had in fact been prepared. He sent me. And I remember there were heads in every window watching me - watching the hunted Jewish animal. Everyone knew the Jews were preparing something but they were decent enough not to inform on us. I found the people who had taken money from us - of course they hadn't prepared anything. I returned to the shelter safely, I don't think anyone followed me.

One day Uncle and Aunt come to us and say: 'The old guy Domzal said someone had ferreted out there were Jews in his house, and he's afraid to keep us any longer'. And they stayed with us. A couple of days later we see someone enter through the gate - and so we all right into the hole, fast. A guy comes in a black leather coat, high-top boots. And he says: 'We know you're here, eight people' - and lists everyone's name and surname. He takes Uncle by the hand, 'What a beautiful skin, so delicate, it'll be good for gloves'. And he says it has to cost, the money will go to the underground. And so all the money he had Uncle had to withdraw from that guy Pastuszko. And we had to wait - either it'll work or it won't. We no longer had any means of escaping.

The man that came to blackmail us was called Zygmunt China [22](#). He was a high-ranking Home Army officer - the head of the Czestochowa area executive. We eventually became such friends with him that when we had no money, he'd bring us gold 20-dollar coins, if someone was sick, he'd help. Even his wife came to visit us on holidays, the Catholic ones. My husband and cousins started

preparing materials for underground newsletters. They sat all day in front of the radio, listening to all the stations - they had studied abroad so they knew several languages. China did the rest.

I remember one day came a wagon with slaughtered pigs and rams. Zygmunt's people had carried out a raid on some Volksdeutscher farmer [23](#). And we had to dress all that meat. Officially, it went to the boys in the forest. But those that brought the stuff were robbers and the best stuff went to the AK leadership, leaving only bones for the partisans. So it was such a house - not only Jews, a radio, but also the meat...

Everyone argued with everyone else in the shelter - when you're under one roof, there's no way to avoid it. We didn't matter at all - neither me, nor my sister or Mirka - because we were young. But all the others argued constantly. It was horrible - we were afraid someone would get angry, go outside, and say, 'There are Jews here.' And that'd be the end.

One night Lucek had an appendix attack and screamed with pain. They gave him - there was a doctor, after all - something. He calmed down, fell asleep somehow. And two hours later there's banging on the door: 'Aufmachen! Aufmachen!' [German: 'open the door']. Shouting, terrible shouting, the landlord had to let them in. We trembled. We were afraid they would hear the rustle of the straw on which we lay, we trembled so hard out of fear. I needed to pee - because of the nerves and because it was the night... My husband and I slept on the third bunk, Bolek and Lucek below us, and Uncle and Aunt were at the bottom. So I'm on that top bunk and I think; 'Well, what do I care, I simply have to pee'. So they, on the second story, put their hands under the trickle so that the Germans wouldn't hear it... Bolek had already prepared his poison so that, when they entered, he'd manage to swallow it.

They searched for us for two hours. And didn't find us... They even searched for us in the well outside, in the garden. They took our landlord. We waited for a whole day, locked up in the shelter, afraid to even move. In the night, we went out to see whether the house had been sealed. Klimczak's father came and said his son had been taken, but that they had already contacted Zygmunt China. And Zygmunt arranged for the young Klimczak to be released. He bought him out, the AK had access to corrupt German officials. I don't know precisely what, where, and how. Perhaps my uncle knew, but the others didn't, we weren't let in on those things.

We lived there for a full two years - from December 1942 to January 1945. Towards the end of 1944, when the Germans were already fleeing, they seized part of the house and put four pilots there - they lived behind the wall. We behaved as if we didn't exist - silence, lock and bar. When they went out, Klimczak would knock on our door and tell us we could go out. Someone sat in front of the window at all times, so there was always time to go into the hole. That lasted for a month. Such miracles happened too.

A month before liberation Zygmunt China came to us. He told us the AK had passed a death sentence on us, that they wanted to liquidate us - so that after the war no one would know that they blackmailed us and took all our money. 'They'll throw in a couple of grenades to get rid of you. Because the Germans have issued an arrest warrant for me, I told them I'd hide with you: "If you waste them, you'll waste me. But I want you to know that I'm going to join them.'" That's what he told us, but whether it was the truth, I don't know. And indeed he came to hide with us.

In mid-January [16th January 1945] the Russians marched in and he immediately went out of hiding. We were afraid the Germans could still come back. And on the same day the NKVD [24](#) arrested him. I think it was his wife who contacted us and told us about that. I was a young girl, unaware of things; I only knew he had been arrested. He spent two years in a camp in Siberia. He returned seriously ill, lived in Zabrze [60 km south-west of Czestochowa], founded some small business, I think. And soon afterwards he died. And with Domzal, the young AK member, we remained on the best possible terms. No one said anything about Zygmunt's blackmail offer even though we knew it was Domzal's doing, that it was him who had told Zygmunt about us.

After the war

After a couple of days we went out. We met a Russian officer - he had a very Semitic face - and we told him we were Jews and had been in hiding here. He told us: 'Flee from here, flee west as soon as you can'. When we went out, first of all we had nothing to put on ourselves. I had boots taken off dead German soldiers - odd ones. Rozenowicz had a paper suit. First we went to the Jewish Committee [25](#). And there they issued us a document - like they did to others - that we had been in a camp in Czestochowa, the Hasag. They gave us some clothes, allotted some lodgings, gave some food - we almost became human beings again. My sister, Helena, was with me all the time.

We went to Rakow, where we used to live with our parents - to see whether someone had shown up. And Mrs. Szymkiewiczowa told us: 'At the end of 1943, I received a letter from your father. He was no longer in the camp; he was hiding away in a haystack. He gave me the address and asked me to come to him. So I went to Kosow near Treblinka [26](#). I met with him'. My father cried terribly, promised her they'd be together - she had lost her husband - and asked her to find me and my sister. But we were already in the shelter...

He had been selected in Treblinka as young and healthy and worked with the segregation of things, looking for jewelry, for gold. The Germans kept replacing them - these ones went to the gas, new ones came in their place. So they were preparing to escape [in August 1943]. Szymkiewiczowa said that when she saw him, he had a lot of jewelry and money on him. He wanted to be able to buy himself out if there was any trouble. So I guess someone tracked him down and murdered him. What else could it have been...? My sister and I didn't go to Kosow. That would have been just opening old wounds...

We went to Lodz. There was the Jewish Committee, registering all the survivors. We went to 1 Maja Street where we had lived before the war. And when we sat on the stairs, we suddenly started crying so hard that we no longer wanted to go inside - we ran away. Those were such unspeakable tragedies...

Our family from Czestochowa was sent with a transport to Treblinka. Grandfather reportedly led Grandmother by the hand when they marched to the 'Umschlagplatz. 'Slowly, slowly,' he was saying - on top of everything else she had just suffered an attack of palsy. And so he led her up to the train... My grandparents and my mother went to the gas right away. Aunt Bela, her husband and their daughter also died in Treblinka. It's a pity that girl, Hania, wasn't saved. She may have been five or six then. She didn't have Jewish looks at all. But how could she have been saved...? Uncle Josef, his wife and kids - no one survived. Szolek, my grandparents' youngest son, was in the Lodz ghetto [27](#). He had already been married to a girl that bore him a child in the ghetto. Of course they died. My husband's father, a dentist, and his mentally retarded younger sister also died in

Treblinka.

The only other survivors were Aunt Cela in Israel and Uncle Maks in Italy, with their families. Uncle Maks, his wife and their daughters were in Milan. And for a long time no one bothered them there. In 1943, I guess, a priest came to them and said: 'Get dressed, we'll take you across the Alps to Switzerland'. So they locked up the apartment. And they found themselves in Switzerland, in an internment camp. Then, when the war ended, they got on a train, came to Milan, pulled the keys out of their pocket, opened the door, and they were in their apartment - untouched. My parents also locked away their Lodz apartment in 1939, but they never returned there...

My sister and I got in touch with Uncle Maks, and he wrote us that even before leaving Milan he had received a letter from our father in Kosow. So it was true that he had managed to escape from Treblinka, because there were now two people, Mrs. Szymkiewiczowa and Uncle Maks, who had been in touch with him. As far as my father's family is concerned, someone from the Tajfels from Wloclawek survived - but I didn't know them at all, those were perfect strangers to me.

We parted with my husband's uncle and aunt, the Markowicz's, as they immediately fled to the West. They were terribly afraid of the Bolsheviks [28](#), because they were the so-called bourgeois. I think they went to England, all five, Mirka included. After the war Bolek and Lucek found it hard to start normal lives. Uncle and Aunt had one more son, Tadeusz, who had completed medicine studies in Italy. He spent the war there; I think he was in the army, though I don't know which one and when. He died shortly after the war. All of them died very quickly. And Klimczak got the house and the building lots - everything that had been agreed. That was financed by Uncle together with Rozenowicz, because the house was owned in half by my husband, so he contributed too. And that's it.

My husband also had a house in Czestochowa that he inherited after his parents, on Druga Aleja [part of Czestochowa's most elegant street, Aleja Najswietszej Marii Panny]. There we lived in three rooms with my sister. My sister and I got very close when we realized that our whole family was dead. We started working right away at a gynecological hospital on Swietej Barbary Street near Jasna Gora [29](#).

However, I wanted to study. I enrolled for a high-school course for adults, I was already twenty-something, and passed the high school finals. 'Passed' is perhaps saying too much, it was all phony - I cribbed all math from the guy sitting next to me. I wanted to study medicine, that was the easiest thing to do - I worked in a hospital, had some foundations for that. But then I quickly changed my mind and in 1949 decided to take an admittance exam to the Theatre School in Lodz [State Institute of Theatre Arts, reactivated in Lodz in 1945, from 1946 as the State Theater Academy in Warsaw with a provisional seat in Lodz].

We had distant cousins in Lodz, Regina and Karola Milichtajch. Regina was our private tutor before the war. Both survived in the Lodz ghetto and at the last moment were sent to forced labor in Germany. Until the end of the war they worked at some German farm. Then they returned to Poland to see if anyone had survived. And it was then we got in touch.

I arrived in Lodz virtually naked and barefoot, utterly penniless, because Rozenowicz said he was opposed to the whole idea of me studying. I didn't even have money for the streetcar fare. For a short time I stayed with those cousins. Karola, the younger one, studied at a nursing college, and

the older one, Regina, had the pre-war high school diploma, so she was a white-collar worker, because the pre-war diploma was a big thing. She worked at an official labor union organization.

I borrowed a little bit of money from them to get me through the initial period and became self-dependent very quickly. I didn't know that if I had gone to the Jewish Committee, they would have helped me - I'd have been assigned a place in the dorm, received an allowance. But even if I had known about it, I would have refused - I wanted to be like everybody else. Only everyone knew I was a Jew - the word spreads, so I saw no point in hiding my ethnic descent.

I applied. It was a competition-type exam, as is usual in art schools. I remember the anxiety; I had prepared several pieces for the exam. And reportedly I performed very well. The question of looks was also important - I was a pretty girl. How this helps in life... Out of several hundred candidates only 20 were admitted, chiefly girls.

The president was Leon Schiller [(1887-1954): outstanding director working for theatres in Warsaw, Lwow and Lodz]. The classes took place in very good conditions - in the beautiful Poznanski mansion [built 1904, owned by the heirs of Israel Kalmanowicz Poznanski, Lodz's largest industrialist at the time and one of the wealthiest in Europe]. We had classes on the first floor, and on the second one was the Musical Academy, where it in fact remains to this day. That was at the corner of Gdanska and 1 Maja, the street where I had lived with my parents before the war. When I was to pass in front of our house, I always made sure not to get too close - I only stretched my neck to see whether it was still there: here the two windows, here my mother's store...

A distant relative of those cousins of mine had a tiny room on 11 Listopada Street [Obroncow Stalingradu after the war, presently Legionow]. She was emigrating to Argentina. I moved in there. She gave me a bag filled with feathers for the pillow, because I had nothing, and now I had a room and an iron bed, and the couple that owned the whole apartment were very nice. But one day some guy was allotted the room where I slept. They came to me: 'You have to leave!' So I lay down on my bed and said: 'I'm not going anywhere!' And they took me with that bed out to the hall! On the next day I went to the housing office and started crying there. And as I was pretty, they gave me three addresses in no time.

I studied and worked. There was a gynecologist whom I knew from the period when I had been with my husband. He made procedures and he offered me the job of his assistant. I applied anesthesia, made intravenous injections, reportedly with great skill. Then I went to a knitting cooperative and got a job - I brought home huge bags of unfinished gloves and sewed up the fingers. I was officially registered as a knitter, had a labor union ID. I sat until two, three in the morning, but it was still good, I felt so happy.

I also gave people injections. Once a dentist I knew called me and said he had a penicillin patient for me - those days you administered penicillin every three hours, so if I had a patient, I had to move in with them. And I was allotted a very nice room on Gdanska with a Jewish family, the Feldons. Those were very wealthy people, they quickly made big money after the war. They had four grown-up sons and one of them fell ill. I moved in with them and they were greatly impressed: such a young, pretty girl and working so hard. They offered to pay me a scholarship so that I wouldn't have to work so hard. They very much wanted to ensnare me, but that was the gilded youth of Lodz, I wasn't interested in that.

Many people were eager to help me, but I was doing great myself. And at the end of my freshman year at the academy I was given a role - a Film School team visited us and they hired me for a movie they were making. It was a group of young filmmakers who were shooting a production with the assistance of their professors. They came to the Theater School in search of nice girls. And they chose me. The movie was a terrible bore, called 'The Two Brigades', really nothing to talk about [a 1950 production shot by the students of the directing faculty of the State Film Art College under the artistic leadership of Eugeniusz Cekalski]. Well, but what did I care - I had something to do, I could earn some money, and the very fact that from among all those girls they had chosen me meant a lot in itself. So I no longer had money problems.

In my third year of studies I met Kazimierz Dejmek [(1924-2002): director, actor, co-founder and director general of the Nowy Theater in Lodz, one of Poland's leading stages in the 1950s; minister of culture and art (1993- 1996)], he was the school's president [1952-55]. I fell in love with him. He was married, but I didn't destroy the marriage, God forbid - he had already left her.

He was born in 1924 in Kowel [presently Ukraine, some 60 km from the Polish border]. His mother was a housewife and his father worked in the prison administration. He had a younger brother named Heniek. Kazik was in the second grade of gymnasium when the war broke out. After the war, he passed the actor's exams extramurally with Schiller in Lodz. And then he was appointed president of the School. He had top-level connections in the party [30](#), and the party had immense confidence in him. And such a young boy was appointed an academy president. He held the office for a very short time - he didn't like the job, never wanted it, they forced him, had no one else.

I was deeply infatuated with Dejmek. And one day I received a letter from my husband saying he saw what was going on and was asking me to come back so that we could start all over. Before that, he insisted we get married by license, but I didn't want to because I knew it wouldn't work anyway. I was his wife only in religious terms and we had in fact divorced each other by mail because the paper from the rabbi had no legal force.

After two years Rozenowicz sent me a suitcase with my things and on top of that lay that document. I thought: 'I can't tear it to pieces like a piece of litter because my conscience won't allow me - so many things we went through together, so much of everything... If I could, I'd burn it in the fire'. I put it aside with a bunch of photos I had. My husband spent the rest of his life in Czestochowa. He died in the early 1990s. He was a very good doctor. When I sometimes meet Jews from there and they find out I was Rozenowicz's wife, they exclaim, 'Rozenowicz?! Why, he is the legend of Czestochowa!'

My sister settled in Czestochowa. Shortly after the war, in 1946, I guess, she went to Wroclaw [city in Lower Silesia, from 1945 within Polish borders, 140 km west of Czestochowa] and enrolled in a cosmetics school. There she completed an occupational course. When I left for Lodz in 1949, she was living in Czestochowa with Rozenowicz, her brother-in-law. When I said I wasn't going back, she moved out. She had a boyfriend, his name was Janek Tenenbaum. He came from Czestochowa, never completed any school, never had the opportunity.

Janek fled east in 1939 [31](#). He found himself in Siberia, he may have been 18 then. He experienced terrible things - cold, hunger, dirt, diseases. His mother had died before, and during the war he also lost his father and his younger sister Lilka who was deeply involved politically - she was a communist and died there, I think, in the east. That left only him and his other sister, Sonia, who

before the war went to Paris and studied dentistry there. She married a Polish Jew, a graduate of the technical university there, I think.

After returning from the Soviet Union, Janek worked at the Czestochowa steel plant, had a job in the supply department. My sister married him, they had two children - Broniek was born in 1951 or 1952, and Lilka a year or two later. My sister and brother-in-law applied for emigration and in 1954 or 1955 left for Israel. They lived in Ramat Gan. My brother-in-law's sister, Sonia, helped them a lot. She had no children of her own, an unsuccessful marriage, so they were virtually all she had. It was thanks to her they bought an apartment, then they swapped it for a larger one. Hadn't it been for her, it would have been very hard for them, they'd have had nothing to live on. Then my brother-in-law got a bank job, and my sister worked as a beautician - one room in the apartment had been turned into her office.

In 1953 my son Piotrus [diminutive for Piotr] was born. I worked at the Nowy Theater in Lodz. Those days, a theater actor had to be versatile; you had to sing, dance, play in contemporary dramas and classical tragedies. Life was hard for me there because my second husband was the director general there and he had a policy of anti-nepotism. For instance, when the director said he wanted to give me a role, my husband would first offer that role to all the other girls. And only when the director said: 'I don't want anyone except Mniewska', he'd agree. He destroyed my professional career. But, well - you can't have everything.

In 1960 my husband was appointed director general of the Narodowy Theater so we moved from Lodz to Warsaw. There I didn't do anything, just drew my wages. In 1968 I played in the Dziady, played is too big a word - I stood and sang [32](#). It was virtually no role at all, but I took part in all the rehearsals, all the shows. And on stage I stood right besides Holoubek when he recited the Great Improvisation - that took well over 10 minutes [Gustaw Holoubek, born 1923, outstanding Polish theater and film actor and director]. And he was so brilliant and so wonderful that there was no show where I wouldn't start crying. Tears are trickling down my face and I can't even wipe them away because I'm an Angel, I can't move.

So that's one thing I had - great experiences. But the show didn't run long - the authorities ordered it off the bill. My husband was fired from the job, expelled from the party. And all of us - people connected to him - left too, of course. I came to the Ateneum [theater in Warsaw] but that was also only to draw the wages and sometimes fill in for someone else. I had a very hard life in theater - humiliating.

And then again a new period began in our life. My husband got a job - Satanowski [Robert Satanowski, 1918-1997], the conductor, was doing something in Norway and he had very good connections there, so he secured a directing contract for my husband in Oslo, Norway. My husband spent a month there, after which he got a job in Yugoslavia. Piotrus and I also then applied for passports because all our previous applications had been turned down. I moved the heaven and earth for Piotrek [diminutive for Piotr] to be allowed to take his high school finals extramurally before our departure - so that he could immediately go into university once we left. I hired private teachers. He passed the exams, it was 1970. We left in 1971.

We lived in Belgrade. My husband worked, had a full-time contract at a theater, then moved to Novi Sad. The only point was to have the money to pay the rent because wages there were like in Poland. It was winter, oil heating, very primitive conditions. A horrible period, feeling like a

complete stranger. My husband then got a job in Germany so he left. And I sat there alone with Piotrek and our dog. The dog had a hard life too because the Serbs don't like dogs, find them disgusting. I remember the period like the occupation era, really horrible.

Piotrek started studying physics even in Belgrade, but later changed his mind. He went to work in Paris where my brother-in-law's sister, Sonia, lived with her husband - my son didn't move in with them but they helped him. Then he went to Italy and worked there, he also spent some time in Vienna. What did that give him? It's given him the fluent knowledge of French, Serbo-Croatian, a good knowledge of Italian.

He returned to Poland in 1973 or 1974. And the two of them, he and my husband, decided he would do the Theater School in Lodz [created in 1959 by merging the State Acting College and the State Filmmaking College, since the 1970s under its present name of the Leon Schiller State Film, TV and Theatre College]. It was a tragedy for me, I know the profession... But it turned out it wasn't so bad after all - he really is a very intelligent boy. He played the lead role in the 'Hospital of the Transfiguration' based on Lem's novel [33](#) and won a debuting artist award in Brussels [in a 1978 Edward Zebrowski film]. He played quite a lot in movies, I didn't see him in theater, I didn't want to - I was afraid to.

Upon returning to Poland I was really fed up with all that - that wandering around the world, not having my own place. I said, 'I'll buy myself some land, settle in the countryside,' I hit upon the idea of setting up a fruit orchard. It was 1975, I think. I wrote to Pieniasek [Szczeban Pieniasek, born 1913, biologist, pomologist, nestor of Polish orcharding]. He wrote back immediately. I went to meet him at the Institute [The Institute of Pomiculture and Floriculture in Skierniewice, 40 km north-east of Lodz]. He told me what and how and where, and took me to the orchard. I bought 10 hectares of land in the Kutno province and started with the basics, with planting. I worked like a horse, people helped me greatly. I also had a permanent contract with a theater in Lodz. It's not far from Lodz to Kutno, 50, 60 kilometers. I had a compact Fiat, I'd drive to the rehearsals, the shows, and drive back.

I had had the orchard for three or four years when there came such a bumper crop I couldn't manage it - such large apples! I signed a contract with a cooperative but then they told me, 'We have so many apples ourselves we can't take your crop.' And then Piotrek came to visit me - his marriage was falling apart. He met boys in the village who agreed to help us. He went three times a week to a market in Gdansk [sea port, 230 km north of Kutno], to a middleman, bringing back incredible amounts of money. He started building a cold store, buying machinery - he really got down to it with great vigor. I handed everything over to him as a younger farmer. We built - I had already started - a large, nice house. The farm was such that excursions from abroad came to view it.

Piotrek met Ewa, his second wife. They settled in the countryside. My marriage crumbled, we got a divorce. After the boom had passed - business became slow - I went to Elblag [city 260 km north of Lodz], to play in a theater there, because I was just one year short of retirement age and I no longer wanted to be in Dejmek's theater.

When the very good period had ended, Piotrek started thinking about getting rid of the farm. His film friends visited him often in the countryside and he felt the attraction again, started missing his chosen profession. He moved to Warsaw, found a job at the public TV, worked as a producer. And

slowly he moved up the ladder. Today he still works for the public TV; he has been one of the directors of the TVP1 channel for two years now. His wife is a Theater School graduate, who works at the TVP too. Currently she is the second director of the 'Sensations of the 20th Century' series [semi- feature historical documentary].

My grandchildren are a very nice trio. The eldest, Pawel, owns a business - something to do with car racing. Cars, races, that's his passion. But what exactly it is about, I don't know. He's a nice boy, has a great wife. Kasia [Katarzyna], my second grandchild, is 20, and studies sociology. She passed the entry exams splendidly - at first try, with such a high score she is on a full-time course at Warsaw University. She's a very bright girl, with an open head, a great memory, smart, but very introvert. Marysia [Maria], the youngest, is 18 and has no idea what she wants to be. She's a pretty girl, with a lot of charm.

They were raised the same way as Piotrek was. As children they knew their grandmother was a Jewess, that their father was a half-Jew. They regarded it as normal, were even fascinated at first, now it's passed. Piotrek, when he was a kid, didn't want to talk about it all. And he knew everything because he always listened. When I watched a film about those things, he sat besides me and just stroked me...

I visited Israel for the first time in 1960, I think. Aunt Cela, my mother's sister, was still alive, though she had been paralyzed. I also visited the farm of Rachel, her eldest daughter. Her husband was a German Jew, a graduate of philosophy in Germany. I don't know when he left there, but after the war he received compensation and with that money they were able to buy a piece of land in Israel. Part of the farm was a 'pardes' [Hebrew: orchard] - oranges, and they also had large henhouses.

They had kids, three boys: Nir, Icyk, I don't remember the name of the third one. And they all worked. Those boys later left the countryside, all have tertiary education - technical. They live in Israel, and by now have surely become grandfathers. Rachel, their mother, is 90. Her brother, Szmuel, is dead.

The other cousin, Salomon, I don't know at all. He lives in Australia and has made some very big money there - owns some factories. And the fourth of the siblings, Bracha, is in Israel. She lives in Ramat-Aviv. She was a radiologist, never married, is more closely in touch with the family than anyone else, and knows about everything. She always calls me on the high holidays. We speak German, she doesn't know Polish.

After 1956 [34](#) she and Szmuel visited Poland as tourists. They wanted to see the cities they had heard so much about in their childhood - all four, after all, were born in Poland. The cousins in Israel are great patriots, but they feel cheated. They were there during the toughest period, sacrificed their early years for the country, donated their blood to it, and then came Jews with big money, who bought themselves beautiful apartments and simply mocked those fantastic young people. And the latter had to work for their living; no one gave them anything, so there was also envy. And now my cousins believe they have lost their lives and that this is not how they thought it would be.

My sister still lives in Ramat Gan. Her husband is dead; he died sometime in the 1970s, I think. Their children live in Haifa. They are well educated, especially Bronek, who's an IT engineer. He is a talented man; he has worked for Rafael [major Israeli defense company] since the beginning of his

career. He holds a very significant position there. He got married as a young boy. In fact, they have recently gotten divorced. He has two grown-up kids, a girl and a boy.

Last year he came to Poland with them to show them where he was born, where the whole family lived. We spent a couple of nice days together. His sister, Lilka, married a diamond cutter who had been born and raised in a kibbutz. They have three children. Lilka was a Tanach teacher at elementary school. Both Lilka and Bronek speak only broken Polish but they understand it.

My sister speaks Polish, of course, but she also speaks fluent Hebrew, after living there for so many years. When she was leaving for Israel, I asked her to take my photos and my marriage certificate from my first marriage. When, many years later, I came to visit her, I wanted to put all that stuff in order. I open the box and right on the top lies the certificate. I say, 'I'm begging you, tear it into pieces. I have no conscience to do it...' Cousin Bracha was with us then, and she says, 'You want to destroy it? Have you lost your mind?!' And she called the Yad Vashem [35](#) and says there's a document from 22nd September 1942 - the first day of the action in Czestochowa. And the document has found itself in the Yad Vashem, this is the most beautiful ending I could have imagined.

I went to Israel regularly. I have a few friends there, people who left Poland, whom I knew from before the war, the occupation era, or after the war. I've been to Eilat, on the Red Sea, more than twenty times; I also have a girl friend there, much younger than myself, whom I met in Israel. I also have a friend from Gordonia who lives in Petach Tikva - Abrasza Inspektor. He spent the war in the Soviet Union. Upon returning he affiliated himself in Lodz with people who were preparing for swift emigration to Palestine; he was a teacher in a Tarbut school [36](#). And he left very early, it was 1950 or 1951. He also worked as a teacher in Israel, in a vocational school, I think.

After 1968 [37](#) my Lodz cousins, Karola and Regina Milichtajch, emigrated to Denmark, to Copenhagen. Regina was a [PZPR] party member and was heavily involved in all those left-wing stories, a valued employee of the Labor Unions. They didn't want to go, only their sons, who were past high school, had already begun their studies. In Copenhagen, Karola worked in a hospital, and Regina at the National Library. Both are alive but they are old, especially Regina, who is over 90 and very ailing. The father of her son, Oles, wasn't a Jew. Oles himself married a girl from a mixed marriage. They converted to Judaism, had a religious wedding, she bathed in the mikveh... They are a happy couple. They bought themselves a part of a detached house in Komorow [a residential suburb of Warsaw] and want to return to Poland after they retire.

I never encountered any anti-Semitism directed against me after the war. I never went around with a placard saying I was a Jew, but everyone knew; it was no secret. I currently hold the position of treasurer with the veterans [The Association of War Veterans and Persons Wronged by the Third Reich], but I want to leave them and move to the TSKZ library [38](#). Its manager has died, she was 95, active until the last moment. Someone has to carry out the stocktaking, I'll gladly do it, for free, of course, I need no remuneration. I simply want to be doing something. After all, we are the last Jews here.

When trips to Germany were being organized, I accidentally joined one of those, in 2001. I went there a total of three times to meet young people, and I loved it. After so many years I had the cheek to conduct those meetings in German - and I did great. I had such good contact with those young people, saw they were interested, and I felt satisfaction that I was doing something good. I

told them about my wartime experiences. About the liquidation of the hospital. As an interruption, I told them the story about how I went to Tomaszow with the fur coat. And the first thing I said was about the rabbi so that they didn't think I was partial, that I saw evil only with others and not with my own. You must say the truth - a son of a bitch, period! What can I think about people like that?

I feel a very strong bond with Jewry. Those are two different things - religion and being part of a nation. I'll put it like Tuwim [39](#): [I feel Jewish] not because of the blood of my veins but because of the blood that has been shed. This is a completely different story, this is an incredible bond, that you lost everyone only because they happened to be Jews. And betray them?! How can you conceal your descent, deny, disown your family, relatives...? It has always been in me and will always be, and I'll never abandon it. But still - despite the tragedy that I experienced - I wouldn't give away a single hour of my life. Not a single hour.

Glossary:

1 Hanoar Hatzioni

(Heb.: Zionist Youth), a youth scouting organization founded in 1931 by a break-away from the Hanoar Haivri organization Akiba. It aligned itself with the centre-right current of Zionism, and its program placed great importance on educating young people in accordance with the principles and values of the Judaic tradition.

2 Jabotinsky, Vladimir (1880-1940)

Founder and leader of the Revisionist Zionist movement; soldier, orator and a prolific author writing in Hebrew, Russian, and English. During World War I he established and served as an officer in the Jewish Legion, which fought in the British army for the liberation of the Land of Israel from Turkish rule. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Keren Hayesod, the financial arm of the World Zionist Organization, founded in London in 1920, and was later elected to the Zionist Executive. He resigned in 1923 in protest over Chaim Weizmann's pro-British policy and founded the Revisionist Zionist movement and the Betar youth movement two years later. Jabotinsky also founded the ETZEL (National Military Organization) during the 1936-39 Arab rebellion in Palestine.

3 Haynt

Literally 'Today', it was one of the most popular Yiddish dailies published in Poland. It came out in Warsaw from 1908-1939, and had a Zionist orientation addressing a mass of readers. In the 1930s it attained a print run of 45,000 copies.

4 Pilsudski, Jozef (1867-1935)

Polish activist in the independence cause, politician, statesman, marshal. With regard to the cause of Polish independence he represented the pro-Austrian current, which believed that the Polish state would be reconstructed with the assistance of Austria- Hungary. When Poland regained its independence in January 1919, he was elected Head of State by the Legislative Sejm. In March 1920 he was nominated marshal, and until December 1922 he held the positions of Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army. After the murder of the president, Gabriel Narutowicz,

he resigned from all his posts and withdrew from politics. He returned in 1926 in a political coup. He refused the presidency offered to him, and in the new government held the posts of war minister and general inspector of the armed forces. He was prime minister twice, from 1926-1928 and in 1930. He worked to create a system of national security by concluding bilateral non-aggression pacts with the USSR (1932) and Germany (1934). He sought opportunities to conclude firm alliances with France and Britain. In 1932, owing to his deteriorating health, Pilsudski resigned from his functions. He was buried in the Crypt of Honor in the Wawel Cathedral of the Royal Castle in Cracow.

5 Gordonia

Pioneering Zionist youth movement founded in Galicia at the end of 1923. It became a world movement, which meticulously maintained its unique character as a Jewish, Zionist, and Erez Israel-oriented movement.

6 Hora

The best-known folk dance of pioneers in Eretz Israel. The dance is chiefly derived from the Romanian hora. Hora is a closed circle dance. Israeli dance is an amalgam of the many cultures and peoples which settled in Palestine, and then Israel. The original sources were Eastern European styles, Arabic and Yemenite.

7 Country house, consisting of small huts and little plots of lands

The Soviet authorities came to the decision to allow this activity to the Soviet people to support themselves. The majority of urban citizens grow vegetables and fruit in their small gardens to make preserves for winter.

8 Anti-Semitism in Poland in the 1930s

From 1935-39 the activities of Polish anti-Semitic propaganda intensified. The Sejm introduced barriers to ritual slaughter, restrictions of Jews' access to education and certain professions. Nationalistic factions postulated the removal of Jews from political, social and cultural life, and agitated for economic boycotts to persuade all the country's Jews to emigrate. Nationalist activists took up posts outside Jewish shops and stalls, attempting to prevent Poles from patronizing them. Such campaigns were often combined with damage and looting of shops and beatings, sometimes with fatal consequences. From June 1935 until 1937 there were over a dozen pogroms, the most publicized of which was the pogrom in Przytyk in 1936. The Catholic Church also contributed to the rise of anti-Semitism.

9 Dachau

The first Nazi concentration camp, created in March 1933 in Dachau near Munich. Until the outbreak of the war, prisoners were mostly social democrats and German communists along with clergy and Jews: a total of ca. 5000 people. The guidelines of the camp were prepared by Theodor Eicke and prescribed cruel treatment of the prisoners: hunger, beatings, exhausting labor. This was treated as a model for other concentration camps. Dachau also had a training center for

concentration camp staff. In 1939 Dachau became a place of terror and extermination, mostly for the social elites of the defeated countries. Some 250,000 inmates from 27 countries passed through Dachau, and 148,000 of them died there. Their labor was exploited for the arms industry and in quarries. The commanders of the camp during the war were: Alexander Piorkowski, Martin Weiss and Eduard Weiter. The camp was liberated on 29th April 1945 by the American army.

10 Zbaszyn Camp

From October 1938 until the spring of 1939 there was a camp in Zbaszyn for Polish Jews resettled from the Third Reich. The German government, anticipating the act passed by the Polish Sejm (Parliament) depriving people who had been out of the country for more than 5 years of their citizenship, deported over 20,000 Polish Jews, some 6,000 of whom were sent to Zbaszyn. As the Polish border police did not want to let them into Poland, these people were trapped in the strip of no-man's land, without shelter, water or food. After a few days they were resettled to a temporary camp on the Polish side, where they spent several months. Jewish communities in Poland organized aid for the victims; families took in relatives, and Joint also provided assistance.

11 Haganah (Heb

: Defense): Jewish armed organization formed in 1920 in Palestine and grew rapidly during the Arab uprisings (1936-39). Haganah also organized illegal immigration of Jews to Palestine. In 1941 illegal stormtroops were created, which after World War II fought against the army and the British Police in Palestine. In 1948-1949 Haganah soldiers were trained in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

12 Pogrom in Przytyk

The most notorious pre-war pogrom of Jews in Poland. It took place in Przytyk, a small town near Radom, during the spring fair on 9th March 1936. Because tensions in the town had already run high for some time due to a brutal boycott of Jewish shops carried out by the Polish nationalists, Jews organized a 20-strong, armed self-defense squad for the duration of the fair. On 9th March, following an incident with a nationalist urging the boycott of Jews, peasants attending the fair started demolishing the Jewish stalls. The self-defense squad intervened, shots were fired. A Pole, Stanislaw Wiesniak, was fatally wounded. That further aggravated the situation, with the peasants forcing their way into Jewish homes and stores, demolishing them, breaking windows; 20 people were heavily beaten up and two - Mr. and Mrs. Josek and Chaja Minkowski - were killed. Order was only introduced by police forces brought in from nearby Radom. Several weeks later a trial was held: the Jew accused of fatally shooting the Polish peasant was sentenced to eight years in jail, two others to five and six years, the Poles accused of murdering the Minkowskis were acquitted. The Przytyk pogrom sparked strong protests in Poland and abroad, becoming the symbol of Polish anti-Semitism of the 1930s.

13 Campaign against ritual slaughter

In pre-war Poland the issue of ritual slaughter was at the heart of a deep conflict between the Jewish community and Polish nationalist groups, which in 1936-1938 attempted to outlaw or restrict the practice of ritual slaughtering in the Sejm, the Polish parliament, citing humanitarian grounds and competition for Catholic butchers.

14 Jewish police

Carrying out their will the German authorities appointed a Jewish police in the ghettos. Besides maintaining order in general in the territory of the ghetto the Jewish police was also responsible for guarding the ghetto gates. During liquidation campaigns most of them collaborated with the Nazis; in the Warsaw ghetto each policeman had to supply at least five people to the Umschlagplatz every day. The reason for joining the Jewish police, first of all, was based on the false promises of the Germans that policemen and their families would be saved. In the Warsaw ghetto the Jewish police was headed by Jakub Szerynski; during the 'Grossaktion' (the main liquidation campaign in the summer of 1942), the Jewish Fighting Organization issued a death warrant on him, and he was to be executed on 20th August 1942 by Izrael Kanal. The attack failed, Szerynski was only wounded, and in January 1943 he committed suicide.

15 Jews in Czestochowa during the war

according to the 1931 national census, 25,600 Jews lived in Czestochowa, out of a total population of 117,000. The Germans marched into the city on 3rd September 1939. On 1st October a 24-strong 'Judenrat' (Jewish Council) was created, with Leon Kopinski as chairman. A large number of Jews from Lodz, Plock, Cracow, as well as the nearby towns such as Krzepice, Przyrow, Olsztyn, Janow, or Mstow were resettled to Czestochowa. When the ghetto was created on 9th April 1941, it had a population of some 48,000. It was located in the north-eastern part of the city in an area bounded by the river Warta and the streets Mirowska, Garncarska, Mostowa, Senatorska, Rynek Warszawski and Jaskrowska. The majority of the Czestochowa ghetto's inhabitants died as a result of the first deportation action between 22nd September and 8th October 1942, when the Germans sent 40,000 people to the Treblinka death camp. Close to 1,000 Jews were employed at the so called "Pelcery" factory, run by the company Hasag Apparatenbau. For the remaining over 5,000 Jews the so-called 'small ghetto' was set up. Some 1,500 people stayed within its bounds illegally. During the deportation action, a Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) unit was created, led by Mordechai Zylberberg. From December 1942, the unit was in touch with the Warsaw ZOB. On 4th January 1943, the second liquidation action was started; in its course, a small group of fighters led by Mendl Fiszlewicz attacked the Germans. Some 4,000 Hasag employees were left in the city. In June 1943, the company launched three new plants: Rakow, Warta, and Czestochowianka. Among the workers there were also Jews from Lodz and from the Plaszow camp, chiefly from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. When, in July 1944, Hasag moved its Skarzysko-Kamienna plant to Czestochowa, there were 11,000 Jews in the city. On 15th January 1945, the plants were evacuated to Germany. Their personnel survived the war.

16 Armbands

From the beginning of the occupation, the German authorities issued all kinds of decrees discriminating against the civilian population, in particular the Jews. On 1st December 1939 the Germans ordered all Jews over the age of 12 to wear a distinguishing emblem. In Warsaw it was a white armband with a blue star of David, to be worn on the right sleeve of the outer garment. In some towns Jews were forced to sew yellow stars onto their clothes. Not wearing the armband was punishable - initially with a beating, later with a fine or imprisonment, and from 15th October 1941 with the death penalty (decree issued by Governor Hans Frank).

17 Judenrat

Jewish councils appointed by German occupying authorities to carry out Nazi orders in the Jewish communities of occupied Europe. After the establishment of the ghettos they were responsible for everything that happened within them. They controlled all institutions operating in the ghettos, the police, the employment agency, food supplies, housing, health, social work, education, religion, etc. Germans also made them responsible for selecting people for the work camps, and, in the end, choosing those to be sent to camps that were in reality death camps. It is hard to judge their actions due to the abnormal circumstances. Some believe they betrayed Jews by obeying orders, and others think they were trying to gain time and save as many people as possible.

18 Chagall, Marc (1889-1985)

Russian-born French painter. Since Marc Chagall survived two world wars and the Revolution of 1917 he increasingly introduced social and religious elements into his art.

19 Aryan papers

Jews hiding during the war by adopting a false Aryan identity had to produce documents confirming their new personal data. Such documents were mainly the Kennkarte, that is identity card, and also birth certificate, proof of address, an employment card, and so on. Having a birth certificate and proof of address was enough to apply for a Kennkarte: therefore many people tried to obtain only a Christian birth certificate, for example from priests. Aryan papers were produced by underground organizations including Aid Organization for Jews 'Zegota', which used the services of a 'legalizing cell' of the AK; altogether it produced 50,000 false documents for its charges. The papers could also be obtained for a large sum of money on the black markets (mainly in town markets) from professional forgers and from employees of city halls. Sometimes Polish friends of Jews gave them their own documents.

20 Hasag (Hugo Schneider Aktiengesellschaft Metalwarenfabrik)

German industrial group manufacturing metal products, including ammunition. Founded in Leipzig in 1863. Its rapid expansion dates back to 1932 when Paul Budin, member of the NSDAP and the SS, became chief executive. The company started then making munitions for the army. From 1934, the company found itself under special protection of the party and the state. During the war, Hasag's factories in Germany employed Polish forced laborers as well as concentration camp prisoners. Hasag operated six forced labor camps for Jews in occupied Poland. The first of those, initially meant for Poles, was set up in Skarzysko-Kamienna and employed over 10,000 personnel. After September 1942, Polish workers were replaced with Jewish ones. During that time, Hasag set up a camp in Kielce (the Granat plant) and the first of the Czestochowa camps (the Pelcery plant), with Jews from the local ghettos as workers. The next three Czestochowa camps - Warta, Rakow, and Czestochowianka - were set up in June 1943. The Hasag camps employed a total of 15,000 prisoners. In August 1944, the prisoners from the Kielce camp were sent to Auschwitz and Buchenwald. The Skarzysko-Kamienna camp was moved to Czestochowa. In January 1945, the Czestochowa plants were evacuated to Germany. The 11,000 of their Jewish forced laborers survived the war.

21 Home Army (Armia Krajowa - AK)

Conspiratorial military organization, part of the Polish armed forces operating within Polish territory (within pre-1st September 1939 borders) during World War II. Created on 14th February 1942, subordinate to the Supreme Commander and the Polish Government in Exile. Its mission was to regain Poland's sovereignty through armed combat and inciting to a national uprising. In 1943 the AK had over 300,000 members. AK units organized diversion, sabotage, revenge and partisan campaigns. Its military intelligence was highly successful. On 19th January 1945 the AK was disbanded on the order of its commander, but some of its members continued their independence activities throughout 1945- 47. In 1944-45 tens of thousands of AK soldiers were exiled and interned in the USSR, in places such as Ryazan, Borovichi and Ostashkov. Soldiers of the AK continued to suffer repression in Poland until 1956; many were sentenced to death or long-term imprisonment on trumped-up charges. Right after the war, official propaganda accused the Home Army of murdering Jews who were hiding in the forests. There is no doubt that certain AK units as well as some individuals tied to AK were in fact guilty of such acts. The scale of this phenomenon is very difficult to determine, and has been the object of debates among historians.

22 China Zygmunt

code name Landrat, military police sergeant. From 1942 head of the Home Army's special sabotage-and-execution squad for the Czestochowa City district, responsible for executing sentenced passed by the AK's Special Military Court on informers, collaborators, and particularly cruel Germans. In the fall of 1943, as AK second lieutenant, transported to Warsaw a radio transceiver, assembled in Czestochowa, that during the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944 became known as the Blyskawica (Lightning).

23 Volksdeutscher in Poland

A person who was entered (usually voluntarily, more rarely compulsorily) on a list of people of ethnic German origin during the German occupation was called Volksdeutscher and had various privileges in the occupied territories.

24 NKVD

(Russ.: Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del), People's Committee of Internal Affairs, the supreme security authority in the USSR - the secret police. Founded by Lenin in 1917, it nevertheless played an insignificant role until 1934, when it took over the GPU (the State Political Administration), the political police. The NKVD had its own police and military formations, and also possessed the powers to pass sentence on political matters, and as such in practice had total control over society. Under Stalin's rule the NKVD was the key instrument used to terrorize the civilian population. The NKVD ran a network of labor camps for millions of prisoners, the Gulag. The heads of the NKVD were as follows: Genrikh Yagoda (to 1936), Nikolai Yezhov (to 1938) and Lavrenti Beria. During the war against Germany the political police, the KGB, was spun off from the NKVD. After the war it also operated on USSR-occupied territories, including in Poland, where it assisted the nascent communist authorities in suppressing opposition. In 1946 the NKVD was renamed the Ministry of the Interior.

25 Jewish Self-Help Committees

Spontaneous committees of Jewish self-help were established on territories liberated from German occupation, with the aim of providing material, medical and legal support to Jews who were revealing their identity. The committees established contact with the Department for Aid to Jewish Population [Referat do spraw Pomocy Ludnosci Zydowskiej], which was created in August 1944 by the PKWN (Polish Committee of National Liberation, the first communist government on Polish land) and they received resources via the PKWN. When the Central Committee of Polish Jews (CKZP) was established in 1944, the local committees subordinated themselves to the central one. New ones were created at the same time as local representation of the CKZP. In June 1946 there were 9 committees at regional level, 7 district ones and 50 at the local level. The committees organized orphanages, soup kitchens for the poor, schools, boarding houses, and shelters for the homeless. They registered persons who came to them, provided assistance in searches for family members, offered financial help, as well as help in finding employment. Their activity was mainly funded the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (Joint).

26 Treblinka

Village in Poland's Mazovia region, site of two camps. The first was a penal labor camp, established in 1941 and operating until 1944. The second, known as Treblinka II, functioned in the period 1942-43 and was a death camp. Prisoners in the former worked in Treblinka II. In the second camp a ramp and a mock-up of a railway station were built, which prevented the victims from realizing what awaited them until just in front of the entrance to the gas chamber. The camp covered an area of 13.5 hectares. It was bounded by a 3-m high barbed wire fence interwoven densely with pine branches to screen what was going on inside. The whole process of exterminating a transport from arrival in the camp to removal of the corpses from the gas chamber took around 2 hours. Several transports arrived daily. In the 13 months of the extermination camp's existence the Germans gassed some 750,000-800,000 Jews. Those taken to Treblinka included Warsaw Jews during the so-called 'Grossaktion' [great liquidation campaign] in the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942. In addition to Polish Jews, Jews from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Yugoslavia and the USSR were also killed in Treblinka. In the spring of 1943 the Germans gradually began to liquidate the camp. On 2nd August 1943 an uprising broke out there with the aim of enabling some 200 people to escape. The majority died.

27 Lodz Ghetto

It was set up in February 1940 in the former Jewish quarter on the northern outskirts of the city. 164,000 Jews from Lodz were packed together in a 4 sq. km. area. In 1941 and 1942, 38,500 more Jews were deported to the ghetto. In November 1941, 5,000 Roma were also deported to the ghetto from Burgenland province, Austria. The Jewish self-government, led by Mordechai Rumkowski, sought to make the ghetto as productive as possible and to put as many inmates to work as he could. But not even this could prevent overcrowding and hunger or improve the inhuman living conditions. As a result of epidemics, shortages of fuel and food and insufficient sanitary conditions, about 43,500 people (21% of all the residents of the ghetto) died of undernourishment, cold and illness. The others were transported to death camps; only a very small number of them survived.

28 Bolsheviks

Members of the movement led by Lenin. The name 'Bolshevik' was coined in 1903 and denoted the group that emerged in elections to the key bodies in the Social Democratic Party (SDPRR) considering itself in the majority (Rus. bolshynstvo) within the party. It dubbed its opponents the minority (Rus. menshynstvo, the Mensheviks). Until 1906 the two groups formed one party. The Bolsheviks first gained popularity and support in society during the 1905-07 Revolution. During the February Revolution in 1917 the Bolsheviks were initially in the opposition to the Menshevik and SR ('Sotsialrevolyutsionery', Socialist Revolutionaries) delegates who controlled the Soviets (councils). When Lenin returned from emigration (16th April) they proclaimed his program of action (the April theses) and under the slogan 'All power to the Soviets' began to Bolshevize the Soviets and prepare for a proletariat revolution. Agitation proceeded on a vast scale, especially in the army. The Bolsheviks set about creating their own armed forces, the Red Guard. Having overthrown the Provisional Government, they created a government with the support of the II Congress of Soviets (the October Revolution), to which they admitted some left-wing SRs in order to gain the support of the peasantry. In 1952 the Bolshevik party was renamed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

29 Jasna Gora

Marian sanctuary and Pauline monastery in Czestochowa. In 1382 the church was given by Prince Wladyslaw Opolczyk to the Pauline monks he had had come from Hungary. A few years later the monks were entrusted with the keeping of the painting of Our Lady of Czestochowa, the object of a cult, believed to be the work of St. Luke the Evangelist. Soon afterwards the monastery became one of the most-visited centers of pilgrimage in Europe. The wars waged in the Polish-Czech borderland regions, in the proximity of the monastery, prompted King Sigismund II Vasa to fund the fortification of the Jasna Gora hill. The monastery became a fortified stronghold, which enabled it to repel the attack of the Swedes in 1655. The defense of Jasna Gora from the Swedes under the leadership of Abbot August Kordecki became the legend of the monastery. Today Jasna Gora is the leading Marian center in Poland and receives more than 3 million pilgrims a year.

30 Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR)

Communist party formed in Poland in December 1948 by the fusion of the PPR (Polish Workers' Party) and the PPS (Polish Socialist Party). Until 1989 it was the only party in the country; it held power, but was subordinate to the Soviet Union. After losing the elections in June 1989 it lost its monopoly. On 29th January 1990 the party was dissolved.

31 Flight eastwards, 1939

From the moment of the German attack on Poland on 1st September 1939, Poles began to flee from areas in immediate danger of invasion to the eastern territories, which gave the impression of being safer. When in the wake of the Soviet aggression (17th September) Poland was divided into Soviet and German-occupied zones, hundreds of thousands of refugees from central and western Poland found themselves in the Soviet zone, and more continued to arrive, often waiting weeks for permits to cross the border. The majority of those fleeing the German occupation were Jews. The

status of the refugees was different to that of locals: they were treated as dubious elements. During the passport campaign (the issue of passports, i.e. ID, to the new USSR - formerly Polish - citizens) of spring 1940, refugees were issued with documents bearing the proviso that they were prohibited from settling within 100 km of the border. At the end of June 1940 the Soviet authorities launched a vast deportation campaign, during which 82,000 refugees were transported deep into the Soviet Union, mainly to the Novosibirsk and Archangelsk districts. 84% of those deported in that campaign were Jews, and 11% Poles. The deportees were subjected to harsh physical labor. Paradoxically, for the Jews, exile proved their salvation: a year later, when the Soviet Union's western border areas were occupied by the Germans, those Jews who had managed to stay put, perished in the Holocaust.

32 Students' Protest in March 1968

on 4th March 1968 the Minister of Education decided to expel from Warsaw University two students: Adam Michnik and Henryk Szlajfer. A few weeks earlier these students gave a French press correspondent an account of the militia breaking up a demonstration on 1st February. The demonstrators were youth protesting against a ban of the staging of the play *Dziady* (a strongly anti-Russian drama from the 19th century) in Teatr Narodowy (National Theater). On 8th March 1968 students organized a rally in the courtyard of Warsaw University. They passed a resolution demanding restoration of student rights to Michnik and Szlajfer, as well as annulling legal action against the arrested demonstrators from 1st February. During the rally units of militia and so-called workmen activists came into the courtyard and started beating the students with truncheons, breaking up the rally. The next day a demonstrating solidarity rally was conducted at the Warsaw University of Technology, and was also attacked by the militia. In the following days such rallies were organized in several large academic centers. About 1600 among the detained students were expelled from the universities, 350 arrested, many young men drafted into the army. Those professors from Warsaw University and other higher education facilities in Poland, who showed solidarity towards the students, were laid off work.

33 Lem, Stanislaw (1921-2006)

Writer and essayist, author of science fiction novels. Debuted in 1946 with the novel 'Man from Mars', some lyric poems, popular science articles, and short adventure and war stories. Following the publication of his contemporary novel 'Time Saved' (originally 'Hospital of the Transfiguration'), which was heavily censored, Lem devoted himself to science fiction. He was a pioneer in this genre, and his works quickly became classics. His science fiction novels also address the issue of the consequences of civilization and scientific progress ('Solaris', 'The Futurological Congress', 'Fiasco'); while some contain parodies of and grotesque twists on the sci-fi theme ('The Book of Robots'). Another group of works are collections of fictional reviews and introductions to non-existent books ('A Perfect Vacuum'). In his essays Lem describes the impact of technological progress on the evolution of human philosophy. His most famous essay is 'Summa Technologiae'. Lem's works have been translated into several languages, and have also been adapted for the screen.

34 Polish October 1956

the culmination of the political, social and economic transformations that brought about the

collapse of the dictatorial regime after the death of Stalin (1953). From 1954 the political system in Poland gradually thawed (censorship was scaled down, for instance, and political prisoners were slowly released - in April and May 1956 some 35,000 people were let out of prison). But the economic situation was deteriorating and the social and political crisis mounting. On 28th June a strike and demonstration on the streets of Poznan escalated into an armed revolt, which was suppressed by police and army units. From 19th to 21st October 1956 a political breakthrough occurred, the 8th Plenum of the PZPR Central Committee met under social pressure (rallies in factories and universities), and there was the threat of intervention by Soviet troops. Gomulka was appointed First Secretary of the PZPR Central Committee, and won the support of many groups, including a rally numbering hundreds of thousands of people in Warsaw on 24th October. From 15th to 18th November the terms on which Soviet troops were stationed in Poland were agreed, a proportion of Poland's debt was annulled, the resettlement of Poles back from the USSR was resumed, and by the end of 1956 a large number of people found guilty in political trials were rehabilitated. There were changes at the top in the Polish Army: Marshal Rokossowski and the Soviet generals went back to the USSR, and changes also to the civilian authorities and the programs of political factions. In November 1956 permission was granted for the creation of workers' councils in state enterprises, and the management of the economy was improved somewhat. In subsequent months, however, the process of partial democratization was halted, and supporters of continuing change ('revisionists') were censured.

35 Yad Vashem

This museum, founded in 1953 in Jerusalem, honors both Holocaust martyrs and 'the Righteous Among the Nations', non-Jewish rescuers who have been recognized for their 'compassion, courage and morality.'

36 Tarbut

Zionist educational organization. Founded in the Soviet Union in 1917, it was soon dissolved by the Soviet authorities. It continued its activity in Central and Eastern European countries; in Poland from 1922. The language of instruction in Tarbut schools was Hebrew; the curriculum included biblical and contemporary Hebrew literature, sciences, Polish, and technical and vocational subjects.

37 Gomulka Campaign

A campaign to sack Jews employed in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the army and the central administration. The trigger of this anti-Semitic campaign was the involvement of the Socialist Bloc countries on the Arab side in the Middle East conflict, in connection with which Moscow ordered purges in state institutions. On 19th June 1967, at a trade union congress, the then First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party [PZPR], Wladyslaw Gomulka, accused the Jews of lack of loyalty to the state and of publicly demonstrating their enthusiasm for Israel's victory in the Six-Day-War. This marked the start of purges among journalists and people of other creative professions. Poland also severed diplomatic relations with Israel. On 8th March 1968 there was a protest at Warsaw University. The Ministry of Internal Affairs responded by launching a press campaign and organizing mass demonstrations in factories and workplaces during which 'Zionists' and 'trouble-makers' were indicted and anti-Semitic and anti-intelligentsia slogans shouted. Following the events of March,

purges were also staged in all state institutions, from factories to universities, on criteria of nationality and race. 'Family liability' was also introduced (e.g. with respect to people whose spouses were Jewish). Jews were forced to emigrate. From 1968-1971 15,000-30,000 people left Poland. They were stripped of their citizenship and right of return.

38 Social and Cultural Society of Polish Jews (TSKZ)

Founded in 1950 when the Central Committee of Polish Jews merged with the Jewish Society of Culture. From 1950-1991 it was the sole body representing Jews in Poland. Its statutory aim was to develop, preserve and propagate Jewish culture. During the socialist period this aim was subordinated to communist ideology. Post-1989 most young activists gravitated towards other Jewish organizations. However, the SCSPJ continues to organize a range of cultural events and has its own magazine - The Jewish Word. It is primarily an organization of older people, who, however, have been involved with it for years.

39 Tuwim, Julian (1894-1953)

Poet and translator; wrote in Polish. He was born in Lodz into an assimilated family from Lithuania. He studied law and philosophy at Warsaw University, and was a leading representative of the Skamander group of poets. His early work combined elements of Futurism and Expressionism (e.g. *Czyskanie na Boga* [Lying in wait for God], 1918). In the 1920s his poetry took a turn towards lyricism (e.g. *Slowa we krwi* [Words in blood], 1926). In the 1930s under the influence of the rise in nationalistic tendencies in Poland his work took on the form of satire and political grotesque (*Bal w operze* [A ball at the opera], 1936). He also published works for children. A separate area of his writings are cabarets, libretti, sketches and monologues. He spent WWII in emigration and made public appearances in which he relayed information on the fate of the Polish population of Poland and the rest of Europe. In 1944 he published an extended poem, 'My Zydzi polscy' [We Polish Jews], which was a manifesto of his complicated Polish-Jewish identity. After the war he returned to Poland but wrote little. He was the chairman of the Society of Friends of the Hebrew University and the Committee for Polish-Israeli Friendship.