

Henryk Prajs

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Gora Kalwaria

Poland

Interviewer: Aleksandra Bankowska

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Mr. Henryk Prajs is a cheerful and friendly person. He participates in the activities of various veterans organizations and is also a member of the Social and Cultural Society of Polish Jews seniors club in Warsaw. We met at his house in Gora Kalwaria near Warsaw, where he lives by himself. He feels very closely bound up with his town. Mr. Prajs is a very talkative person, although often wandering off subject and into digressions. During our conversations he stressed his Polish identity and his liberal views time and again. He asked me to stop recording a couple of times, not wanting to disclose certain information publicly.

[My family history](#)

[Growing up](#)

[In the army](#)

[During the war](#)

[In hiding](#)

[After the war](#)

[Recent years](#)

[My family history](#)

My grandparents came to Gora Kalwaria [1](#) from the Kielce region [town ca. 180 km south of Warsaw]. I know for sure since 1850 my father's side of the family lived in Gora Kalwaria, on Pilsudskiego Street, and they had their own little house there. It's no longer there, the Germans pulled it down. My paternal grandfather was called Majer Bejer Prajs. He worked as a middleman, ordering dairy products - cream, milk - and delivering them to Warsaw, for Jews only, as it was all kosher. I remember him as a brisk elderly man with a short gray beard and a 'krymkowka,' a Crimean cap [a round black cap with a small visor]. I have his death certificate, he died in 1930. My grandmother was called Golda, but I never knew her, I think she died before I was born.

They had many children. My father's brothers were called Nusyn and Mojsze. Nusyn didn't have a proper job or profession. Sometimes he worked picking apples, give a hand somewhere, and so on. There were lots of people like him among the Jewish poor. Mojsze had a horse cab; he made his living driving people places. He used to drive the judge to the court for example, he had his regulars. He had two children, Josla and Golda. Every one of them had a daughter called Golda; they were given that name after Grandma. He lived with his family in Gora Kalwaria, in a wooden house, just like us, nothing fancy whatsoever, definitely in poverty.

Father's sisters were called Kaila, Malka, and Chana. Kaila's husband, Herszek Bogman, was a shoemaker. They had children, too, but I don't remember them all, it was a lot of people. There was Hudeska, Glika, and a boy called Mosze.

Father's younger sister was called Malka. Her husband was Dawid Szyniawer. He was a Torah scribe; it's called a soyfer [sofer]. You know, he wrote the Jewish [Hebrew] letters from right to left, on a parchment. It has to be officially approved calfskin, very thin; they only write on that, it's forbidden to use anything else. Malka had many children, that is: Mojsze, Szulim, Eta, Mendel, Josel, Ele, and Gedale. I do remember all of them because they lived nearby and were either my age or older.

Aunt Chana had a small notions shop. Her husband's last name was Szoskiel, but I don't remember his first name, Duwid perhaps? She had two children, a daughter called Golda and a son, Ele.

I didn't know my maternal grandparents. They were seldom spoken of at our home; it wasn't considered an important subject. Mom's family was called Frydman. They lived in the country not far from Gora Kalwaria, they had an estate [sic] in Coniew. Not a big one it was, a garden and a little house. They moved to Gora Kalwaria before the war, in 1937 or 1938, and didn't live there anymore. We didn't see each other much at the time, as I was in the army. I can tell you they were truly religious Jews.

Mom had many brothers and sisters as well. Her eldest sister was called Frajda, then came Mom, after her Szulim, after Szulim came Chana, after Chana came Glika, and after Glika Iciek, and after Iciek came Fajga, and after Fajga came Sura.

Frajda had a husband, she lived in Piaseczno [town 15 km north of Gora Kalwaria] and so I can't tell anything about her because I don't know. Szulim had a family in Gora Kalwaria. His wife was called Czarna, they had four children: Herszel, Josek, Gina, and Rachel. Szulim was a tailor, he used to make the so-called 'tandeta,' shoddy clothes. They were called 'tandeciarze,' second-rate tailors, you know, because they made the worst quality, the cheapest clothes. While in pre-war times you had to pay a tailor 25 zlotys for a suit, just for the tailoring, a 'tandeciarz' would bill you 23 for the whole suit: fabric, tailoring, the whole nine yards. The poor from the villages as well as the towns would buy it. He [Szulim] made those shoddy clothes and sold them at the market. The fair was held once a week, on Tuesdays I think.

Mom's sister Chana was a housewife, her husband's name was Mosze Warym. They had a restaurant in Gora Kalwaria at the main square, on the corner of Pilsudskiego and Pijarska streets. I think they had three children, Motek, Gedale, and yet another Gina.

Glika didn't have any children, she was a spinster. She worked as a seamstress. She only made underwear, men's and ladies' shirts. Iciek had a shop in Warsaw on 4 Sowia Street, with dairy products. He was doing very well. I don't remember his wife's name. He had three children. One of them was Gina, nicknamed Genia, but I don't remember the rest, they were little children.

Sura was a spinster as well, she never got married. She was a seamstress. There was also Fajga, a seamstress as well, she only made men's trousers. Fajga died two weeks before the expulsion of Jews [from Gora Kalwaria] in 1941. She was still buried in Gora Kalwaria. She passed away peacefully, so to speak. She was buried according to the Jewish rite. It's weird, we actually envied her that she died naturally and didn't live to witness the catastrophe. I know more or less where we buried her, but the tombstone is gone.

How is one buried according to the Jewish rite? A person dies, you have to bury him the very same day, you don't wait to check if it's some coma or not. Basically there's a regular grave you know, and the Jewish coffin consists of seven boards, two boards a side, 20-30 centimeters wide, joined without any nails, because the world is open, and the coffin must not be closed, or nailed. The corpse is put on the naked ground and it's all covered with three boards. That's the ritual burial. And you say prayers at a funeral.

My parents were born between 1890 and 1892. My father was called Jankiel and my mother Estera. They met each other, as it used to be back then, through a matchmaker. Mom was a very attractive woman, of medium height, with a round face and very pretty eyes. I have Mom's eyes. She didn't wear a wig, she had nice hair. And Father was tall, blond, very unlike a Jew. He had a finger missing. He had cut it off himself so that they wouldn't draft him to the tsarist army. He could only write in Yiddish and not in Polish. In Russian, he was just able to sign his name, just like Mom. [Editor's note: Prior to WWI that part of Poland was under the Russian rule, meaning the official language was Russian.]

Mom was a seamstress. Father traded orchards, I mean he leased them from the farmers, utilized them, watched over them, sprayed them, and sold the fruits. Often he would buy ripe fruits and sell them. Sometimes he traded chickens or geese. He was a small time merchant; he didn't have his own stall. We always lacked money. I come from a poor family, very honest people, very hard-working, but they were not rich.

We only spoke Yiddish at home. My parents dressed the European way, observed the [religious] rules, the food was kosher. My father didn't go to the synagogue very often, not on every Saturday, and Mom only once a year, on Yom Kippur. There were two synagogues in Gora Kalwaria. One belonged to the kahal, the Jewish community, a progressive one, and the other belonged to the tzaddik [Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter, or Imrei Emes, 4th rebbe of the Ger dynasty, the last of the dynasty to live in Poland]. My parents used to go to the progressive synagogue.

I was born on 30th December 1916 as Froim Fiszel. I had a sister and a brother. My sister's name was Golda, after Grandma. She was older than me, she was born in 1914. She was a pretty young girl, dark haired. She was a very good student, one of the best in her class. She finished seven grades of the Polish elementary school. When she was 16 or 17 she went to Warsaw and became a bookkeeper in a small soap factory on 12 Radzyminska Street in the Praga district. They paid her rather well, 120-130 zlotys per month. It was not too much, but you could get on. Bread was very cheap back then, 25, 35, 50 groszes [1 Polish zloty = 100 Polish groszes], a bun two groszes, five groszes.

It was a small workshop in the backyard plus a shop, six or seven people were employed there, they made and sold various soaps and washing articles. My sister lived with the factory's owners, the Hirszhorns, they were Jews. I was in Warsaw once or twice before the war, and stayed with my sister there, once as I was on furloughed from the army.

My brother Dawid was born in 1919. He completed six grades, he was a good student, too. He was a handsome, tall man, he had a slight squint though, he had good sight, but his left eye would always wander a bit to the side. After finishing school he learned saddle making. A saddler makes saddles, harnesses, horse-collars. We were both members of the youth organization 'Frayhayt' of the Right Poalei Zion [2](#) party. My brother hadn't been in the army, his year had not yet been

drafted [when the war broke out].

We lived in Gora Kalwaria. The town was founded by the Poznan bishop Stefan Wierzbowski to symbolize Jerusalem. [Editor's note: the urban design and toponymy of Gora Kalwaria, or Calvary Hill, was intended by its founder to recall the Jerusalem of Jesus's times; it was even called New Jerusalem at first]. That's why dissenters [non-Catholics] couldn't live there. The ban wasn't canceled until Napoleonic times and the Congressional Kingdom [Editor's note: actually earlier, in 1797; the Congressional Kingdom, or the Kingdom of Poland, was created after Napoleon's fall, in 1815].

The Jews started to settle in Gora Kalwaria in 1802. In the 1930s there were already 3,000 Jews and 3,500 Poles. It was a very primitive town at the time. No waterworks whatsoever, just some wells far apart, you needed to walk some couple hundred meters to fetch water. It was only Mayor Dziejko [in the 1930s] who ordered pumps to be installed on every street and so you could take water from just next to your house. Electricity was introduced in Gora Kalwaria in the 1920s, but the poor households didn't have it until shortly before the war. Luckily, we had electric lighting, because Mom was a seamstress and needed it to work. Everyone has fond memories of Mayor Dziejko, as he was a good host. He did much for the town, and with some help of Jewish money, too. When Jews came to see the tzaddik, they had to pay the mayor a zloty each. The money was then used for the town's needs.

The tzaddiks came to Gora Kalwaria from Przysucha and Kock. [Yitzchak Meir (Icik Majer), the founder of the Alter dynasty, was a disciple of tzaddiks Simcha Binem (Bunim) of Przysucha and Menachem Mendel of Kock (Kotzker Rebbe).] Since their arrival the inflow of Jews increased, most of them Orthodox. The Gora tzaddik [Yiddish: Gerer Rebbe] didn't have many followers in Gora itself, though.

The Gora Jews recognized the tzaddik from Kozenice rather than the one from Gora Kalwaria. [Editor's note: there were no tzaddiks in Kozenice between the two world wars; Mr. Prajs refers to the tradition of the Maggid of Kozenice, or Israel Yitzchak Hofstein (Hapstein), 1733-1814.] His followers were mostly outsiders. They came from all over Poland, from every city except maybe for the Poznan district, from all of eastern and southern Poland: Cracow, Rzeszow, Lodz, Warsaw, Lublin, all the small towns [surrounding the big cities]. They came to him on High Holidays. On New Year - or Rosh Hashanah in Hebrew, on Yom Kippur, and on Shavuot - or Pentecost, I'd say 2,000 Jews would come to Gora Kalwaria. They rented rooms from the local Jews. My Mom, for example, used to rent them a room to earn an extra zloty or two.

The tzaddik was well-known. I saw him a few times. Just an ordinary bearded Jew. I've never been one of his followers. In my opinion he was no sage, just a man who knew the Torah really well. Surely, there had to be something about him, since he had so many followers and everyone thought of him as a miracle-worker. Even the Poles respected him. There was a telling moment, when Cardinal Kakowski [Aleksander Kakowski, 1862-1938, archbishop of Warsaw, cardinal, politician] came to Gora Kalwaria in 1933 or 1934. They built a triumphal arch and everyone welcomed him, including the Jews with the rabbi. But the tzaddik did not come to greet the cardinal, and received him in his house instead. They exchanged gifts.

Growing up

We lived by my grandfather Majer's at Pilsudskiego Street. The house was made of wood and quite poor. The whole family was squeezed into one room. It was a big room, perhaps ten by six meters. There was everything in it: Mom's workbench, and a place to sleep, and the eating table, and we also did our homework there, but only after Mom had finished her work. Beds stood in the corner, the sewing machine by the window; the window had four or six panes and was next to the door, and to the left stood a chest to store this and that. The beds were behind a screen. The kitchen stove was made of bricks and a pipe connected it to the chimney. It was always very tidy, Mom kept things in order. The clients complimented her, as they came to see her.

There were three Polish and three Jewish families in our yard. We got on with each other very well, like a family. There was no anti-Semitism, none at all. Our Polish neighbors were called Wozniak, Rytko, and Jarosz, and the Jewish ones Bielawski and Kielman. When Mrs. Wozniak baked the holiday cakes, she used to come to my Mom and share them with her: 'Here, Estera, it's for your kids.' When we, on the other hand, got our matzot, Mom would bring it to Mrs. Wozniak and Zosia Jarosz just the same: 'Na, Zosia, take the matzah, take it.' I used to come to Wozniak's as if it was my house. And Mom taught Zosia how to sew.

My friends were mostly Poles: Mietek and Wladek Zetek, Janek Bialek, Wojciechowski, Wozniak, Stasiak Rytko, Maniek Jarosz, we all grew up together. We spent time together in the yard, played soccer, dodge-ball, and so on. We pretended we were soldiers. I was a bit older and so I was in charge, we made sabers out of tin scraps 'aaand maaarch, hut two three four, hut two three four!'

We celebrated all the Jewish holidays: Pesach, Rosh Hashanah. During Pesach everything in the house had to be kosher, there could be nothing containing leavened bread. Father always went to the synagogue and Mom prepared the breakfast. When he returned, we ate. The breakfast was a bit better than usually, just as the holiday supper; we had fish, broth, and such.

We sang various religious songs, according to the psalms appropriate for the time of year. On Rosh Hashanah the prayers in the synagogue lasted till well after midnight, at which time someone blew the shofar, or horn. This is to remind of Moses addressing the Jewish tribes as he received the Ten Commandments. On Yom Kippur one fasts all day. And Chanukkah and Purim were no different from any ordinary day. In the poor families there was nothing at all, just the prayers. If one was a strong believer, he would go to the synagogue in the evening to listen to the Esther's prayer [The Book of Esther, or Megillat Esther, is read aloud during Purim], because it [Purim] was a celebration of Esther's miracle. But it was no holiday.

On Fridays we simply had a supper after work. Saturdays I either worked or went to the organization [Mr. Prajs was at first a member of the Bund's children organization, Skif, and after that - of Frayhayt]. I didn't observe Sabbath too rigorously, and later not at all. It made my Mom sad, but I was progressive, not a bit religious, I didn't even pray anymore. I didn't feel the need to. And I dined at Mrs. Wozniakowa's [the neighbor], oh yes. I didn't observe the kashrut even in my early youth. Mom never knew it, God forbid, never, no one knew, it was unthinkable! They would separate my dishes right away, wouldn't use them at all. That's the rule, the Jewish rite.

What did Mom use to cook? I like fish Jewish style above all. Nothing else, really. Mom prepared fish thus: she skinned it, chopped some onion, added an egg, some salt and pepper, and mixed it all. Then she stuffed the skin with it, and cooked it for two hours.

What other dishes did Jews eat? Well, chulent. Chulent is very heavy, stodgy, nothing interesting really. You had to have an earthen pot. You filled it with potatoes, barley, some fat - oil or such, and a fair bit of meat, a beef shoulder for example. It was then covered, wrapped, and put into the stove for the whole night. It roasted till morning, and then was brought home and eaten after the prayers.

Rich Jews would put another pot inside the bigger one, not necessarily earthenware but made for example of metal, and fill it with some fancy tidbits, some delicacies. It also had to be covered so that the dishes couldn't mix. It was called kugel. It was a sort of pudding, a dessert, something like that. You only eat kugel on Saturdays after the prayers. You mustn't eat before that.

I know Jewish religion and I'm proud I do. Our parents sent me and my brother to a cheder. There were no illiterates among the Jews, because children had to be sent to school as soon as they were five, no matter what. A cheder could be organized in any Jewish house. Any Jew could teach in it, if he knew anything of the Jewish religion, didn't have to be some pundit. A dozen or so boys would gather, aged five to 12-13.

My teacher was called Majer Mesyng. The cheder was in his house on Kilinskiego Street. The building does no longer exist, it was demolished after the war. He taught us the Jewish [Hebrew] alphabet, how to write the names Abraham, Jacob, Isaac, David, showed us the east, west, north, and south, told us that Israel was located in Asia, and what Africa was. I attended it for five years, from age five to ten. I know Mishnah, Gemara, and I can still speak Hebrew and Yiddish.

My parents were not rich enough to throw any bar mitzvah party. When I turned 13, I went to the synagogue with my father and had to read aloud some passages from the Torah. You have to say those prayers in a special way, putting accents in all the right places. I did great. Father was proud of me. We went home, Mom prepared a festive dinner, I got 5 zlotys for saying the prayers so well, and that was it. My brother's bar mitzvah was exactly the same. Well, only he didn't read from the Torah as well as I did.

I went to a Polish elementary school at the age of seven. From 7am to 1 or 2pm I was at school, and after that I went to the cheder. At school they taught us Polish, math, geography, music, and from fourth grade on we also had German classes. Jews and Poles studied together, but the Jews were fewer. There were I think 36 people in my class, and only three of them Jewish: me - they called me Heniek at school, not Froim - Uszer, and Josel Mesing. I already knew Polish, because there were Poles in my yard, but it was definitely the school that taught me the proper grammar and basically to speak correct Polish. I was very popular at the school, I liked the teachers, I liked to study and had good marks, except for math, but otherwise I had A's and B's.

From among the teachers I'd mention Mrs. Karniewska, who taught German. She was my Mom's client. She often asked me to fetch something, or do something for her. No other favors, though. I remember celebrating 3rd May [3](#) at the school. Students from all the schools would gather in the morning and sing 'Long live May, the 3rd of May, it's like the paradise for all the Poles.' We would have an assembly in the evening. The firemen, the soldiers, and the students would parade through the town. I always took part in those celebrations.

When I was 12 or 13 my friends and I joined the Skif [4](#). Skif stands for Sotsyalkinderfarband, or the Socialist Youth Union, a children's organization connected with the Bund party [5](#). Bund was a social

democratic party, struggling for the emancipation and equality of Jews. While still a 'skifist' I was the Gora Kalwaria delegate at the funeral of Bejnysz Michalewicz [a.k.a. Jozef Izbicki, 1876-1928, a Bund activist since 1905, pedagogue, journalist, co-founder of TsISHO (Central Jewish School Organization)], a Bund leader, on Okopowa Street in Warsaw. It was a huge funeral. Naturally, there were Bund delegates there, giving speeches: [Wiktor] Alter, [Jakub] Pat, I guess [Henryk] Ehrlich [6](#) as well, to name a few. There were lots of people from all over Poland. At some point we all left Skif. They wanted Jewish emancipation [instead of building a Jewish state], and that's not possible. Only two of us stayed: Krupka and one more person.

I preferred to join a Jewish [here: Zionist] organization, because I believed it necessary to build our own state. That's why I joined the Right Poalei Zion as a scout. I was still a kid, I was 14. It was a social democratic labor party, they wanted to liberate Palestine to create our own state in which the social democratic parties would flourish. There were maybe 50 of us [Frayhayt members] in Gora Kalwaria. We rented a room on Pilsudskiego Street. It was about 10 meters long and 7 wide. There was a library and everything else was there. The room was paid for from the membership fees. All the pre-war organizations were funded from membership fees, unless someone rich from abroad donated 100 zlotys, it was an awful lot of money before the war.

We often had our meetings there, always on a Saturday or Sunday, on free days. There were talks, excursions. The talks were basically about the culture, the world, what was going on, how things in India or China were, in Warsaw, or in the rest of the world. Basically the economic life, wars, and so on. If I knew something, I prepared a short speech. Do I recall any such speech? We fought for freedom, democracy, or the unions in other words, for equal rights, and against exploitation. You had to quote a paper, Robotnik [The Worker, a Warsaw newspaper of the Polish Socialist Party] or some Jewish paper. There were many different of those, the Bund published Folks-Shtime [Editor's note: probably Folks-Tsaytung, People's Journal, a newspaper published by the Bund; Folks-Shtime, People's Voice was published after WW II], there was Haynt [7](#), and later the orthodox Jews started to publish their paper, and the Zionists published some, you quoted one of them and basically gave a speech.

We didn't go on excursions, where would we go, we didn't have the money. But we did take walks into the woods on Saturday mornings in May. It was called Kepa, nowadays a pasture a few kilometers from Gora Kalwaria. There was also the so-called Klajnowski Forest, or Karolin, or we would simply take a walk to the river Wisla, if the weather was nice. There was always a lecturer on such trips and he gave his speech.

The chairman of the Gora Kalwaria branch of Poalei Zion was Mojsze Skrzypek. He was also our lecturer. We had those, well in Yiddish it's called 'kestelgesprekh,' talks. Questions were posed anonymously and the speaker would answer them. He spoke about literature for instance. Everything in Yiddish of course, I don't know if maybe ten people in Gora Kalwaria spoke Hebrew. Mojsze Skrzypek was an intelligent guy. I don't remember what he did for a living, perhaps he worked in some office, there was the Zajdemans soap factory, a bank, maybe he was a bookkeeper there, I don't know. Chaskiel Goldsztajn, Mendel Cukier, Chane Gotlib were my friends from the organization. I remember them all, I can still see their faces.

I didn't have much free time. You went to pick currants or give someone a hand to earn some money. When it was warm, we would go swimming in our free time, usually Saturdays. But I also

read a lot. Historical novels, most of all. I remember books about Lokietek [Wladislaus I the Elbow-high], Kazimierz Wielki [Casimir III the Great], Zygmunt Stary [Sigismund I the Old; all three were Polish kings]. I do also remember some Jewish authors: Peretz [8](#), Sholem Aleichem [9](#), An-ski [10](#), Asch [11](#), Bergelson [12](#). I seldom bought books, didn't have the money. I was sometimes given books as a school prize. Mostly I borrowed them from a library.

There were three libraries in Gora Kalwaria. There was the Peretz's library, where the Jewish youth would meet up, no matter, left- or right- wing. That was the first one. As for the other two, the Bundists had their own library, and so did the Zionists. They only had the writings in accordance with their programs, as each party believed in different things. The Bundists were generally freethinkers, so they didn't even consider religious books, only contemporary literature, that's what they supported. I used to go to the library at the Zionists' place, to Poalei Zion. They had some literature, but it was no big library.

I read various newspapers, both Jewish and Polish. The Polish would be 'Kurier Codzienny' [full name 'Kurier Codzienny 5 groszy,' The Daily Herald 5 groszes, a pro-government paper published from 1932 to 1936], Oblicze dnia [The Day's Visage, a socialist weekly published in 1936], sometimes I even leafed through ABC [a weekly published by the nationalist Oboz Wielkiej Polski, Camp of Great Poland, from 1926 to 1939], an anti-Semitic magazine. When did you actually buy a paper? On Saturdays. Newspapers were pretty expensive, Haynt cost 1.20 zlotys, Moment [13](#) - 1.50, while other papers 40, 50 groszes. We read Haynt at home. My father was a member of a Jewish craftsmen organization called Handwerker [Central Union of the Jewish Craftsmen of the Republic of Poland] [14](#) and they all read Haynt. They even got elected to the Sejm [the Parliament; the union formed part of the National Minorities Bloc that won 17% of the votes in the 1928 election]. Generally my father was apolitical, though.

Ever since 1933, when Hitler came to power [15](#), people grew more and more certain a war was coming. Everyone who had the chance to do so, fled to Israel [Editor's note: until 1948 Palestine]. Apart from that, the ones who fled were patriots, they wanted to build their own country, and did the right thing; emancipation is one thing, but having your country goes a long way. Many of my friends left before the war, Mojszele Rawski was one of them. At first before leaving they were Hahalutzim [16](#). They formed teams and took up the toughest tasks, trying to prepare for Israel, to build their country. They knew beginnings are always tough, so they learned to farm, to work in a sawmill, they learned the trade of masonry, all the worst drudgeries.

There were two kibbutzim in Gora Kalwaria. One belonged to the right-wing Zionists [the General Zionists party] [17](#), or Grinbaum's [18](#) democratic Zionists in other words. It was located in a house on the corner of Polna and Dominikanska streets. The whole upper floor was theirs. They had many talented people among them - there was a painter for example, she painted landscapes. The other kibbutz was on Ksiedza Sajny Street, the one leading down to the river. I don't remember what group they were.

My organization, Right Poalei Zion, didn't have a kibbutz in Gora Kalwaria. If one of us wanted to join a kibbutz, he had to go to the eastern regions of the country. Lots of folks were preparing for that, but I doubt if all of them actually left. It was hard to just leave your father, your mother, your brother, and go. I didn't take part in kibbutzim activities. Neither did I think about leaving for Israel.

Immediately after finishing elementary school I started to learn tailoring. My first master was Izrael Cybula, and I worked for him in the workshop on 15 Pilsudskiego Street for two years without a pay, in exchange for training. After that I had an exam in Jaszeniec near Warka. They had sort of a crafts corporation there, the so-called guild. I passed my apprentice exam, received a certificate, and was allowed to practice as a tailor. An apprentice can make a suit or a pair of trousers by himself. A trainee is being trained, but an apprentice should be able to do it himself. And a master can train others, he should know all the tricks of his trade.

Later I worked for various tailors, both Jewish and Polish, I worked for Cybula a month or two, when he had a job for me, I worked for Ryszard Gorecki, Jasinski, Jaworski, Pelc, in many different workshops. I didn't make much, 15-20 zlotys a week, it varied, because sometimes there was no job for me.

I was a member of the Tailors' Union. There were both Jews and Poles in it. I was the secretary of the Gora Kalwaria branch, and the voivodship [district] secretary had his office in Warsaw, on Leszno Street. The union [branch] had its own place, the size of this room maybe. And that was it. A stool in the middle and nothing else. So what can I say about such a union. When necessary, we organized some lectures and such. We couldn't call a strike, there was unemployment, well not as high as nowadays. You were happy to get a job at some shoemaker's, tailor's, cobbler's.

The union was funded from membership fees as well, there was no state funding. The municipality wouldn't give us anything. They gave some support to the unemployed a couple of times a year, about 5 zlotys, and the Poles would get 90 per cent, while the Jews maybe 5 per cent.

Jews before the war were mainly craftsmen, tailors, shoemakers, cobblers, saddlers, hat makers, all such professions, mainly services. How many truly wealthy Jews were there in Gora Kalwaria? Poloniecki, Rapaport, Wajnsztok, Mardyks, Doctor Rozenberg, ten at most. They mainly traded in grain, had their own houses, could have as much as 2,000, 3,000, 10,000 zlotys. Around 40 per cent of the Jewish population were from the middle class, and 50 per cent were poor. [Editor's note: the ten wealthy Jews accounted for much less than the remaining 10%]. I was one of the, well, not the very poor, but the poor. Before I started to work as an apprentice, we were living pretty much hand to mouth.

It was the poor who suffered most during the anti-Semitic riots [19](#). Because each wealthy Jew had some Polish friends, who would say, 'You can beat up all the Jews you want, but stay away from my Moshke.' It was no different in Gora Kalwaria. At the St. Anthony Day's fair [13th June] people placed their stalls and began to sell. Those from Falanga [20](#) came by, smashed the stalls, beat up some Jewish men and women. A tumult began, the police came, but it was already done. That's how things were in 1936, 1937, I don't know about later as I was in the army. They often started such riots. They were not pogroms, but brawls, beatings.

The Falangists came from Warka, Karczew, Otwock [towns in the dozen or so kilometer radius from Gora Kalwaria]. There was an Endeks [21](#) organization in Gora Kalwaria as well, but they used to go rumble somewhere else, not in our town. Mayor Dziejko and Police Chief Boleslaw Janica wouldn't allow it. There were fewer of such unrests thanks to them. Once, as they came to rumble, Janica told the Jews, 'Listen, people, you defend yourselves, and I'll handle the rest.' And so a self-defense was formed, no matter, Zionists, Communists, or Bundists but simply the Jewish youth, particularly the workers, coachmen, all the tough ones. They formed the self-defense and stood up to the

attackers.

Janica and Dziejko were objective people, they'd say: 'Alright, he's a Jew, and let him be one - that doesn't bother me.' While in other towns no Jews were allowed into the city council, he, Dziejko had two Jewish councilors. I remember the last Jewish councilors were Szyje Kaufman and Aron Poznanski.

In the army

I was drafted at the age of 21. It was a regular draft, all the boys born in 1916 were drafted in November 1937. I served in the Jan Hipolit Koziatowski 3rd Mazovian Chevaux-Leger [Light Cavalry] Regiment in Suwalki. There were only three regiments of elite cavalry [the Chevaux-Legers] in Poland, the other two were the Jozef Pilsudski Regiment, stationed in Warsaw, and the Dwernicki Regiment in Stargard Gdanski. I was assigned to the regiment because I was an absolutely unblemished and loyal citizen, and I was not a member of any anti-Pilsudski [22](#) organizations. My commander was Colonel Edward Milewski, and my officer in charge - Borys Zaryn.

How was the army? Well, I was a tailor suddenly turned cavalryman. And I had always been afraid of horses. Well, I had seen them, pulling a coach for example, but that's different. I mounted a horse for the first time then, but I did learn to ride, and how! A recruit was trained for a few months and then given a rifle. I managed to figure it all out somehow.

In 1938 I was assigned to a non-commissioned officer school, as I had completed seven years of school. It wasn't very common, many of the recruits were illiterate. I used to write letters for everyone. They began with 'Praised be Jesus Christ' and ended with 'Waiting for your reply, now and for ever, amen.' I ranked high in the [NCOs] school, because I was able. I ranked second out of 85 in the knowledge of Poland course, the first place was taken by a Mastalerz from Warsaw. I was promoted to corporal. I was doing well in the army, I can't say I was favored but they treated me fair, no complaints.

In the Polish army before the war every unit had a few Germans, some Jews, a couple of Belarussians and Ukrainians. [Poland between the world wars was a country with ethnic and national minorities accounting for 1/3 of the population] The Ukrainians - we called them Ruthenians - were very good soldiers, first of all very physically fit, and the best riders. At a Saturday or Sunday muster the officers would call, 'Of Jewish persuasion, step forward, of Lutheran persuasion, step forward, of Orthodox persuasion, step forward!' and if you wanted to pray, you went your way.

My friend in the army was Eliezer Geller [1918-1943, a Gordonia (a Zionist organization) activist, soldier of the Warsaw ZOB (see below), he fought in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and later went into hiding; he was probably killed in Auschwitz]. He came from Opoczno in the Mazovia region. He was my age. We often times went to the synagogue together, spoke with each other.

He was a very intelligent boy, very handsome, a blond. He was a left-wing Zionist, like me. I don't know what his profession was, but I think he'd finish a gymnasium, completed more than seven years of school. They didn't take him to the non-commissioned officer school, though, I don't know why, maybe he just didn't want to go. He was in the second squadron and I was in the fourth, so I never saw him from September [1939] on. He was later in Warsaw, I don't know by what miracle he

ended up there. I was certain all the time he died in the Warsaw Uprising [23](#).

Military service lasted two years and mine was to finish in 1939, so instead of going home I went to war. I fought in the September campaign [24](#). On 14th September I was wounded in a battle with the Germans at Olszewo [near Bransk and Lapy, in the Bialystok district]. There's still a memorial room there with a photo of me, among other things, and a description of the battle. I was messed up by a shrapnel, had a couple of wounds. I was unfit to fight on, so I was assigned to the regimental train [service column].

During the war

On 17th September the Russians marched in [25](#) and took us all prisoners. We were interned in a place called Negroloc, some 40 kilometers further east from Minsk, Belarus. They didn't treat us bad. We had to work and if we fulfilled the ordered quota, it was alright. The food was also acceptable. Every Saturday we had a bath, they called it 'bania.' We weren't given any clothes for change. In December [1939] there was a prisoners exchange, the Russians returned the Germans and the Poles. I was in that group and so got back to Gora Kalwaria. [Editor's note: An exchange of the prisoners-of-war - privates and NCOs. The Poles originating from the German-occupied parts of Poland were sent to the German authorities and later released; similarly with the ones from the Soviet-occupied regions.]

Everyone thought I'd been killed because there had been no news from me since September. And so it started, the occupation, the Gehenna [misery, hell]. I was told that when the Germans entered Gora Kalwaria the first Jew they saw was Pinio Rawski, leaving the synagogue at the very moment. And they shot him. I was also told about a Jewish boy called Mojsze Cybula - his father was the master Cybula I used to work for - who took a tiny crumble of bread when the Germans ordered the boys to work and they shot him for that, too. So I said to myself, 'My God, as a human being, not mentioning the nationality, I promise myself that if I survive the war, I'll put a symbol, so that the people will know what has happened here.' That was my obligation.

Right in the beginning the Germans confiscated all the front shops [with their display facing the street]. Jews were not allowed to trade at all. The ghetto in Gora Kalwaria was created in May 1940 [26](#). Things were already very bad at the time. They evicted the Jews from the outskirts of Gora Kalwaria, the ghetto was right in the center of the town: the Pilsudskiego and Senatorska streets, and a short section of Pijarska Street. We all had to squeeze in somehow.

My family was not evicted, because it was already ghetto where we lived on Pilsudskiego Street. Leaving the ghetto was forbidden on the death penalty. Mom and I continued to sew, we had clients coming, some Poles, they commissioned clothes and we could make some money, just to get by. Plus we still had some supplies, we were always selling something. Yes, but what kind of life it was?! Vegetation, we couldn't afford anything, just the potatoes all the time, potato soup, there was nothing else.

When the relocation to the ghetto started [in May 1940], the head of the Jewish community in Gora, Josef Lubliner, came to my Polish neighbor Rytko, and left him the Torah and all the sacred books. Rytko, as the decent man that he was, kept them safe throughout the war. When I came back after the war, he gave the books to me as his neighbor. I later sent them to Israel, to my Uncle Mosze. I simply put them in a parcel, went to Professor Tyloch [Witold Tyloch, 1927-1990,

Hebrew philologist and Bible scholar, a Warsaw University professor] to get a certificate they were not items of historical value, and sent them by post; legally, absolutely. I should think it was in the 1960s. The Torah is now in Israel, in Netanya.

In 1940 a group of ZOB [27](#) fighters came to Gora Kalwaria [Editor's note: ZOB did not yet exist at the time]: Lajbl Frydman, Horowic, and a woman. Frydman was a Bund member, Horowic was from Poalei Zion, and as for the woman, I don't know. They wanted to organize a combat team consisting of those who had served in the army to fight in self-defense. We only admitted the people we trusted. The 25 of us gathered at Aron Nusbaum's. We didn't have any weapons but the spirit was there, that we will defend ourselves. But nothing happened.

On 25th February 1941 they deported the Jews from Gora Kalwaria to the ghetto in Warsaw. My sister was already there, she hadn't come back to Gora Kalwaria with the outbreak of the war. Mom didn't even think of escaping, and me neither, I wanted to go to the ghetto with my family. The neighbors would come over and say, 'Listen, run away, go, you don't look like a Jew, maybe you'll make it.' I heard there were Jews in Magnuszew [town 25 km from Gora Kalwaria] - there was this sort of grapevine during the occupation - and that there are no deportations there. And so I basically ran away in the evening, after a talk with Mom. I don't know what happened to my family. I lost contact with them on that day. They were gone without a trace. Only my brother came to me later on. Lots of people left the ghetto then, everyone tried not to surrender.

It's twenty-something kilometers from Gora Kalwaria to Magnuszew, wintertime, so I stepped in a yard once in a while, knocked on the door, I asked, 'Hello sir, open, please, I'm a Jew, I ran away, please, help me.' If it was a good man - he'd let me in, if not - he'd say 'Go away, go away!' The Jews stayed in Magnuszew until May or June 1942. [The Magnuszew ghetto was liquidated in October 1942]. I didn't know anyone there. I basically worked as a tailor, people came in, gave me something to sew, I did it, and it was enough to get by.

Two months before the deportations they created a ghetto, put everyone in, and later moved them to Kozienice [town ca. 20 km from Gora Kalwaria, 80 km from Warsaw]. In Kozienice they selected young men and took them to Chmielew [village 5 km from Magnuszew] to dig irrigation ditches. There was a labor camp for Jews. I was one of those transported there.

We stayed there until December [1942], and later came the deportation and we went back to Magnuszew. I already had many friends there at the time, among those whom I tailored for. On our way back from Chmielew a Polish friend, Janek Cwyl, pulled me out of the column while the policemen weren't paying attention. He took me with him, he saved me.

In hiding

Somehow I managed to get through to Gora Kalwaria. I went to my neighbor, Mrs. Wasilewska. She immediately started to plan what to do. We went to Osieck [town 15 km of Gora Kalwaria] together, to a parish priest, Kuropek was his name I think. He issued a birth certificate for me. Later I got myself a kenkarta [28](#), in the name Feliks Zoladek. You had to do it with the help of friends and friends of friends. Because the priest gave me the certificate, but not the kenkarta, naturally. A friend took the certificate, went to one of those doing funny business [people who fabricated false IDs], and had them make me a kenkarta, that's how it was done. It wasn't legal.

I lived in the country, staying with different farmers and tailoring for them. One told some other he knew a tailor, and so I kept going from one person to another. Some of them knew I was a Jew, they figured it out, but well, I did survive. I stayed in one village, returned to another, kept in hiding for some time, had to run away on another occasion, one was always looking for a safe house.

I've been exceptionally lucky. They told me: 'Heniek, you don't look like a Jew at all.' I also spoke correct Polish, more or less, I mean I had the right accent, because as for the grammar a peasant wouldn't notice. I could quite safely assume I wouldn't be recognized by anyone. Plus I was a soldier, I was brave. That's why I took risks, I probably wouldn't otherwise, just like many others. You can't imagine, you could be killed any time, and not just you, but also the person harboring you. [Editor's note: On 15th October 1941 the death penalty for hiding a Jew was introduced in the General Government.]

I saw my brother [Dawid] in 1943, I don't remember if it was January or December. He came to see me in that village, Ostrowie [3 km from Magnuszew], he knew I stayed there with a farmer. I spoke with him but couldn't do anything, I couldn't! The farmer came to wake him up at 5am and told him he had to run. And so he did. He was hiding, too, he went from one farm to another, they gave him some work to do, he made horse-collars. Somewhere near Machcin some farmers gave him away, they brought him to the Germans. And the Germans killed him in the cemetery in Gora Kalwaria.

My longest single stay was in the village Podwierzbie near Zelechow [Podlez community, Garwolin district] with a Mrs. Pokorska. She was an acquaintance or a cousin of Mrs. Wasilewska [Mr. Prajs' neighbor]. Many decent people lived there generally, the Pyz family for example, the Polak family, the Marciniaks. Even the head of the village protected me. And as for the villagers, some did and some did not believe that I was a Pole. Not once did they later tell me, after the end of the war: 'It made us think, you lived here, it's a poor house, and nobody came to see you, you didn't leave for Christmas; we eyed you, a nice looking boy.' They didn't know what to think.

I went to the dances once, but later decided not to go anymore, because I was afraid. I went to the church once, too, but was afraid someone would recognize me as well. But nobody gave me away, simply Godsend. I went to that church after the war and ordered a thanksgiving mess for all the villagers.

I'm not surprised people didn't want to hide Jews. Everyone was afraid, who would risk his family's lives? You can accuse the ones who kept a Jew, exploited him financially, and later gave him away or killed him. They're murderers. But you absolutely can't blame an average Pole, I don't know if anyone would be more decent, if any Jew would be more decent.

Some Germans came to Mrs. Pokorska one day. I spoke with a Gestapo man face to face. He asked me, 'Weser das Mantel ist?' [incorrect German: 'whose coat is it?'], and I answered, 'It's not mine,' and he went, 'Du verstehst Deutsch?' [German: 'you understand German?'] It was getting bad, so I changed the subject and said, 'Sir, just take a look, everything's falling apart here, the roof, perhaps you could write a paper to the Kreishauptmann [German: district administrator]...'

That shocked the Gestapo man, he came from Silesia, he understood Polish. He saw my face didn't belong there. And she [Mrs. Pokorska] said I was her son, he asked her like a dozen times, and me as well, if I was her son. I said 'mom,' and she said 'son,' and again, 'mom, son.' I had a birth certificate in her son's name, Stanislaw Pokorski, so I said, 'I got the certificate, but I don't have the

money to go to Garwolin and have me an ID made.' He didn't even want to take a look at the ID. And so I made it somehow.

He could have just said: 'Take off your pants,' and what, the whole family would have been doomed, all the children, the mother, everyone. She was very kind. But what cunning one's got to have, and what nerve, to stay calm and not to panic. These are terrible things, these are not the things to talk about, because a dog or a cat were worth more than a human being, just because the latter was of Jewish descent.

I had to hide once, and from whom, from ours [Poles]. The frontline was already near, it had almost reached the Wisla river. NSZ [29](#) or WiN [30](#), I don't even know, sentenced me to death. I had met them by chance, as a tailor. I'd sewn for them, they'd got to like me, we'd spent all the time together. I used to refashion what they'd stolen somewhere. One of them didn't agree with the sentence, hadn't said a word to them, but later told me: 'Heniek, be careful, hide, mister, 'cause it's so and so.' So NSZ's history has a not-so-exquisite [sic] chapter - their attitude towards the Jewish nation. When the Red Army took over the area, they [the NSZ soldiers] killed two or three Jews. They all came to me later and apologized, a couple of times. So I don't really want to get back to the subject, I've forgiven them and that's it.

After the war

That village, Podwierzbie, was on the right bank of the river, so they liberated it six months earlier than the left bank. It was in the summer, in July. [Editor's note: In the summer of 1944 the Red Army stopped on the east bank of the Wisla river. At that time the Warsaw Uprising was taking place, and its commanders counted on Soviet support. The uprising ended on 2nd October with Polish defeat. The Soviet army resumed its offensive only in January 1945.]

I took a walk and was standing on a levee as I saw the first 'razvedka' [Russian: reconnaissance patrol] of the Red Army. I was overwhelmed. They asked me, 'Who are you?', and I got scared, but soon enough answered, since I spoke Russian a bit, because I'd been interned in the Soviet Union in 1939: 'Ya Yevrey, ya Yevrey, zdes spratalsya, Yevrey' [Russian: 'I'm a Jew, I've been hiding here.']. And the one in charge was of Jewish descent. He immediately came over to me, overjoyed, and started to talk to me in Yiddish. He said, 'Listen, you'll go to the martial commandant and he'll take care of you.' And so I did, and they took me to work for them.

I was a hired hand, not in the army, but on their boarding. They reached Wisla in the summer and stopped, the offensive didn't start before January. I tailored for them, and later had no obligations, so I stayed in the village, another six months or so, as a free man at last. Everyone in the village knew about me, and they'd say, 'Well, Heniek, you've made it.' And the girls were crazy about me!

I fell in love with a girl there, but I'd already had an obligation. The story is characteristic and even a bit funny. During the war Mrs. Wasilewska told me, 'Heniek, listen, I'll help you out, but remember, when the war's over, you'll marry one of my daughters.' I said, 'Mrs. Wasilewska, if I only make it through the war, why not, I like them, they're all pretty girls after all.' So I came back to Gora Kalwaria and indeed married the youngest one before long.

I'm proud I was the first one to commemorate the fallen. I took out the wicket from the synagogue fence and put it in the Jewish cemetery. It still has the bullet marks made when the Germans shot

Pinio Rawski. I hired a guy I knew named Cieplak to put a fence around the cemetery. There were four or five mazevot left. The Germans and the Poles took the rest. [The mazevot from the Jewish cemetery in Gora Kalwaria were used by the Germans as road pavement. Some of the tombstones were stolen by the Poles.]

It was a total mess. I started to put things in order at the cemetery. People reported some tombstones to me, so I collected them, transported to the cemetery and put them upright. These are pre-war mazevot, but they're not standing on their previous spots. Many of these people I knew personally, could be 80 per cent: Szternfeld, Rozenblum, Skrzypek, Mesing, I just didn't recall their burial places exactly, I hadn't attended every funeral.

The tzaddiks' tomb is real. Two of them are buried there, the founder of the dynasty, Chidusz ha-Rem, or Arie Lejb, and his grandson Sfas Emes [Chidushei ha-Rim, or Yitzchak Meir Alter, 1785-1866, the founder of the Ger dynasty; Sfas Emes, or Yehudah Arie Leib Alter, 1847-1905, Yitzchak Meir's grandson, 3rd Rebbe of the dynasty]. The ohel was demolished during the war, but they didn't get inside, so it's the actual burial place. The new ohel was put up a few years ago by the Hasidim from Israel or America, from the Gora Kalwaria [Ger] communities. They visit the tzaddik's tomb very often.

Only one member of my family survived the war, Uncle Mosze. My calculations show I've lost 36 members of my immediate family, meaning the aunts and their children. Uncle Mosze miraculously survived somewhere in the Sandomierz region. He stayed with a farmer just like me, or so they say. I never asked him. His wife was killed. After the war he remarried in Lodz. He settled with his second wife in Gora Kalwaria. In 1950 they moved to Israel together. They had a son, Dawid. Uncle Mosze became a farmer in Israel, he had some land, an orchard, he kept geese. He died in May 1972.

After the war I lived in a state owned house on the corner of Dominikanska and Polna streets. It had been a German property and the owners were gone. I received an apartment there from the municipality. When I got married, I lived there with my wife. It wasn't until 1960 that I built my own house.

We got married in 1949. My wife was called Czeslawa Maria Wasilewska. She was eight years younger than me. We were an exemplary couple, we lived together for 41 years. She was Catholic and it didn't bother me one bit. We only have one daughter, Malgonia [from Malgorzata], my wife couldn't have any more children. I never kept it secret I was a Jew, but she didn't see that Jewishness in the house. We celebrated the Catholic holidays.

My wife's parents were called Jan and Helena. My father-in-law served in the tsarist army for five years. My wife had four siblings. They lived in Gora Kalwaria. They were farmers, had some land nearby.

Back before the marriage I changed my name to Henryk at the district administration in Grojec. Why shouldn't I have a Polish first name while I'm a Pole, well yes, of Jewish descent, but still a Pole. I never felt, however, the urge to erase my nationality. It's not a shame, and it's not a distinction either, that's who I was born, that's who I am, that's who I will be.

You mustn't forget your nationality, it's no shame. Every human being has a right to live, and it doesn't make any difference if someone is black, or a Gypsy [Roma], or a German. Even against the Germans I don't hold any grudge anymore. A German named Kulc harbored me for three months, could I have any grudge against him, could I refuse to shake hands with him? I would do anything to help that man, because he helped me knowing I was a Jew. There's no place for chauvinism, nationalism, or racism in my mind.

Immediately after the war I worked on my own, and later in a tailor's co-operative. I earned pathetically little there, 2,000 zlotys. After seven years of that I started my own tailoring business. Later I completed a technical high school and took up horticulture. My father used to sell orchards, so I knew something about it, my father-in-law and my brothers-in-law were farmers and gardeners, so I thought I'd learn, and so I did. I planted some trees, and they fruited wonderfully, I had beautiful fruits. I built a house. My wife worked in a shop at first and later in the community cooperative, selling coal, and finally as a deputy manager of a restaurant in Gora Kalwaria. She then retired. She died, my poor thing, in 1990.

We have three grandchildren, Mateusz, Ola [Aleksandra], and Jula. We've worked hard, we've made our way, I've been respected and still am. I had a good life. My house is cultured, open, if a Jew comes knocking, I'll let him in, if a priest, I'll let him in as well. Our parish priest is a great friend of mine, we speak like father and son, he respects me and vice versa.

I had the Pokorski family come to Gora Kalwaria and as my grandfather had a small patch of land in Coniew near Gora Kalwaria, I made it over to them. I arranged for them to receive the Righteous Medal [31](#) from Yad Vashem [32](#). They're dead now.

I think only about 30 Jews from Gora Kalwaria survived the war. They returned but fled soon. They moved mainly to Israel, but also to the Scandinavian countries: Sweden, Denmark, Holland. They welcomed Jews. The situation in Poland was not very good for the Jews at first, there was the Kielce pogrom [33](#) right in 1946, and later the events of 1968 [34](#).

Why, it's horrible that a supposedly socialist country makes up some myths about a fifth column and so on [In his speech on 12th June 1968 Wladyslaw Gomulka, head of the Polish Communist party, accused the persons of Jewish descent of pro-Israeli bias and stigmatized that attitude as a betrayal of the state, using the phrase 'the fifth column'; the term 'fifth column,' coined during the Spanish Civil War, was also being used to refer to the German saboteurs during the Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia and Poland]. And yet everyone, Jews and non-Jews, was working, creating, helping to build. How could one order the people of Jewish descent to leave the country? Is that the way it should be? So one shouldn't blame those who left. I never had the intention to leave.

I do have a grudge against the ones I knew in the Gora Kalwaria municipality. They had me come over to the office and declare if I was objective, if I was a good Pole. I told them, 'What's that supposed to mean, what do I declare? You know me very well, I have fought in the Polish army, I've been wounded, I've paid with blood, what do you want from me?' I didn't even say good bye, turned my back on them and left. I think it was sheer stupidity, what is this 'good Pole,' I live here, I'm a citizen, they know me, if they have anything against me, there are penalties, judges. Are all the Poles good?

Recent years

As I've served in the army, after the war I was a member of the ZBoWiD, Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy [35](#). In the 1990s ZBoWiD was transformed into the Veterans Union and the Disabled Soldiers Union. I'm a member of the latter now, of the Piaseczno branch. I've recently received a medal, the Disabled Soldiers Union gold medal, for taking part in the Olszewo battle, where I was wounded.

I've been a member of the TSKZ [36](#) for 50 years now I think, ever since its creation. I go to the seniors club in Warsaw once or twice a week when the weather is fine. Very rarely in the wintertime. I have my friends there: Kawka, Janowski, Wajnryb, Mrs. Szymanska, Mrs. Kaczmarska, all of them elder people, some are even older than me. We tell each other tall tales, what comes, our life stories, we talk of our youth and the later years.

I've been to Israel twice, in 1965 and 1990. Nothing special about the trip, I asked for a visa and got it, they refused the first time but later changed their mind. Jerusalem was still divided in 1965, so I couldn't get to Bethlehem, to the tomb [Rachel's tomb just outside Bethlehem], the Wailing Wall was also on the other side, but you could more or less see it. I don't know if a million Jews lived there at the time, maybe a million and a half, not more. The immigration increased after the 1967 war [37](#).

What's with the anti-Semitism in Poland, against whom, as the Jews are gone?! They make up their own Jews. Whenever I talk to such people, I say, 'Okay, well, come on, show me a Jewish shop here, show me people speaking the Jewish language, well, let's go, I want to see, if you say Jews rule the country, show me those Jewish rulers. You idiot, they call everyone who's objective a Jew.' I have a friend, and because we like each other a lot, they say he's a Jew.

It's like that: there are those anti-Semitic hooligans on the one hand, you know - oh, a Jew! and that's it, and on the other hand there are the prewar intellectuals, the Endeks, whole families, the Giertychs, Dmowski, it's a strong group, anti-Semitic since always and that's the bottom-line, no way to persuade them. You have to be liberal and objective, you have to think reasonably. That's how I raised my daughter, that's how she raises my grandchildren.

The center of Gora Kalwaria, the streets Dominikanska, Pijarska, were inhabited by Jews. Poles lived mostly on the outskirts. There was a whole block of tzaddik houses on Pijarska Street. Nowadays there's a shop of the community cooperative in the tzaddik's house. There's also the Alter Synagogue. The Jews don't own it officially, but you can get inside. It stands empty. It's both Jewish and non-Jewish, half Jewish and half non-Jewish. The Hasidim [38](#) coming from Israel visit the cemetery, the synagogue, and the tzaddik's house.

A man called Karpman and I have the keys to the cemetery. If there's anything to be done in the cemetery, we hire a person and it's fixed. The fence was funded by the Nissenbaum Foundation. Excursion groups come here, plenty of them, to visit their grandparents, great-grandparents, because many Israelis have Polish origins. They often come over to see me, ask me to give them some information, and I speak with them with pleasure. But I don't take care about them that much anymore, I don't have the strength. It's great anyway, that my head still works, that I still have the memory.

Glossary

1 Gora Kalwaria

Located near Warsaw, and known in Yiddish as Ger, Gora Kalwaria was the seat of the well-known dynasty of the tzaddiks. The adherents of the tzaddik of Ger were one of the most numerous and influential Hasidic groups in the Polish lands. The dynasty was founded by Meir Rotemberg Alter (1789-1866). The tzaddiks of Ger on the one hand stressed the importance of religious studies and promoted Orthodox religiosity. On the other hand they were active in the political sphere. Today tzaddiks from Ger live in Israel and the US.

2 Poalei Zion (the Jewish Social-Democratic Workers' Party Workers of Zion)

In Yiddish 'Yidishe Socialistish-Demokratishe Arbeiter Partei Poale Syon.' A political party formed in 1905 in the Kingdom of Poland, and operating throughout the Polish state from 1918. The party's main aim was to create an independent socialist Jewish state in Palestine. In the short term, Poalei Zion postulated cultural and national autonomy for the Jews in Poland, and improved labor and living conditions of Jewish hired laborers. In 1920, during a conference in Vienna, the party split, forming the Right Poalei Zion (the Jewish Socialist Workers' Party Workers of Zion), which became part of the Socialist Workers' International and the World Zionist Organization, and the Left Poalei Zion (the Jewish Social-Democratic Workers' Party Workers of Zion), the radical minority, which sympathized with the Bolsheviks. The Left Poalei Zion placed more emphasis on socialist postulates. Key activists: I. Schiper (Right PZ), L. Holenderski, I. Lew (Left PZ); paper: Arbeiter Welt. Both fractions had their own youth organizations: Right PZ: Dror and Freiheit; Left PZ - Jugnt. Left PZ was weaker than Right PZ; only towards the end of the 1930s did it start to form coalitions with other socialist and Zionist parties. In 1937 Left PZ joined the World Zionist Organization. During WWII both fractions were active in underground politics and the resistance movement in the ghettos, in particular the youth organizations. After 1945 both parties joined the Central Jewish Committee in Poland. In 1947 they reunited to form the strongest legally active Jewish party in Poland (with 20,000 members). In 1950 Poalei Zion was dissolved by the communist authorities.

3 3rd May Constitution

Constitutional treaty from 1791, adopted during the four-year Sejm by the patriotic party as a result of a compromise with the royalist party. The constitution was an attempt to redress the internal relations in Poland after the first partition (1772). It created the basis of the structure of modern Poland as a constitutional monarchy. In the first article the constitution guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion, although Catholicism remained the ruling religion. Members of other religions were assured 'governmental care.' The constitution instituted the division of powers, restricted the privileges of the nobility, granted far-ranging rights to townspeople and assured governmental protection to peasants. Four years later, in 1795, Poland finally lost its independence and was fully divided up between its three powerful neighbors: Russia, Prussia and Austria.

4 Skif (Sozialistischer Kinder Verband, Yid

: Socialist Children Union): A children organization of the Bund party. It was founded in the 1920s

on the initiative of Cukunft (Bund's youth organization) activists. The organization aimed at educating the future party members. Children were looked after by parents committees. In the 1930s SKIF had a couple thousand members in more than 100 places in Poland. Dayrooms, trips, and summer camps were organized for the children. SKIF existed also in the Warsaw ghetto during the war. It was reactivated after the war, but was of marginal importance. SKIF was dissolved in 1949, together with most of the Jewish political and social organizations.

5 Bund

The short name of the General Jewish Union of Working People in Lithuania, Poland and Russia, Bund means Union in Yiddish. The Bund was a social democratic organization representing Jewish craftsmen from the Western areas of the Russian Empire. It was founded in Vilnius in 1897. In 1906 it joined the autonomous fraction of the Russian Social Democratic Working Party and took up a Menshevist position. After the Revolution of 1917 the organization split: one part was anti-Soviet power, while the other remained in the Bolsheviks' Russian Communist Party. In 1921 the Bund dissolved itself in the USSR, but continued to exist in other countries.

6 Bund leaders in prewar times

the most eminent Bund activists of that period were Wiktor Alter, Henryk Erlich, Jakub Pat, Szmul Zygielbojm, and Maurycy Orzech. They led the Bund's social organizations, published the party press, were members of the local self-government bodies. Wiktor Alter (1890-1943), member of the Socialist International executive committee, Warsaw councilor, trade unions and cooperative movement activist, journalist, editor of the magazine 'Mysl Socjalistyczna' ('Socialist Thought'). He was shot in a Soviet prison. Henryk Erlich (1882-1943), lawyer, Warsaw councilor, member of the Jewish Community Council, editor of the magazines 'Glos Bundu' ('The Bund Voice') and 'Folks Cajtung' ('People's Journal'), member of the Socialist International executive committee. Arrested by the Soviet authorities, he committed suicide in prison. Jakub Pat (1890-1966), contributor to 'Folks Tsaytung', TsIshO (Central Jewish School Organization) activist, author of language and literature handbooks for the Jewish schools, he also wrote reportages and short stories. From 1939 he was still an active Bund member while on emigration in the USA. Maurycy Orzech (1891-1943), publisher and co-founder of many newspapers and magazines ('Folks Tsaytung', 'Arbeter Shtime' ['The Workers' Voice'], 'Glos Bundu' among others), Warsaw councilor, member of the Jewish Community Council and the National Trade Unions Council. At the outbreak of the war he was in Lithuania, after being expelled on the Germans' demand he lived in Warsaw. He was active in the Jewish Social Self-Help and the Anti-Fascist Bloc. He died in 1943, probably during a failed attempt to escape to Romania. Szmul Zygielbojm (1895-1943), secretary-general of the Jewish Section of the Central Trade Unions Board, Warsaw and Lodz councilor, publisher of the 'Arbeter Fragen' ['Workers Affairs'] magazine. A member of the National Council of the Polish government-in-exile in London. He committed suicide on 13th May 1943 at the news of the fall of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, protesting against the Allied passiveness towards the Holocaust.

7 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.

8 Peretz, Isaac Leib (1852-1915)

Author and poet writing in Yiddish, one of the fathers and central figures of modern Yiddish literature, researcher of Jewish folklore. Born in Zamosc, he had both a religious and a secular education (he took courses in bookkeeping and studied law in Warsaw). Initially he wrote in Polish and Hebrew. His debut [in Yiddish] is considered to be the poem *Monish*, (1888, *Di yidishe Folksbibliotek*). From 1890 he lived in Warsaw. Peretz was an advocate of Yiddishism, and attended a conference on the subject of the Yiddish language in Jewish culture held in Czernowitz (1908). His most widely read works are his novellas, which he wrote at first in the positivist style and later in the modernist vein. In his work he often used folk motifs from the culture of Eastern European Jews (*Khasidish*, 1908). His best known works include *Hurban beit tzaddik* (The Ruin of the Tzaddik's House, 1903), *Di Goldene Keyt* (The Golden Chain, 1906). During World War I he was involved in bringing help to the victims of war. He died of a heart attack.

9 Sholem Aleichem (pen name of Shalom Rabinovich (1859-1916))

Yiddish author and humorist, a prolific writer of novels, stories, feuilletons, critical reviews, and poem in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian. He also contributed regularly to Yiddish dailies and weeklies. In his writings he described the life of Jews in Russia, creating a gallery of bright characters. His creative work is an alloy of humor and lyricism, accurate psychological and details of everyday life. He founded a literary Yiddish annual called *Di Yidishe Folksbibliotek* (The Popular Jewish Library), with which he wanted to raise the despised Yiddish literature from its mean status and at the same time to fight authors of trash literature, who dragged Yiddish literature to the lowest popular level. The first volume was a turning point in the history of modern Yiddish literature. Sholem Aleichem died in New York in 1916. His popularity increased beyond the Yiddish-speaking public after his death. Some of his writings have been translated into most European languages and his plays and dramatic versions of his stories have been performed in many countries. The dramatic version of *Tevey the Dairyman* became an international hit as a musical (*Fiddler on the Roof*) in the 1960s.

10 An-ski, Szymon (pen name of Szlojme Zajnwel Rapaport) (1863-1920)

Writer, ethnographer, socialist activist. Born in a village near Vitebsk. In his youth he was an advocate of *haskalah*, but later joined the radical movement *Narodnaya Vola*. Under threat of arrest he left Russia in 1892 but returned there in 1905. From 1911-14 he led an ethnographic expedition researching the folklore of the Jews of Podolye and Volhynia. During the war he organized committees bringing aid to Jewish victims of the conflict and pogroms. In 1918 he became involved in organizing cultural life in Vilnius, as a co-founder of the Union of Jewish Writers and Journalists and the Jewish Ethnographic Society. Two years before his death he moved to Warsaw. He is the author of the Bund party's anthem, '*Di shvue*' (Yid. oath). The participation of the Bund in the Revolution of 1905 influenced An-ski's decision to write in Yiddish. In his later work he used elements of Jewish legends collected during his ethnographic expedition and his experiences from WWI. His most famous work is *The Dybbuk* (which to this day remains one of the most popular Yiddish works for the stage). An-ski's entire literary and scientific oeuvre was published in Warsaw in 1920-25 as a 15-volume edition.

11 Asch, Sholem (1880-1957)

Polish born American novelist and dramatist, who wrote in Yiddish, Hebrew, English and German. He was born in Kutno, into an Orthodox family and received a traditional religious education; in other fields he was self-taught. In 1914 he immigrated to the USA. Towards the end of his life he lived in Israel. He died in London. His literary debut came in 1900 with his story 'Moyshele.' His best known plays include 'Got fun Nekomeh' (The God of Vengeance, 1906), 'Kiddush ha-Shem' (1919), and the comedies 'Yihus' (Origin, 1909), and 'Motke the Thief' (1916). He also wrote a trilogy reflecting his opinion that Christianity should be regarded as the logical continuation of Judaism: 'Der Man fun Netseres' (1943; The Nazarene), The Apostle (1943), and Mary (1949).

12 Bergelson, Dovid (1884-1952)

Yiddish writer, arrested and shot dead together with several other Yiddish writers, rehabilitated posthumously.

13 Der Moment

Daily newspaper published in Warsaw from 1910-39 by Yidishe Folkspartei in Poyln. It was one of the most widely read Jewish daily papers in Poland, published in Yiddish with a circulation of 100,000 copies.

14 Central Union of the Jewish Craftsmen of the Republic of Poland

a social organization founded in 1921. One of the co-founders and its president until 1930 was Adam Czerniakow, the head of the Warsaw Judenrat during the war. The Union's goals were: defending its members' interests in the Crafts Chambers, Apprentice Departments, and the guilds, organizing cooperative movement and loan funds, legal counseling. The Union had its headquarters in Warsaw, 493 local branches, and 94,000 members. It published 'Handwerker un Industri - Tsaytung' from 1925 to 1927 and 'Handwerker Tsaytung' from 1927 to 1938. The Union was part of the National Minorities Bloc in the 1928 elections.

15 Hitler's rise to power

In the German parliamentary elections in January 1933, the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) won one- third of the votes. On 30th January 1933 the German president swore in Adolf Hitler, the party's leader, as chancellor. On 27th February 1933 the building of the Reichstag (the parliament) in Berlin was burned down. The government laid the blame with the Bulgarian communists, and a show trial was staged. This served as the pretext for ushering in a state of emergency and holding a re-election. It was won by the NSDAP, which gained 44% of the votes, and following the cancellation of the communists' votes it commanded over half of the mandates. The new Reichstag passed an extraordinary resolution granting the government special legislative powers and waiving the constitution for 4 years. This enabled the implementation of a series of moves that laid the foundations of the totalitarian state: all parties other than the NSDAP were dissolved, key state offices were filled by party luminaries, and the political police and the apparatus of terror swiftly developed.

16 Hahalutz

Hebrew for pioneer, it stands for a Zionist organization that prepared young people for emigration to Palestine. It was founded at the beginning of the 20th century in Russia and began operating in Poland in 1905, later also spread to the USA and other countries. Between the two wars its aim was to unite all the Zionist youth organizations. Members of Hahalutz were sent on hakhshara, where they received vocational training. Emphasis was placed chiefly on volunteer work, the ability to live and work in harsh conditions, and military training. The organization had its own agricultural farms in Poland. On completing hakhshara young people received British certificates entitling them to immigrate to Palestine. Around 26,000 young people left Poland under this scheme in 1925-26. In 1939 Hahalutz had some 100,000 members throughout Europe. In World War II it operated as a conspiratorial organization. It was very active in culture and education after the war. The Polish arm was disbanded in 1949.

17 : Zionist Organization in Poland (also General Zionists, General Zionist Organization)

The strongest Zionist federation in prewar Poland, connected with the World Zionist Organization. Its primary goal was the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, by means of waking and strengthening the national identity of the Jews, promoting the emigration to Palestine, and colonizing it. The organization also fought for national and cultural autonomy of the Polish Jews, i.e. the creation of a Jewish self-government and introducing Hebrew education. The Kingdom of Poland Autonomous Bureau of the General Zionists existed since 1906. At first it was headed by Jozua Heszal, followed by Meir Klumel and, since 1920, Icchak Grünbaum. The General Zionists took part in all the local and national elections. In 1928 the party split into factions: Et Liwnot, Al ha-Mizmar, and the Revisionists. The groups grew more and more hostile towards each other. The General Zionists influenced most of the Jewish mass organizations, particularly the economic and the social and cultural ones. After World War II the General Zionists tradition was referred to by the Polish Jewish party Ichud. It was dissolved in January 1950.

18 Grinbaum, Icchak (1879-1970)

Barrister, politician and Zionist activist. Born in Warsaw, he studied medicine and law. In 1905 he attended the 7th Zionist Congress as a delegate. Co-founder of Tarbut. He was the leader of a radical faction of the Zionist Organization in Poland, and deputy to the Polish Sejm (Parliament) from 1919-1932. In 1933 he immigrated to Palestine. Grinbaum was a member of the governing bodies of the Jewish Agency (until 1951). During World War II he founded the Committee to Save the Polish Jews, and acting through diplomatic channels strove to have immigration restrictions on refugees in allied countries lifted. In 1948-49 he was a minister in Israel's Provisional Government.

19 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.

20 ONR

A Polish nationalist organization with extreme anti-Semitic views. Founded in April 1934, its members were drawn from the Nationalist Democratic Party. It supported fascism, its program advocated the full assimilation of Slavic minorities in Poland, and forced Jews to leave the country by curbing their civic rights and implementing an economic boycott that would prevent them from making a living. The ONR exploited calls for an economic boycott during the severe economic crisis of the 1930s to drum up support among the masses and develop opposition to Pilsudski's government. The ONR drew most of its support from young urban people and students. Following a series of anti-Semitic attacks, the ONR was dissolved by the government (July 1940), but the group continued its activities illegally with the support of extremist nationalist groups.

21 Endeks

Name formed from the initials of a right-wing party active in Poland during the inter-war period (ND - 'en-de'). Narodowa Demokracja [National Democracy] was founded by Roman Dmowski. Its members and supporters, known as 'Endeks,' often held anti-Semitic views.

22 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.

23 Warsaw Uprising 1944

The term refers to the Polish uprising between 1st August and 2nd October 1944, an armed uprising orchestrated by the underground Home Army and supported by the civilian population of Warsaw. It was justified by political motives: the calculation that if the domestic arm of the Polish government in exile took possession of the city, the USSR would be forced to recognize Polish sovereignty. The Allies rebuffed requests for support for the campaign. The Polish underground

state failed to achieve its aim. Losses were vast: around 20,000 insurrectionists and 200,000 civilians were killed and 70% of the city destroyed.

24 September Campaign 1939

Armed struggle in defense of Poland's independence from 1st September to 6th October 1939 against German and, from 17th September, also Soviet aggression; the start of World War II. The German plan of aggression ('Fall Weiss') assumed all-out, lightning warfare (Blitzkrieg). The Polish plan of defense planned engagement of battle in the border region (a length of some 1,600 km), and then organization of resistance further inside the country along subsequent lines of defense (chiefly along the Narew, Vistula and San) until an allied (French and British) offensive on the western front. Poland's armed forces, commanded by the Supreme Commander, Marshal Edward Rydz-Smigly, numbered some 1 m soldiers. Poland defended itself in isolation; on 3rd September Britain and France declared war on Germany, yet did not undertake offensive action on a larger scale. Following a battle on the border the main Polish line of defense was broken, and the Polish forces retreated in battles on the Vistula and the San. On 8th September, the German army reached Warsaw, and on 12th September Lvov. From 14th-16th September the Germans closed their ring on the Bug. On 9th September Polish divisions commanded by General Tadeusz Kutrzeba went into battle with the Germans on the Bzura, but after initial successes were surrounded and largely smashed (by 22nd September), although some of the troops managed to get to Warsaw. Defense was continued by isolated centers of resistance, where the civilian population cooperated with the army in defense. On 17th September Soviet forces numbering more than 800,000 men crossed Poland's eastern border, broke through the defense of the Polish forces and advanced nearly as far as the Narew-Bug-Vistula- San line. In the night of 17th-18th September the president of Poland, the government and the Supreme Commander crossed the Polish-Romanian border and were interned. Lvov capitulated on 22nd September (surrendered to Soviet units), Warsaw on 28th September, Modlin on 29th September, and Hel on 2nd October.

25 Annexation of Eastern Poland

According to a secret clause in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact defining Soviet and German territorial spheres of influence in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union occupied Eastern Poland in September 1939. In early November the newly annexed lands were divided up between the Ukrainian and the Belarusian Soviet Republics.

26 Ghetto in Gora Kalwaria

It was created in February 1940. About 3,500 Jews were kept in it, inhabitants of Gora Kalwaria, Gostynin, and the surrounding villages, as well as expellees from Lodz, Aleksandrow, Pabianice, Sierpc, Wloclawek, and Kalisz. On 25th February 1941 the Jews from the Gora Kalwaria ghetto were deported to the Warsaw ghetto. They shared the same fate, were murdered in 1942 and 1943 in Treblinka death camp.

27 ZOB (Jewish Fighting Organization)

An armed organization formed in the Warsaw ghetto; it took on its final form (uniting Zionist, He-Halutz and Bund youth organizations) in October 1942. ZOB also functioned in other towns and

cities in occupied Poland. It offered military training, issued appeals, procured arms for its soldiers, planned the defense of the Warsaw ghetto, and ultimately led the fighting in the ghetto on two occasions, the uprisings in January and April 1943.

28 Kenkarta

(German: Kennkarte - ID card) confirmed the identity and place of residence of its holder. It bore a photograph, a thumbprint, and the address and signature of its holder. It was the only document of its type issued to Poles during the Nazi occupation.

29 National Armed Forces (NSZ)

A conspiratorial military organization founded in Poland in 1942. The main goal of the NSZ was to fight for the independence of Poland and new western borders along the Oder-Neisse line. The NSZ's program stressed nationalism, rejected fascism and communism, and propounded the creation of a Catholic Polish State. The NSZ program was strongly anti-Semitic. In October 1943 the NSZ had some 72,500 members. The NSZ was preparing for an armed uprising, assuming that the Red Army would occupy all the Polish lands. It provided support for military intelligence, conducted supply campaigns, freed prisoners, and engaged in armed combat with divisions of the People's Army and Soviet partisans. NSZ divisions (approx. 2,000 soldiers) took part in the Warsaw Uprising. In November 1944 a part of the NSZ was transformed into the National Military Union (NZW), which was active underground in late 1945/early 1946 (scores of divisions numbering 2,000-4,000 soldiers), fighting the NKVD, UB (Security Bureau) task forces, and divisions of the UPA. In 1947 most of its cells were smashed, although some groups remained underground until the mid-1950s.

30 'Wolnosc i Niezawislosc' ('Freedom and Independence')

A conspiratorial organization founded in September 1945 by Colonel Jan Rzepecki after the dissolving of the Armed Forces Delegate's Office at Home (command of the underground army). WiN was to be a social and political movement defending the rights of the Polish citizens and Poland's independence. It demanded that free national elections be called and the freedom of press and of association be restituted. In 1946 WiN subjugated to the Polish government-in-exile in London and declared fighting the communist terror machine its primary goal. WiN operated throughout Poland. At the end of 1945 it had 30,000 members. The communist authorities were fighting it fiercely, arrestments were gradually diminishing the organization. WiN conducted various activities: intelligence and counter-intelligence (collecting information on the army, the UB [Security Office, the secret police], and so on), information and propaganda, self-defense (including liberating political prisoners), guerrilla warfare. Captured WiN members were sentenced in political show trials. Since 1948 WiN was totally infiltrated by the UB and eventually dissolved in 1952.

31 Righteous Among the Nations

A medal and honorary title awarded to people who during the Holocaust selflessly and for humanitarian reasons helped Jews. It was instituted in 1953. Awarded by a special commission headed by a justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, which works in the Yad Vashem National Remembrance Institute in Jerusalem. During the ceremony the persons recognized receive a diploma and a medal with the inscription "Whoever saves one life, saves the entire world" and

plant a tree in the Avenue of the Righteous on the Remembrance Hill in Jerusalem, which is marked with plaques bearing their names. Since 1985 the Righteous receive honorary citizenship of Israel. So far over 20,000 people have been distinguished with the title, including almost 6,000 Poles.

32 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'.

33 Kielce Pogrom

On 4th July 1946 the alleged kidnapping of a Polish boy led to a pogrom in which 42 people were killed and over 40 wounded. The pogrom also prompted other anti-Jewish incidents in Kielce region. These events caused mass emigrations of Jews to Israel and other countries.

34 Anti-Zionist campaign in Poland

From 1962-1967 a campaign got underway to sack Jews employed in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the army and the central administration. The background to 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 a lack of loyalty to the state and of publicly demonstrating their enthusiasm for Israel's victory in the Six- Day-War. This address marked the start of purges among journalists and 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. After 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.

35 Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (ZBWD, Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację)

Combatant organization founded in 1949 as the result of the forced union of 11 combatant organizations functioning since 1945. Until 1989 it remained politically and organizationally subordinate to the PZPR. In 1990 ZBoWiD was reborn as the Union of Combatants of the Polish Republic and Former Political Prisoners (Związek Kombatantów RP i Byłych Więźniów Politycznych). ZBoWiD brought together some Polish World War II veterans, prisoners from Nazi camps, soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces (WP, Wojsko Polskie), and officers of the Security Office (UB, Urząd Bezpieczeństwa) and Civil Militia (MO, Milicja Obywatelska), as well as widows and orphans of others killed in action or murdered. For political reasons, many combatants were not accepted into ZBoWiD, including some AK (Home Army) soldiers (especially before 1956). It had several hundred thousand members (1970 approx. 330,000; 1986 almost 800,000).

36 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.

37 Six-Day-War

(Hebrew: Milhemet Sheshet Hayamim), also known as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Six Days War, or June War, was fought between Israel and its Arab neighbors Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. It began when Israel launched a preemptive war on its Arab neighbors; by its end Israel controlled the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. The results of the war affect the geopolitics of the region to this day.

38 Hasid

Follower of the Hasidic movement, a Jewish mystic movement founded in the 18th century that reacted against Talmudic learning and maintained that God's presence was in all of one's surroundings and that one should serve God in one's every deed and word. The movement provided spiritual hope and uplifted the common people. There were large branches of Hasidic movements and schools throughout Eastern Europe before World War II, each following the teachings of famous scholars and thinkers. Most had their own customs, rituals and life styles. Today there are substantial Hasidic communities in New York, London, Israel and Antwerp.