

# Janina Duda

Interviewer: Marta Cobel-Tokarska

Date of interview: September 2004 – January 2005

Ms. Duda lives alone, in a large apartment in Mokotow, an elegant district of Warsaw. She is a very energetic person, but quite reserved. When I met with her several times, I had a feeling she was not being completely open with me. She did not want to talk about some of the facts in her life, while she described others in a very vague manner.

Although Ms. Duda has an excellent memory (especially for names), her story is sometimes unclear, her sentences are unfinished.

My grandfather, my mother's father, Noter Lapidus, was a well known person in Bialystok [200 km east of Warsaw]. He lived on Fabryczna Street 5. His apartment was quite large. He worked in the Tryling company. It's a textile company. I don't know what he did exactly, but until the end of his life he received 5 zloty a month. The owners of this Tryling company were probably Grandfather's distant family. And they took on this obligation to send him money. It wasn't very much. Practically nothing. Before the war, for example, a teacher or a policeman used to make about 180 zloty a month. And this was 5 zloty a month... It was nothing.

The Lapidus family was a very well known family in Bialystok, a bourgeois-intelligentsia family. Many physicians, members of free professions [that is, they graduated, had higher education]. There were no special signs of piety at Grandfather's house. I only remember a large portrait, or rather a collection of photographs: Grandfather and all his children. And a portrait, you could have hung it in some nobleman's house, it would have fit there perfectly. They observed traditions, the basic religious forms, but there were no visible signs. They all dressed normally.

Grandfather was married to a woman from the Kanel family. I remember the early 1920s when, as a little child, I was sitting on my father's shoulders and I witnessed the death of my grandmother, whom I don't remember, I don't even know what her name was. But I do remember that Grandmother was a malicious old woman, she hated my mother, like a typical mother-in-law. And what was my mother to do? She simply hated Grandmother.

I didn't know Grandfather's siblings, but I did know Grandmother's. She had a brother, who was a wealthy man, he operated a textile company, textile warehouses. This was in downtown Bialystok; on the corner of Sienkiewicza Street next to Bialka [Biala river]. And this was the only brother. I don't remember what his name was. Grandmother's brother's son was a pediatrician, his wife was an optometrist, and they had a daughter named Natasza.



Natasza's brother-in-law survived the war, he lives in Warsaw until this day... I mean he used to live there, because I doubt he's still alive. I have his name, Zlatin Szymanski. We met in Warsaw once, he visited me, we talked. I asked him how he managed to survive and he said that he left the ghetto in Bialystok [1](#) and went to the countryside and survived, just like that. He spoke perfect Polish, he didn't wear sidelocks, he was a completely secular person. However, his entire family died.

In 1933 when I was in Bialystok - Grandfather was still alive - I always had to drink some vodka with him. He died several years later, before the war. He lived to be 94 years. A fantastic guy. He said he married Grandmother, because the match had been made, but he was in love with a different woman, he liked the other one more, but then the kids were born... Grandpa was such a great guy!

My other grandmother, Father's mother, was Sara Perelmut. Her maiden name was Bortner. I remember Grandmother wore a wig. She wrote beautifully in Russian. [Editor's note: On lands under Russian partition [2](#) the local residents used, depending on their nationality, Polish, Yiddish and Ukrainian; knowledge of Russian was also common.] These Jewish families paid a lot of attention to education. It's a Jewish trait, after all. When you talk about Jews, you say they're clever, talented, intelligent - it is so, but, after all, that's two thousand years of learning. A habit of learning. And you can see that pays off, from generation to generation. I didn't know Grandfather Perelmut. I know nothing about him. Not even his first name...

One part of the Bortner family lived in Warsaw and the second part in Lodz [130 km south west of Warsaw]. One of these Bortner cousins from Warsaw was in the Red Army, he fought in the Stalingrad battle [3](#); he later returned home [to Poland] as an officer. He changed his last name to Tagori. He was a lieutenant colonel and got married in Lublin to a Polish woman, Zosia, a very pretty girl. In 1948 he left for Israel with his wife, as part of Haganah [3](#), 'the fight for Israel.' These are interesting things, how people's fates become twisted. He took part in the battle for Haifa. He sent me, in Hebrew, of course, so I can't read it, a story about his heroic deeds [published in 1954 in the newspaper 'Ha-Mekaped' in Israel].

They later left Israel and broke up. He went to Paris. Although he was a musician, a saxophonist, a composer, in the military, there he switched to construction work, renovations, because that was very profitable. And he made it. He bought a castle near Nice and the title of baron. He married a French woman, Denise. They had two children. But he's dead by now.

Father's name was Lejb, Lejb Perelmut. I don't know when he was born. And the same with Mother, I don't know. You can see what Father looked like in the photographs: mustache, blond hair, he was an ordinary man, he dressed normally.

My first childhood memories are of Fabryczna 35 in Bialystok, the four-room apartment on the 1st floor. It was a detached house, but one room was taken up by a large weaving loom, where Father worked at home. My toys were rags from that weaving loom. Later, Father became an accountant. How this happened, I don't know. He wrote beautifully, he kept books normally. Anyway, the tax police would go around and check if you weren't cheating in your accounting. I remember Father got busted once and had to give a bribe.

I remember that, as a child, when I was being naughty, Father wanted to beat me with a towel. And in Bialystok there was this garden in front of the house, with flowers and lilacs. There was a Persian lilac, very dark, it was a tree. When my Father chased me, I'd climb up on that tree. There was a seat there, so I'd sit, dangle my legs and just wave at Father. Or I'd hide under the bed, so he wouldn't be able to catch me. And I remember this one time, I must have been very small then, when Father carried me home from Grandfather's house. I remember that. I sat on his shoulders and he carried me. Oh, God, Father was such a good man as well.

Mother's first name was Estera, her maiden name was Lapidus. Estera, but at home, among family, she was called Esfir, from Russian [5](#). Mother stayed at home, she was a housewife. She was a very intelligent, wise woman. When I remember my adolescence and my behavior and Mother's calmness among all this, she never reproached me, I'm at a loss for words about her wisdom. Because I know what I did and how I stirred things up. She was very tolerant. I don't know how she could have been so tolerant to me. I wouldn't have been able to be like that.

In some ways I resemble my mother, my nose, hair color - Mother was also a dark blonde. Father was almost white, he had very fair hair and I don't know how it was that my sister Dina was red haired. Mother attended a Russian gymnasium [lyceum], I don't know if she ever graduated. And she was a bit involved in political activity in her youth. Once she told me how she even transported guns from Warsaw to Bialystok in her youth. [Editor's note: the sister of Mrs. Duda's mother, Bluma, was involved in a Russian revolutionary group, it is possible that Mrs. Duda's mother helped her.]

Yes, mother was a bit different from the rest of the family. She was also very considerate to Father. Once, this was already in Lublin [in the 1930s], Father was nervous, he had lost his job, there were bankruptcies and he'd sometimes raise his voice at Mother... And I remember I'd say to her, 'Mommy, why don't you talk back to Father?' And she'd say, 'And who is this poor Jew supposed to talk to?' So - I am the wife, I have to understand him and help him in this situation. Father and Mother died in Bialystok - during the Holocaust. I don't know if they died of hunger, or how else.

Mother had many siblings. First her sister Bluma, whom, of course, I never knew. I was named Bluma after her. [Editor's note: One of the most common practices is to name a child to honor a relative. Sephardic Jews name their children freely after both living and deceased relatives. However, Ashkenazim rarely name children after living relatives.] In 1905, after the revolution [6](#) she was dragged out of her home, Grandfather's apartment, Fabryczna 5. And they shot her in front of the house.

One brother studied painting in Petersburg. I don't know what his name was. There was one more Lapidus brother. He was married to a widow of a Siberian [a man deported by authorities to Siberia], he was the father of a son named Moszek and he had a stepson, whose last name was Lubnicki. This Lubnicki later became a professor and taught philosophy at Maria Curie-Sklodowska University in Lublin.

Then there were also the sisters, Berta [Jewish name] or Basia [Russian name] and Emma Domeradzka, and then Anna Wolfson. That's the one at whose house I stayed in Bialystok [in 1935] and who helped me. And one more sister: Zlata [Russian name] or Zina [Jewish name]. Her last name, after she got married, was Mroczkowska. Those were all the sisters.

Father's family came from Brest [200 km east of Warsaw]. They were more of a working class family. They all worked in the textile industry. In 1920, when there was a revolutionary committee in Bialystok [cf. Polish-Soviet War (1919-21)] [7](#) the three of them, two of Father's sisters and the youngest brother left for Russia with the Red Army [in 1920]. This youngest brother's name was Filip. He died in the battle of Kursk [8](#) in 1941. His son Aron lived in Minsk, in Belarus.

My aunts, father's sisters were Genowefa, Fela, Ania and Mania. Mania married Naum Pinski. Ania's husband was Natan Lapidus. Natan also fought the Germans, as a senior lieutenant. He fought like the entire family did. None of them are alive. I met them in 1941, when Belarus was under Russian [Soviet] occupation. That was when Father went to see his family, whom he hadn't seen for so many years. He was the oldest. And I also went there, to Russia [the Soviet Union], right before the war. And that was when I met one aunt, the second one, both are dead now, and my uncle Filip, who was in love with the Soviet Union. They all worked.

There were no losses in the family, because of Stalin's regime [nobody died during the Holocaust]. And he explained to me that he had a job, that he appreciated how they cared for workers, how they cared for people. When I got there, the first thing he did was show me Lenin, there in that mausoleum [Red Square, Moscow, the present stone mausoleum was built in 1929-1930, architect: A.V.Shchusev], then we went to see the Soviet officer's house, which was a very beautiful building [Editor's note: probably this building is a simple lodging house for state officers]. And he showed me Moscow.

The oldest of Father's sisters, Genowefa, whom my father married off, gave her a dowry, well, Genowefa and her husband died in the Holocaust.

And Father had one more sister. That was yet another branch of our family in Lublin. This sister's name was Fela. Fela married a Goldberg. And my father had the brother in Bialystok, who was a weaver, he was very poor. But I wasn't in touch with them: with Aunt Fela or this uncle from Bialystok. I was simply young, full of myself, and so on. I was closer to Mother's family, because of the age of the children, my cousins. But all the family of my Mother died. I don't know, I guess they didn't have any support of friends from Polish families.

After the war, in the 1990s, a meeting was organized on the occasion of the anniversary of the creation of the Bialystok ghetto and I went there. And I have to admit that most of the Jews present there survived thanks to the help of Polish peasants, among whom they practically used to live and were only moved by the Germans during the occupation to the ghetto in Bialystok. And when it came to life or death, they chose to run away back to those villages and they managed to survive there. But I didn't meet any natives of Bialystok. They simply didn't have any contacts with the countryside.

I don't remember Father ever going somewhere to pray in Bialystok. Perhaps he did... sometimes he used to pray at home, he'd put on a white tallit and he'd put on tefillin. And in Lublin, because we lived in a house where there were many Jews, sometimes there'd be prayer meetings in our apartment. Some ten men would get together and pray together. Father felt very honored when this prayer meeting took place in his apartment. That was when we, the kids, were put in the kitchen and, to spite the adults, we'd buy ourselves pieces of sausage [pork] on Yom Kippur, as a sign of protest, because young people are always rebelling. And if Father used to go to a synagogue, if he had a tefillin or whether he just carried something else under his arm, I don't

know, I simply didn't pay much attention to those things then.

The first time I saw a synagogue was in Warsaw, the reconstructed Nozyk synagogue [9](#). I simply never went to synagogues before that time. Perhaps because less attention was paid to the religious education of women. [Editor's note: it is improbable that lack of Mrs. Duda's religious education was due to generally less attention paid to the religious education of women. Mostly it depended on Mrs. Duda's family's decision, but it is also possible that she simply doesn't remember well.] It was enough for a woman to behave appropriately, be a good wife, mother, and that was it, wasn't it? But in that family circle there was complete separation of religion, religious behavior from normal [everyday] life.

And Mother's family was also, in a sense, assimilated. All the sisters, although they had Jewish names, used different names in everyday life. They were very Russified. Perhaps because they attended Russian schools. This community was different from those Hasidim [10](#), with sidelocks, deep in prayer, dancing etc. Those were secular people, who abided by the rules of their religion, but other than that, it has to be said, they assimilated.

But I do have to say that candles were lit on Friday, mother prayed over the candles. I remember it as if it was today, I have an excellent visual memory: the table, a white tablecloth, candlesticks, candles. Easter [Pesach] holidays were the same. There was seder, so I said, 'Ba ladem alisztama halajla haze' ['Mah nishtana ha-lailah ha-zeh mi-kol ha-leilot?': 'Why is this night different from other nights?'], first question at seder], because there were three girls in our family and the youngest one was too small. [Editor's note: the four questions are traditionally asked by the youngest child.] Mother made cake for the holidays and I licked the bowls clean. This was in the period when Father worked, there was money at home, so Mother baked cakes for holidays... Yes, all holidays. We celebrated all of them at home.

I was Mother's oldest child. I was born in 1918, in Bialystok. But I was really the middle child at home because Father was a widower. His first wife died during childbirth. So I had an older stepsister, Fania. I didn't know about this for a long time, until I was seventeen, because Mother didn't tell us that Fania wasn't her daughter. Fania was eight years older than I, so she was born in 1910. And Dina, the youngest, was born in 1926. I was there when she was born, I handed the towel to the doctor. She was born at home. Doctor Sokolowski attended the birth; he was my mother's cousin, from the Kanel family.

My sister Fania graduated from gymnasium, she passed her final exam at Szperowa's in Lublin. And Dina - we called her Dinka - attended Druskin's gymnasium in Bialystok. Then Fania got married. Her sweetheart, Gorzyczanski, left somewhere and she married his friend - Mosze Rojzman. She had a daughter. When my parents left for Bialystok in 1937, she and her husband moved into their apartment in Lublin. Later, I got them to come to Bialystok. They all died, like the entire family, in Bialystok, in the ghetto.

Bialystok was a half-Jewish town. Industry was mostly in Jewish hands, although I have to say that Mr. Komorowski [Mrs. Duda actually means Ryszard Kaczorowski (born 1919): Polish politician, after WWII emigrated to Great Britain. 1986-1989 minister of national affairs in the Polish government in exile; 1989-1991 President of the Republic of Poland in exile; cf. president-in-exile [11](#)] was a former accountant in one of the factories in Bialystok. I knew many Jewish workers, I remember these Bialystok factories, the rags would stink so you could smell it from a long

distance... because since the middle of the 19th century Bialystok specialized in the production of materials from rags, from wastes. There were piles of waste in front of the factories, the workers sorted them and then they would be processed. These products were later sent to Far East markets, Manchuria, so even to China.

Our apartment on Fabryczna Street 35 was close to Grandfather Lapidus's apartment. Some Germans, the Schmidts and the Stebbes, lived nearby. There was this boy, Hans Schmidt, we all played together. My parents told me that during World War I, Germans gave the Schmidts flour for baking bread and the Schmidts gave that flour to their neighbors, it didn't matter to them if they were Jewish or Polish, they gave it to everyone. There were Russian children there, Polish and Tatar children, a real hotchpotch. Grandma Sara Perelmut, father's mother, lived on Ciepła Street, in a kind of garret. And a Tatar family lived on the first floor. So they celebrated Friday, because the holy day of the Muslims is Friday. And Grandmother, of course, celebrated Saturday. So, in one word, there was this conglomerate of faiths, cultures, but it didn't matter for the kids. All the kids played together and I really didn't feel strange in that crowd of kids.

I'd like to say a few good words about the owners of the house where we lived in Bialystok. They were from the local gentry of Podlasie, the Rozycki family. I remember how once, when I was sick with measles or some other childhood illness, this Mr. Rozycki took some apples from the garden and gave them to Mother, so I'd have something to eat when I was sick. My parents told me that when Haller came to Bialystok with his army [12](#) and they were looking for Jews, this Rozycki hid all his Jewish tenants in his basement and hung crosses in their apartments. He saved them from disgrace, because you can't say what would have happened, death or disgrace.

And the neighbors, I remember, later on there was the Cukier family... They left for Italy [before the war]. They lived on the second floor. And right next door there was a Polish family, the family of a Latin teacher, who was also, I think, an employee of the political police. And there was this girl there, Wanda Strzelecka. I visited all these local manors with her [relatives of the Strzelecki family, who lived in the countryside], because we played together and grew up together.

When we moved to Lublin with my parents it was 1928 or 1929. We moved, because Father got a job there. They gave him a store to run in Lublin with textiles from Bialystok. He'd share this with another man, his name was Brawerman. So my parents packed us and took us to Lublin.

In Lublin we lived in a very poor area, Jewish-Polish, no, Polish-Jewish, next to the Castle. [Editor's note: The block of streets at the base of the castle hill, which before 1939 was the center of the Jewish district, was pulled down by the Germans after the liquidation of the Lublin ghetto in 1942. In the castle a prison was located until 1954.] There were many Poles in the house where I lived. Policemen, with whom I was great friends; when they arrested me [in 1937], then my neighbor would bring me apples and rolls, hiding them under his coat.

We lived in Szif's [the owner of the tenement house, a Jew] house, the address was Lubartowska 61, corner of Unicka, on the 3rd floor. We had a nice apartment, two rooms and a kitchen, arranged one behind another. I remember, there was a cupboard there. An antique, early 19th century cupboard, with these twisted little pillars, but the woodworms would eat it up. When Mother was getting married she got it from her grandparents, as part of her dowry. It was my job to varnish it for the Easter [Pesach] holidays and clog up those holes from the woodworms, to save the cupboard. The caretaker, who sometimes came round, used to say to my mother, 'Mrs. Perelmut,

this cupboard is just like at Pilsudski's [13!](#)'

And in that house there was just one privy in the backyard. It was something horrible. In the winter, when everything was frozen up, you could stand it, but in the summertime it was just horrid. Another thing, there were lots of cockroaches there. In our kitchen there was a chest, where the servant would have slept in normal [wealthier] houses. And in these other houses, like ours, we stored potatoes for the winter in these chests.

Wood was used for cooking in the kitchen, because it was a wood stove, not some electric or gas stove, a normal stove for wood and coal, which I had to carry from the basement very often. And from time to time, each week, a huge pot of water would be boiled to blanch everything because of the insects. It was difficult to avoid them, because it was a large house, so when the bugs survived in one apartment, they would pass through some holes in the walls. These houses were made of bricks and there were also many [bugs] in those bricks. When it came to bedbugs, they could somehow be combated, it was easier, but I remember that in the kitchen it was just horrid. And we got used to it. You'd blanch with boiling water, sweep the bugs, burn them and that was it.

Lublin was a whole different world. In Bialystok you wouldn't feel the pressure of religion, there was freedom. But Lublin had a different atmosphere, one I wasn't used to. It was there that I saw for the first time these, as they are called in Poland, 'chalats' [Hasidim]. I walked around in my high school cap, with a large visor and they pointed at me in the street. Pointed at me with their fingers, because I was wearing that cap. A girl? With such a visor? I didn't see that at all in Bialystok. All the rules were observed in Bialystok, it was kosher, there was boiling, blanching, different pots [for dairy and for meat], everything was observed. But they wouldn't overdo it. And in Lublin it was different.

I started going to school when I was six years old. The school was Gutman's gymnasium [lyceum] in Bialystok. I even remember how we exercised standing on the desks. And one girl peed on that desk, she couldn't stand it, we were laughing so hard. This school system looked like this then [in the 1920s]: a sub-elementary level, then elementary, then eight grades of gymnasium and the 8th one was the one when you took final exams. So there were ten years of schooling in total before the final exams. Then, in the 1930s, this system was changed, but it's hard for me to say what it looked like later. So when we came to Lublin there was this issue of what to do with my education. I was then ten or eleven years old. It was in the middle of the school year, so probably I'd have to repeat a grade, I don't remember which one, 2nd or 3rd grade of gymnasium.

Well, and you'd have to pay for that. So it was decided that I'd go to a public school. And I went to a school, whose principal was Mrs. Mandelkernowa. It was a very good school, on Lubartowska Street. When I graduated from this school I went to a humanities gymnasium in Lublin. It was also a gymnasium, where nothing was taught about Jewry. There were public gymnasia in Lublin, government officials, officers sent their children there. Wealthier people, who could afford to pay, rather wealthy. Jews also attended these gymnasia, but there were very few. These were also private gymnasia, Polish ones, and many Jews attended them, for example Czarniecka's gymnasium or Arciszowa's gymnasium for girls, Staszic for boys. And there were two Jewish gymnasia [in Lublin]: Szperowa's, where my sister went, and the humanities gymnasium which was operated by some Jewish association, it wasn't a private school, so it was less expensive.

I studied a lot of Latin then, a lot of history, the standards were indeed quite high. I also took French then. It was an obligatory foreign language and, I have to say, these basics which I learned at school were very solid, I can still speak French fluently. But I didn't get my diploma then. Father was unemployed, you then had to pay for tutors, to be well prepared for the finals. So I decided: I can't take the finals, because I don't have enough money. I told Mother and Father. Especially Father was very saddened. He used to say, 'My children, my daughters, what can I leave you but an education.' At that time you wouldn't say 'Dad', but 'Papa'. So I would answer, 'Papa, but all I do is sit on the other side of the door [the pupil that could not participate in the lessons without paying tuition sat in the hallway, on the other side of the classroom door, where she could at least hear the lessons], you have to pay for everything and you don't have the money for that.' And I explained, 'I will still have time to study if I want to.' And I did go to university after the war, without any problems.

But then, instead of taking the finals, I went to Bialystok, to my aunt Anna Wolfson. I stayed with Grandfather, my aunt paid for my schooling, 300 zloty [probably for a semester; 300 zloty was in this time the rent for a good three bedroom apartment in Lodz] I learned corsetry. I'd come back after work, I was maybe 15 then, and my aunt would serve me dinner. There was a white napkin, a white plate, knife, fork, all very nice. And then I went back to Lublin.

And at the same time [when Mrs. Duda was still attending gymnasium] Father sent me to the neighbor's to study Hebrew. Why? Father wasn't a Hasid, he wasn't Orthodox, he was a normal secular person and he thought that a girl should primarily study. And you could only study in a normal [secular] school. But he wanted me to know some Hebrew, so he sent me to these lessons. This family really influenced my fate, and my sister's too. This was the Gorzyczanski family; he wore a 'chalat,' but he was a teacher; a very delicate, cultured man. Well, I took Hebrew lessons for about two years.

Unfortunately, all that I still have in my head are the first words [letters] of the alphabet. Some words I remember, because I spoke Yiddish at home. There are many Hebrew words in this German dialect [Yiddish] which I learned and I remember them very well. But when I was in Israel, I couldn't understand a word they were saying, so I am full of respect for all my friends who left and taught themselves [Hebrew]. But later, when I was learning German, I had to cut myself off from this dialect [Yiddish], because otherwise I would have never been able to learn German.

Since the very beginning, since I was a little girl, I was very interested in sports. Perhaps I had a lot of energy and needed an outlet? There was no way to let this energy out at home, in those two rooms, so I joined the Ha-Koach sports club in Lublin. This club was a part of Maccabi [14](#), a large Jewish sports organization. I played volleyball, basketball, did some discus throwing, shot put, but I was too short for that, I was only 1 meter 60 tall. I mean then, at that time, I was somewhat in the middle, now I'd be a midget compared to girls like Otylia [Otylia Jedrzejczak, Polish Olympic champion in swimming in 2004], who is 1 meter 85. Anyway, nowadays sport has a different character. Then, it was purely amateur. I played ping-pong. I would sometimes leave for practice, get half a loaf of bread from somewhere and a bag of apples, eat that from morning until night and spend the entire day on the field... In 1936 I went to a sports camp organized by Maccabi.

This period meant a lot to me. I had an outlet for my energy; secondly, I had fun, I liked sports, I liked games. We'd meet on the Unia playing field in Lublin. It was a sports club. There was also the

Strzelec sports club. I remember a volleyball match with the Unia girls. And the boys, Poles from Unia, threw us high up in the air, because they were so glad we showed those girls who were so stuck up. There were no differences then [between Jewish and Polish youth]. I had an admirer, he belonged to a corporation [Corporations] [15](#) - at KUL [Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, 'Catholic University of Lublin']. He had two friends; all three of them wore corporation caps. When I went out with one of them, then my friends would be amazed - how could I? With a boy from a corporation?

And this corporation boy came to Ha-Koach with me, played ping-pong with me, we went dancing at the Jewish students' club on Lubartowska Street in Lublin. So these divisions [contemporary separation of the pre-war Jewish and Polish worlds] that some people want to create now artificially, didn't really exist. Although there was anti-Semitism, without a doubt - but how should I put it, I didn't even feel it. We'd often go swimming in the Wieprz [river near Lublin]. There was Maniek Wojcicki, he was a boxer, also a buddy of mine; he died in Majdanek [16](#). I remember how he once jumped into a very muddy pond to bring me some lilies... There was another friend, Zygmunt Krolak, he went off to serve in the military, in the navy, and he died, in the navy. This corporation boy, Henryk Zajaczkowski, he also died in Majdanek. Yes, these are all memories of my youth, really very... beautiful.

I also had a fiancé, an official one, because his father and my father had already arranged our wedding, but it was love. He was one of the handsomest, most beautiful Jewish boys in Lublin, Wiktor Szwed. His mother wasn't very keen on me becoming her daughter-in-law, because I was a poor girl. But his daddy thought that I could earn money, work, and he liked me.

Wiktor practiced sports at Ha-Koach as well and I remember this funny story. Our friend, his last name was Wojcik, had a weaving loom at home. And he made some textiles. And we ordered bathing suits from him. He made them for us on his weaving machine. The swimming pool on Czechowskie lake was opened in Lublin at that time. When we jumped into the water, his underwear, excuse my language, stretched all the way down to his knees, because it was made from some poor yarn...

In the summer we would not go on vacation together. Father would send Mother and my little sister near Lublin, in the direction of Lubartow, there was a large village called Niemce there. And I stayed at home. I couldn't even cook potatoes. This boyfriend of mine, Wiktor, used to cook potatoes for me. I didn't know if I was supposed to add salt or sugar. But it so happened that in 1937 I had to break off the engagement, because I ended up in jail myself and I didn't know what would happen later. His parents really wanted him to marry rich, because they had a glove workshop and they weren't doing very well. I understood the situation and, through Mother, I passed the news to him that he was free.

And how did it happen that I ended up in jail? Long story. When I was twelve, in Lublin, I was influenced by others to join this Zionist organization Hashomer Haleumi [17](#). It was supposedly a religious organization, but I didn't feel it. But the family of this Hebrew teacher, Gorzyczanski, they influenced me, especially their daughter Malka. So I dropped out of Hashomer Haleumi and I became involved with communist youth. Why? Mother made some food and took me with her to Ruska Street, to some old, sick people who lived there, sleeping in holes in the ground. This shocked me. So I thought: these dreams of our own state, kibbutzim, that's a beautiful thing. But who will help these people from day to day? This system has to be changed.

This was a basic problem: should we look for a future for the [Jewish] nation in Palestine, even though there was no talk then of getting land there to form this state. Even as young people we knew this was necessary, but there were no possibilities, it was a utopia then. So I liked the fact that here we could all change our fate. And that was what attracted me, not some Marx. [Marx, Karl (1818-1883), German philosopher, economist and revolutionary. The system of beliefs he created was the basis of the ideology of socialist and communist parties.] All I knew about Marx was that he had a beard. Really, you do have to be a complete idiot to convince young, 17 or 18-year-olds that they're Marxists. It's just some idea of social justice. The fact that I went to school hungry, that I sat on the other side of the door, because my tuition wasn't paid... All that influenced me. This is why I became involved with communist youth and then with socialist youth in Lublin, with TUR [Towarzystwo Uniwersytetu Robotniczego] [18](#). And these last few years before the war, between 1935 and 1937, I was very active in TUR. When they told me to distribute leaflets, that's what I did and... nothing more.

I met fantastic, young working class people in TUR, especially from 1 Maja Street. A group of students from KUL directed TUR at that time. There was Feliks Baranowski, later the ambassador of Poland in Germany, in the GDR, the minister of education, Jozef Kwiecinski, who was in Anders' Army [19](#), sailed on a battleship and drowned when he was leaving Iran for England. There was Stanislaw Krzykala, after the war a professor of history at Maria Curie-Sklodowska University. Is it strange that there were students from a Catholic university in a leftist organization? Well, but there was only one university in Lublin – the Catholic University of Lublin.

There were different student groups there. There were student corporations influenced both by Sanacja [20](#) and 'endecja' [Endeks] [21](#) and socialist groups. TUR was a group of socialist students, mostly sons and daughters of railroad workers from Lublin. When we organized some events, for example 'no more war,' we were afraid that police agents would spy on us. So the mothers of these students made sure strangers wouldn't come up to us.

Communist youth and TUR were very close in Lublin. They took advantage of the fact that TUR was legal. I remember the pavement-makers' strike. The trade union of pavement-makers had a place, where they had a ping-pong table. Felek [short for Feliks] Baranowski and I played ping-pong there, but I used to go there with a pan of food for the pavement-makers. We brought food for those who were on strike. I also remember how, during 1st May demonstrations, students from the most radical corporation waited for us, for the TUR demonstration, with clubs, ready to beat us. So we brought clubs as well, to fight back. There were many Jews in TUR. There weren't any problems. We were all Polish citizens. That's how it was in TUR in Lublin.

And I was accused in the trial of TUR in Lublin. Accused of communism. They were playing a bigger game, the supervisor of the school district Mr. Lewicki and the Polish authorities, which were becoming pro-fascist after 1935. He was connected with the supporters of Pilsudski, with Sanacja and also had PPS [22](#) roots. So his daughter, Wanda Lewicka, was accused of communism. So what this was all about, speaking in plain terms, harassing this Lewicki and his family.

When TUR was dissolved, PPS protested – you have no right! So TUR was reopened, but the entire board was put in jail, including some of the young people who could be accused of communism. And this is how I ended up in the so-called 'Trial of 40' in Lublin [one of the numerous so-called show trials]. To make this trial more communist, they dragged in from Bereza Kartuska [presently

in Belarus, 300 km east of Warsaw] where in 1934 the Polish government created an isolation camp for prisoners, primarily political, Franciszek Jozwiak, pseudonym Witold, who was the chief of staff of the AL [23](#) during the war and later the commander of militia.

I have to say that this entire indictment, at least to the extent that it concerned me, was not true. All the accusations were fictitious. They just took three boys, Okonowski, Durakiewicz and one more guy and they signed a declaration; they signed everything that the police gave them. This is how the indictment was drafted and there wasn't a word of truth in it. And there were sentences. I finally got four years, just like others from TUR. [Mrs. Duda was in jail from 1937 until the day of the commencement of WWII, 1st September 1939.]

Before they put me in jail, there was a trial. I have one funny story to tell that describes what it looked like. Right before my arrest there was supposed to be a sports competition in Lodz. And I was sent out there. All I had with me was a blouse, two pairs of shorts and tennis shoes. I think it was a volleyball match. So I got to Lodz, went to my aunt's and it turned out there was no match. Suddenly, my aunt received a letter that the police were looking for me. And I didn't have anything more to do there, so I went to Bialystok although my family lived in Lublin. And that's where they arrested me.

A childhood friend, Kola [short for Mikolaj], was an undercover cop. When he saw me he said, 'What the hell are you doing here?' At the trial one of the charges was that I ran away in a hurry, because I only took some underwear and a blouse. That's what it was like. Now people say that the UBP [24](#) did this or that - well, there has never been a police force that would have clean hands and would be able to say 'we are all right.'

God, there was also a charge in the indictment that in 1936, when they announced an amnesty for political prisoners, I organized a party for those who were freed. I, an 18-year-old girl. At my neighbor's. This man committed suicide! Because he was a White Guard [25](#) supporter and he didn't have a passport. But because there was this charge that something had happened at his place, he was afraid for his family and he killed himself.

When I was arrested my parents were devastated. But I think they knew it could happen. I was too disobedient, too free-spirited and this leftist atmosphere among working class and lower bourgeoisie young people, this bond between Poles and Jews in Lublin had to bring some effects. I think Father started working then, in 1937. Because it was cold in jail, he bought me some warm shoes for railroad workers, felt with leather. They brought them to me, so I'd be warm and wouldn't get ill. I really cried then, because I was so moved.

Father didn't want to have anything to do with communism. He would have preferred for me to join a Zionist group... Anyway, I had an admirer at that time; his name was Josl Laks. And in 1935 he left for Israel. At that time a lot of Zionist youth left for Israel [then Palestine]. There is a Russian song 'khodit parim na zakadye vozlye doma moyevo,' - 'a boy walks around my house at sunset.' And he walked around my house. I didn't want him. Because I didn't want to leave. I didn't feel a bond with all that [with Jewry]. I left Jewry and joined TUR and that was my community. After the war, when I was in Israel, my friend Estera Klawir and her husband Lang Lejben told me that this boy came back to Poland in 1939 looking for me, he wanted to convince me to leave with him. He died in Lublin, in Majdanek, together with his parents.

I was in one cell with Maryska Wozniak and with Birowna, who was a very well known leftist activist, a legal clerk, her father had a law firm. Anyway, how can you talk about politics when, in that cell, we organized a contest for who had the best legs. Birowna won and I got second place. Or, when I led exercises for everyone, the guards would peep to see how the girls are exercising...

That's how it was in the prison in Lublin. And in 1938 they took us to Fordon, near Bydgoszcz [420 km north west of Lublin]. That was the Central Women's Prison. In 1939 the Ukrainian nationalists were taken out of there, further into Poland, and the communists and some of the criminals stayed in Fordon. When the war broke out [26](#), they didn't open the door, the staff ran away... And they wanted to hand us over to the Germans. [Editor's note: the area of Bydgoszcz was annexed by Germany, separated from the remaining Polish lands and Germanized.] Consciously or not, I can't say, I don't know for sure. On 1st September, it was a Friday, a bomb fell on the prison. The girls who were on the 4th floor panicked.

We asked Zdankowska, who was the chief of the prison, to move them downstairs and the woman told us, 'When they drop bombs, then it's going to be worse upstairs, but if there's gas, then you're going to have it worse downstairs.' I was in the basement. One of the guards opened the door for us, we helped others and that's how we got out. They had a cell for minors there, 15-17 years of age, so-called communists. They knew about as much about communism as I did, they were just fighting for a Ukrainian or Belarusian school. Or for land that they took away from them, in Volhynia, in Podolye [in 1921 Poland gained western Volhynia, eastern Volhynia and eastern Podolye belonged to Soviet Ukraine.] And there was a door with metal fixtures there, so we had to move some bricks. When we got out, a bomb fell and the wall collapsed.

People from the military units suggested that we should join them. But the Germans were close by. And we, with our stupid biographies... and stupid people who would have turned us in to the Germans at once... There were twelve girls in our group; the oldest one was Maria Kaminska, who became the president of Samopomoc Chlopska [27](#) after the war. So she was our leader, but I was the one who had to take care of all the outside contacts. Because I had a good appearance, Aryan, I spoke Polish perfectly and all the others were either Jews or Ukrainians, who didn't know Polish. So there I was. And that's how 'Janina' was born. And that's how it stayed.

This year, 1939, was a horrible one. As you traveled from west to east - dead horses, human bodies, mooing cows that hadn't been milked, destroyed houses, fallen trees, crying people and us, in the middle of everything, without food, in prison 'kabats' ['jacket', word of Hungarian origin]. When we reached a country estate and asked for milk, bread, potatoes, they gave it all to us. The squire gave it to us. But he separated us from his people, the farm-hands. And what were we in for? We said - for strikes. Well, what were we to say, for communism? He separated us immediately anyway.

On 15th September [1939] I reached Warsaw, via Bielany. There was heavy gunfire. We found attorney Duracz, Maria must have had his address. [Duracz, Teodor Franciszek (1883-1943): attorney, communist activist, member of PPS and KPP, until 1938 he defended people accused in famous political trials, co-founder of PPR, murdered by the Germans.] And they housed us at his legal clerk's apartment and we slept on the floor. There was this Stefania Sempolowska and she gave us 2 zloty each, so we'd have some money. [Sempolowska, Stefania (1870-1944): social activist, publicist, pedagogue, writer. One of the leading figures of Polish intelligentsia, activist of

the leftist teachers' movement, editor of magazines, author of many books.]

I started looking for my family, the Bortners. So I went to Tlomackie Street and there was a note on the door, which said to look for them on Nowolipki. And I went there. It was the 4th floor, an old woman and a young one. They didn't know anything, perhaps I misread the address, but they said, 'please stay,' because they were afraid to be alone. They gave me a coat, they gave me some shoes. Well, it was mid-September. And two more weeks of bombings and you had to eat something.

It's good that someone gave me a piece of horse meat, cut out of a horse that was shot on the street and these ladies gave me some bread... You can't even imagine what Warsaw was like during those bombings. I was walking down Miodowa Street to get some water from the Vistula River and everything was burning all around me, the [Royal] Castle was burning, fires everywhere.

The last night before the surrender, we were sitting in a basement, bombs were falling everywhere, non stop, this house was shaking non stop and what you were dreaming of was that, if you're supposed to die, then it should happen quickly, so you don't suffer. And then, the next morning, it all died down, the surrender of Warsaw [28th September 1939]. I left the city to go to Bialystok. A friend of mine, his name was Szwarc, or Weiser, walked with me... because he said, 'You know, it will be easier for me to be on the road and more difficult for a girl.'

So I finally made it home. My parents were back in Bialystok, on Kupiecka 7. This was a house almost next to the gate of the ghetto, from the side of Lipowa Avenue. I stayed with my parent and my younger sister, Dina. My older sister Fania, who got married, was living in Lublin, in our old apartment on Lubartowska 61.

In 1939, when the Russian army came in [cf. Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact] [28](#), it is said that the Jews were happy [29](#). This was understandable. Why? Because everyone has dignity. And no one wants to feel worse than others. If the Germans had entered then, if the Germans had taken over Bialystok, the fate of those Jews would have been shortened by two years. [The ghetto in Bialystok was closed on 1st August 1941]. That's one thing. And people knew about it. Second thing. The Russians didn't persecute Jews because they were Jews. Of course, there are many Jews, stupid Jews, who evaluate those deportations, jails, like that. This is nonsense. If there were so many nations, different tribes, people weren't arrested because they were Jews or something else, they were arrested because they were enemies and couldn't be trusted. So this wasn't from a nationalistic perspective, but because of class animosity, distrust of people. With regards to Jews, they were treated like everyone else. For example, I, when I started working in Bialystok in 1939, I started feeling human.

I worked in sports. I have the fondest memories of this sports period. I was the vice-president of the Bialystok branch of the Spartak club. I was deeply involved in sports, because I was a competitor. I competed in bicycle racing, I was even the runner-up regional champion. I was practically the regional champion, because the winner was a girl from Leningrad or Moscow. That's youth and young people; it's hard to talk about politics. I organized clubs in the region, we used to go to Hrodna [100 km north east of Bialystok, today Belarus] to start clubs there. And that was where I met my first husband. I always had his photographs with me when I was in the partisan troops. He was the best soccer player, left striker, Janek, that is Jankiel Baran.

He was a very well known athlete – he was one of the best soccer players in all of Belarus. I only lived with him for a month. I didn't want to have a rabbinical wedding, so I only had a civil wedding and I announced it to my parents. Father was outraged, but I only said that, Father can believe whatever he wants to believe, but he can't force me to do it. I explained that a married couple is a social unit, that this has nothing to do with faith. But my family somehow got involved, somehow they arranged it and organized a wedding for me. And this was a month before the war [the war between Germany and the Soviet Union, which broke out on June 22nd 1941] [30](#).

Because I had been convicted in the past, I could argue with the authorities about why my father couldn't get a job. He was an accountant. And Father was over 50 years old then. I went, I think, to the secretary [of the committee – part of the Soviet authorities in Bialystok] and I said, 'Why in the hell can't Father get a job?' 'Because, you know, older people...' And I said, 'What, are they supposed to die? He's a professional.' And I won. He got a job.

In addition to being vice-president, I was also a gymnastics instructor. Spartak was a club formed and subsidized by a cooperative and I had lots of these artisans' workshops, small factories, where I went and led gymnastics exercises for 15 minutes, during a break at work. And then they told me to go to the Komsomol [31](#) to work. First, I was in charge of culture and education. I worked in a tile factory in Antoniuk [a district of Bialystok]. Cultural issues, newspapers and other things, some meetings, field trips, all in all, that kind of work. And then they told me to work in the regional committee, this was the Committee of the Bialystok region, Molotov's region. This was mostly work with children, we even organized some dancing, performances at my sister Dina's school. What is said now about ideological indoctrination... as far as I remember, what we did was interest these young people in field trips, drama, reading etc.

We didn't expect the war. Several boys and girls went to Lublin across the border and brought my sister Fania with her husband and child back to me. And they stayed with us. It was a very difficult period, because the winter was hard, there was nothing we could use for heating the house. It was a three-room apartment, two large rooms and one small one you had to pass through to get to the other ones. My room was above the entrance to the house, it wasn't heated. Father worked as an accountant. Mother stayed at home, my younger sister was at school and the older sister and brother-in-law worked.

And then there was the night when the first bombs fell on Bialystok. Because I had survived 1939 walking from Bydgoszcz to Warsaw and then to Bialystok I immediately understood this was no drill, no lightning, but bombs. So I quickly gathered all the tenants on the 1st floor. I took my bicycle, because I rode like mad then, I had an excellent bicycle, semi-racing bicycle that I competed on, wooden rims... I went to the party secretary. He was sitting up there, he lived in the attic of a wooden house. I shouted to him, 'War!' and he replied, 'Are you crazy?' But I was right, it turned out it was a war.

And then I had to go to this 'rajkom' [regional committee] to pack all the documents [probably documents of the Soviet authorities, which could not fall into the hands of Germans]. All this is lost now, all my data is in that office. I was there with a friend, Lida Kowalewska. And the Germans were close by. They told me to go east. I offered to my entire family to get on the trucks and go. Father and mother said: 'We are old and we won't move anymore.' So I took my sister Fania with her family, my sister Dina, I put them all on a truck with other Belarusians and I chased after them

on my bicycle.

The road was clogged up with cannons, tanks, people and I managed to ride for some 15-20 kilometers on that bike and I didn't have the strength to go any further. I threw the bike on the road, I saw some soldier pick it up, and I also got on that truck, but they were bombing the road, so we had to get off. At some point the truck left and I was in some small wood next to the road with all of them. My sister was holding the baby, 18 months old; there was my brother-in-law and my little sister. I didn't have the courage to tell them, 'We are walking east.' Because how could you walk with such a crowd of people and a baby? How could I take on responsibility for someone's life? After all, we weren't expecting the Holocaust then. We were expecting the worst, but not the Holocaust. That's why I decided to walk them home.

We returned. Meanwhile, Fania's husband, who was near-sighted, lost his glasses somewhere, he got lost and died. We were told that he died, because the Germans caught him and shot him, because we never saw him again. I walked Fania, the baby and my little sister home. The road wasn't easy, not easy. The Germans didn't come to Bialystok for another week. Meanwhile, people were robbing stores, taking blankets, materials from factory warehouses, everything that the textile industry in Bialystok produced. My husband and his brother were taken for military training, as conscripts, because there were two military training grounds near Bialystok. One day his brother came back and my husband didn't. He told me, 'Don't wait, he's dead.' And that's how I was left alone.

I moved in with my in-laws. One day when I was just going there, the Germans entered Bialystok. They came in on the main street, Sienkiewicza, and I was on a side street where my in-laws lived. And I only looked, I stood there, hid myself. They drove in on motorcycles, shooting, they had machine guns on the handlebars and they were shooting from the motorcycles. I quickly jumped into the house, went upstairs. Biala Street or Zamenhoffa, because that's where Zamenhoff [32](#) was born once, that's where their house was, a wooden one, I still remember it. The Gestapo headquarters was nearby. Then a huge cloud of smoke and the Germans quickly rushed into the Jewish district, they knew where to go.

They locked up over 1,000 Jews in the synagogue and burned them alive. [Editor's note: On June 27th 1941 the Germans burned alive 2,000 Jews from Bialystok in the Great Synagogue on Boznicza Street 14]. And they burned the houses, which were there. Father's brother lived there, he was a bit off the norm [that is, mentally disturbed]. His son was a weaver, his children, they all worked in the textile industry in Bialystok. And after they lost their house they came to us.

I have to say a few words about my father-in-law, old Baran. His daughter, so my sister-in-law, a beautiful blonde, worked as a waitress in 'Soldatenheim' [German: 'Soldiers' club'], or in the canteen. Every day she brought back a pot of soup. And I can say one thing, my father-in-law never ate a spoon of soup until I had had some of it. And I remember one day Mother came, her lips were purple with hunger, and she got food. He wouldn't eat himself, he gave food to Mother...

The Gestapo, or Wehrmacht [33](#), barged in once and took my brother-in law, who had returned from the army. Mother came and said, 'Listen, the Germans want ransom and then they'll let these people go.' There were 2,000 young Jews there. 'Should I - I have one gold chain, only one - should I give that?' So I said, 'Mom, I can't say, at home you've got Father, sisters, granddaughter, the family of this brother-in-law, Chaim and children, decide, I can't.' As it turned out, the Germans put

everything they got in their pockets and shot the Jews. This was the first week, or the first ten days of this war.

When the Germans entered the city, I recalled an event from childhood: I was playing hopscotch in the backyard and someone came and asked about the owners, the Rozycki family. And I showed them and told them. Mr. Rozycki then told this to my parents and said that they noticed the little girl, so outgoing and asked about her. 'And she's Jewish?' They were surprised! Because I'm not very Jewish in my appearance. Really.

So once, already after the Germans had come, I met some buddies of mine who worked in that tile factory in Antoniuk, Wacek Dziejma, Marian Wolniewicz and some others, on the street. And Marian told me, 'Listen Janina, you're still having doubts, run off to the countryside, you'll wait out the war and that's it, look at yourself, don't stay in Bialystok.' So I thought that perhaps I really should leave the town. With my past I'd be the first one to go to the Gestapo and the family would suffer. And how much help could I be anyway? Just one more mouth to feed and there was no food in the house.

Meanwhile, a friend of my sister Dina, Grzegorz Lewi, was looking for me. He was graduating from gymnasium at that time, he was several years younger than I. We had a deal that we would leave Bialystok together. Grzegorz came looking for me, because he wanted to go. He only had a mother, his father was dead. My parents didn't want to tell him where I was, but Dina knew him, so she said, 'Listen Grzegorz, Janina is there and there.' So that's when we [with Grzegorz] decided to go. I had a piece of sausage and bread, butter that I was supposed to take to my husband, because it was a Sunday and it was left over in the house. And in the house, apart from what I was supposed to take to Janek, there was just this one bag with buckwheat groats. There was nothing more. We left, Mother even gave me her sweater, and we went east.

We got to Bielsk [Podlaski] [150 km east of Warsaw], where my husband's family lived, they gave us some food, but we had to go on. We both decided to change names in Bielsk. Grzegorz found some Soviet identification card of a Ukrainian, he corrected the date of birth, put in his photograph, this was amateur work, but somehow during the war it was enough. So he became Ivan Carycynski, born in Stanislavyv.

In Bielsk Podlaski we spent the night at a woman's house, the notary's wife. Her husband wasn't home. She gave us a room, some straw, a sheet. There was a large orchard there. And because it was summertime we filled up on fruit. And, what's interesting, I went to the mayor of the city, he was a senator [that is, the officials working there addressed him as 'Mr. Senator']. Erdman, I remember this name. So I asked him for an identity card and hid my Soviet one. He asked for my name, I gave my chosen last name, Zurek, and he asked them to put on my identity card 'born in Vawkavysk' [300 km east of Warsaw, today Belarus].

Why in Vawkavysk? Because they had no identity cards there. What I mean is that in 1939 Soviet officials issued identity cards, but only to people who were born in a given town. But they wouldn't issue identity cards to refugees from central or western Poland. That was because they claimed they didn't know them and they would have to be checked. If they wanted to live in the interior of Russia, they could do so, but they were afraid to have them near the border. They thought they might be spies or something. So if I said I was from Bialystok, they would say, 'Dear child, but where's your passport?'

And so I said Vawkavysk, because Vawkavysk was burned down during the first military activities... I listed an area where there was no [documentation] and they could control me however long they wanted to and they still wouldn't find anything. You have to be clever, when your life's at stake. I said we were going to Stanislavyv, to my fiancé's family and it's very difficult to get anywhere without an identity card in wartime. The official didn't want to issue anything, but Erdman told him to. So I now honor the ashes of those people who were so wise and decent then.

So this is how we ended up, after a long march, in Polyeskaya Nizina [about 400 km south east of Warsaw, today Ukraine]. Then we reached this small town in - Vysotsk [Rivne, Ukraine]. There was a fully Ukrainian government there, not Soviet. [Editor's note: After 22nd June Ukraine was also taken over by the Germans, who were supported by Ukrainian nationalists, hoping for help in forming an independent state.]

We went there, because they told us there was fighting near Malin. We were hoping to find a military unit, because, quite simply - we just wanted to fight. And we found this Vysotsk. Grzegorz was very courageous. He was a tall boy, dark blond, his hair was parted, he had a mustache, he was a very aristocratic child. Yes, it was easy to trust him, he was very confident, brave and I owe my life to him.

We found the mayor of this city, or rather the district chief, who was also the pope, I mean the Eastern or Greek-Orthodox priest. We later killed him. Well, it wasn't us, but some others [partisans]. The Germans installed him as the district chief of this region in Vysotsk. And why was he killed? Well, he was all in all a kind person, but this kindness was directed more at Germans than at local people. What was he good at? He tried to solve conflicts, he tried to create the best possible conditions for people, but at the same time he didn't tell us that they were killing Jews. He allowed the Ukrainian police to come at night with the Germans and liquidate the entire ghetto. And the partisans couldn't forgive him that. I say about him - weak man.

His name was Thorevsky. When he looked at this document, which said that Grzegorz was Ukrainian, he employed us in a grain warehouse. He gave us housing with some Jews, a nice room, a bed, everything. And it was so funny, because they wanted to find out if we, by chance, weren't Jewish. They kept talking and talking, and we - nothing. After the war someone once asked me if I had been an actress. And yes, at that time I was playing a role. We made friends there with a group of Ukrainians, communists, very decent people. They brought the previous manager of the grain warehouse to us, a peasant from the village, and he taught us how to run this warehouse. Everything was going well.

It was funny, these Jews had a cow. The Germans ordered them to give it away. This cow was signed over to us, so I once took this cow to the bull, but the bull didn't want her, so I had to take her there again, but then she didn't want him... Oh, such strange things.

As a grain warehouse manager I used to visit this administrator, a German, who was always very elegant to me, very sophisticated, he almost kissed my hand. I laugh now, really... it would have been different if he had known that I was Jewish. But not all Germans were like that then. There was one German man from the group of military policemen, older people, and he would come to these Jewish people, because he could communicate with them. Someone reported on him and he was transferred to the front, to a punitive battalion.

Once, in December 1941, one of my friends, Polahovich [a Ukrainian], who was working in the city government, told me, 'Listen, there is a mass for capturing Moscow, you're a German government employee, because you work in the grain warehouse. You have to go...' He told me I had to go, because all the local government employees were going. But why did the government employees have to go? Because the role of the church is to keep a check on people and here the pope was the district chief. And there was also confession, so they could count on finding something out. So I went to the Orthodox church, but because I didn't know what the liturgy looked like, I watched the president of the cooperative, Mr. Dunchych, who was walking in front of me. He had a Jewish lover; he managed to save her, but the child had to die... And I watched how he made the sign of the cross three times in front of each icon. I did the same as he did, confession as well, I went through everything, just like I was expected to.

And a ghetto was created in Vysotsk. We moved out from our Jews and lived maybe 100 meters from that ghetto. When 1942 came, the liquidation of the ghetto started. One night, dogs barking, noise, shouting, shots. They surrounded the ghetto. Someone watched this happening and told me: there were pits dug in the ground, they all stood naked on the edge of these pits, because their belongings would be sent to the Reich and then one physician shouted to the Germans - 'you will be held responsible for this and so will your descendants.' They shot them all anyway.

I mean, a few people were saved because many men had their women in the countryside, Ukrainians. They had children with them and these women would come to their husbands hiding in the grain warehouse and bring them food. I also know that a woman from a very rich Jewish family from Lodz, Eiger, survived. I never met her again. I don't know if she was later in the partisan forces. I don't know, I can't say.

And we were looking for partisans; there were already rumors in the area that we really wanted to join them. I have never told anyone about this period, this is really new. The chief of police was there, from the White Guard. Once, when we were going to the second warehouse in the woods near Svaritsevichi, we were hoping to find the partisans along the way. And this chief of police invited us for vodka and some food and he says, 'So, are we going to meet with partisans?' That's what it looked like.

So we finally decided to give it all up, our situation was unstable and we wanted to join the partisan troops. So we decided to go into the woods, to go east. And this peasant, his last name was Shchur, who was once the manager of the warehouse, took me to a woman from the village of Ozery, who had a Jewish husband or friend. I stayed with her for one night and she went to get Grzegorz herself and walked him to that place. I had some baked chickens which my friend, Pogorzewiczowa, made for me. We were helped the most by the researchers of the Holy Scriptures - some sect [probably Jehovah's Witnesses]. They were deeply religious people, whose faith obligates them to help others. They led us from one village to another.

The Gestapo looked for us in the first house, because we burned all the documents from the warehouse and all the grain, with Shchur's help, was taken by the peasants. This Shchur was later tortured by the Germans, beaten, but he didn't tell them anything. The peasants, when they got their grain, didn't say anything of course. The Germans never got the grain and all the documents were burned. Such an act of sabotage was death for us. So they were looking for us. They sent out arrest warrants and the Gestapo.

We were in the barn and the peasant was in the house. The peasant slipped out and he led us through mud to another village. These villages were so-called 'chutory' [old Polish word], settlements where each house is surrounded by an entire estate. This was all in Palyeskaya Nizina. But nobody knew we were Jewish. They only knew that the Gestapo was looking for us for sabotage, for the grain warehouse. Perhaps they suspected it, I don't know. We had these backpacks with all our things: the Jews with whom we had stayed in Vysotsk gave us some rags, sheets, such things. We had a deal that if they survived, we would give everything back to them. This Jewess told me that if her child ran away to me, I would manage to somehow save him. I wanted to tell her – the blind leading the blind. But there were such situations.

And so, selling these things along the way, we reached a Polish village. We entered a house, the name of the peasant was Bronislaw Kotwicki, and we wanted to sell him something. 'Where are you from?' 'From Rokytne, from the glassworks.' He replied, 'No, you're Jews, but I will help you, I won't hand you over to the Germans.' So I thought, all or nothing, and said – 'Yes, we are Jewish.' And he said, 'But I will help you.' He gave us food, allowed us to wash ourselves and led us to the woods, where he had a hut, that was well hidden. He had 80 log hives [natural bee hive in the trunk of a tree, the shelter of wild bees] with honey. He brought us water, milk, honey and bread for three weeks. That's true. A man, who had never before seen us in his life, kept us in his hut in the woods for three weeks; he brought us bread and honey, because he didn't have anything else. As long as he could. How could I say a bad word about Poles as a nation?

After three weeks, he wasn't there. We didn't have a drop of water for three days, because I couldn't drink from the canal, I vomited. Hunger. We didn't know what was happening, we had to get out, because we would have died of hunger. And so we went back to the village, to him. And we asked, why? 'Mister, those were Lithuanian szaulis [from the Lithuanian word 'šaulis', meaning 'shooter' – Lithuanian soldier serving the Nazi occupants between 1940-1945], they were combing the forests, looking for partisans and runaways. They didn't find you, but I can't keep you any longer. I don't have anything.'

We went to another peasant, we sold some of these things, we washed, spent the night and then walked on. I told him, 'If the partisans show up, please let us know.' He said, 'There were several of them here, but I don't believe them. They'd kill the boy, have their way with you and then kill you, I don't believe them.' That's what this peasant told us, a man who possibly could not read or write; a Pole from the Polish village of Kupel, in the area of Rokytne, north of Sarny.

We kept walking, we found a forester's hut. A Pole, Marian Surowiec, with his wife Gienia and a small boy, six or seven years old, was inside. We didn't tell him we were Jewish. It turned out he didn't love Jews very much, but he let us stay. He knew the Gestapo was looking for us, but he didn't know we were Jewish. We stayed with him for several weeks. First of all, we bribed the 'soltys' [elected chair of a village council]. We had some Jewish coverlets hidden, we got them from those Jews in Vysotsk, we gave them to the 'soltys.' He just said, 'Live here if you want to' and that was it. The first night we were there several partisans came round. They said they were going on a mission, so they couldn't take us with them but they said they would come to get us on their way back. They didn't come.

When we were staying at the forester's hut, we started to make a living by sewing. We'd make pants from plain peasants' cloth. This had to be done with a thick round needle and a linen thread.

Grzegorz taught himself to tan leather and oak bark and we had our hands full. Marian and I would sew on the floor, because he had some old army pants, we laid them down on the floor and cut the fabric like that.

Meanwhile, after several weeks, this was the end of October 1942, a Ukrainian peasant came in the morning, driving a cart, and shouted, 'The Red Army is coming!' it turned out that large partisan forces had come from the interior of Ukraine, moving to western Ukraine. Of course, we went to the command straight away and asked to join. And they accepted us.

[Editor's note: Mrs. Duda refused to talk about her wartime fate after joining the Red Army. Her friend, Grzegorz Lewi, died on 9th February 1943 in Khrapun.]

I described the period of the war when I was a civilian and the partisan forces that's... I was in a partisan unit, I was sent to a unit in the village of Kupel [50 km north of Rivne, about 400 km south east of Warsaw, today Ukraine]. The war ended in this area in 1944. I joined the army and I was transferred to Poland, dropped with a parachute.

And after the war? Well, different things happened, but mostly I worked. I kept moving around Poland, following my husband, Teodor Duda.

Some people can be quite mad when it comes to the ministry of security. I am walking with a woman, a Jew from Lublin, who was saved by my friends from TUR and she says, 'You know, this hospital is ubecki.' [Editor's note: Ubecki: Polish, adjective formed from the abbreviation UB - Ministry of Security, slang name for the Security Office (UB) - the secret police] And after all, excuse my language, her butt was saved. I worked in the ministry of security, so many people were helped. I worked in that police. But does that mean my conscience isn't clear?

At this moment, a friend of mine [from the ministry of security], a Pole, has a case in court; and he's eighty years old. After the war, Jews were returning from Russia and they caught them there in the Rzeszow district [300 km south east of Warsaw] and murdered some of them. And he wanted to save them [the Jews], so he punched one of those assailants in the face. He's got a court case now, because it doesn't expire, that he harassed veterans. And are they veterans because they were murdering Jews?

I attended university after the war, I became a civilian again, I worked for many years in foreign commerce, which was the profession I was educated for, because I graduated from School of Foreign Service. And later, because I was receiving a pension for the years I spent in the army, I became a contract employee in the tourism industry, I only stopped working as a tour guide in 1990. Because I passed exams in three languages - German, French and Russian; and that's it.

After the war I didn't find anyone from my close family. I searched at the Jewish Historical Institute [34](#) and I came upon the name of a cousin who had been to a camp [probably in evacuation] in Russia, in Komi. But when he came back, he didn't suspect that anyone from the family was alive, so he didn't look for us. He later went to the States [USA], where he had some family, but because the name Goldberg is so popular in the United States it would be difficult to find them. I didn't have any precise data. He was the son of Fela, my father's sister, I've already talked about her. Before the war their family lived in Dratowo near Lublin. Their last name was Goldberg and they had a lake there. Perhaps this will reach someone there, won't it?

Later, I found some family from Father's side in Moscow, two aunts [Mania and Ania] and an uncle [Natan Pinski]. But they're dead now. However, Aron, Uncle Filip's son, lived in Minsk, in Belarus. He changed his name to Arkadij after the war; he went to law school and was sent off to Minsk to the army. After he retired, because he was born in 1922, he also worked as a legal advisor. There is a niece in Canada, a daughter of that cousin; I also had some distant cousins in Israel. I don't know if that cousin [Arkadij's daughter] is still alive, she became a bit strange after her husband died.

And one of those Bortners, I've talked about him as well, also survived [the one who changed his name to Tagori]. His son from his first marriage, Maciek, also got married to a Polish woman and lives in Paris. Lech Walesa [35](#) was the godfather of his child. Maciek's mother, Zofia, remarried. Her second husband was a man who was active in Solidarnosc [36](#) and personally knew Lech Walesa. Ms. Funny stories, aren't they? And my closest cousin lives in Lodz, but she married a Pole, like all of us did, and her family is completely Polish. Her son even got married in a church... that's the end, as they put it, that's complete assimilation, quite simply.

I had an exceptional husband, Teodor, who was completely free from any kind of nationalism. In 1968 [Anti-Zionist campaign in Poland] [37](#) he suggested to me – let's leave. I told him, 'No, my place is here.' And in 1968, in the office, in the company where I was working, in international commerce, one of the men had just returned from the Far East when the Israeli war [Six-Day-War] [38](#) was going on and he talked about what was happening there. They threw him out of the party [Polish United Workers' Party] and they told me, 'You have to repeat what he said.' I really didn't remember and, even if I did, I wouldn't have said it.

I hate informers, although I understand that sometimes you need to use them, but not in this case. I voted against his expulsion from the party. So I was reprimanded. It was only a reprimand, because I had been a partisan and the chief of my district was Korczynski, so they were scared to do anything more. But they later asked me in the district party headquarters if I felt I had been harmed. So I just told them one thing, 'You know what, I worked in the ministry of security, I understand they have to use informers there, but you in the party structures?' That really is what I told them. So I didn't leave and wasn't planning on leaving. Just like that.

I would like to say a few words about my second husband. My husband, Teodor Duda, was from a village called Czesniki [250 km south east of Warsaw] near Zamosc, from a large family of the Eastern Orthodox faith. He was born in 1914, on 25th November. He himself couldn't say if he was Polish or Ukrainian. Because there was no [national] consciousness in the countryside yet. He studied, he attended elementary school. They were very poor, because 2 hectares of land for eleven people is not much. There was one pair of shoes for several boys, so they would take turns going to school. The oldest brother, Mieczyslaw, who served in the Polish Army, married rich and he helped my husband very much, so that he could study. Mieczyslaw lived in Komorow, a village near Zamosc.

When he was 17, Teodor got involved with the Communist Union of Polish Youth [39](#), he was sentenced to three years in jail. And he spent those three years in jail. When he came back, he was, as it was said – a professional communist activist. He was sent to prison again, this time for eight years and he got out during the war, in 1939. He went to the Soviet Union and he happily approached the border patrol, telling them that he, a communist, was going to his, how would you put it, spiritual homeland. So they sent him to a labor camp for three years. He was somewhere up

in the Ural, then they settled him in Kazakhstan, he found his way to the army from there, but not to Anders, to Berling [cf. The 1st Kosciuszko Infantry Division] [40](#).

So this is how we met in the Polish partisan headquarters, I had been in the Soviet partisan forces, I was staff officer of the Grunwald brigade, which was supposed to cross the River Bug. And this is how the two of us got together. After the war, he was an officer, a senior officer of the ministry of defense. We got married officially in 1946. What do I think of him? I have to say that when I look at the people around us, I think – God, if there were only more idealistic people like him, then all changes would happen differently. Apart from his ideology, he was a very decent man, very kind and that was probably the greatest luck I had in life. We spent 42 years together.

My husband wasn't nationalistic at all. For him, everyone was a human being first. I even have to say that at first he would brag to his friends about having a Jewish wife. I told him: 'Fiedia – this is how we called him in Russian – stop it, you never know who you're dealing with.' I simply pointed it out to him that he shouldn't trust everyone like that. Anyway, I think I couldn't have had it better than with him. Such was my happiness. But we didn't have children. I was pregnant, but I had to terminate: it wasn't a time for having babies [in 1941]. I walked from Vysotsk to Stolin, had the procedure and went back on foot, 30 kilometers. I fell ill and somehow... I couldn't have children later.

I went to Israel after the war, several times. Here [in Poland] Jews, especially those who survived the occupation, have an inferiority complex, because you just can't not have it, you can't. The fact that Toeplitz [Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz, contemporary writer and journalist] now published 'The Saga of the Toeplitz Family' [Saga rodziny Toeplitzów], this also proves the existence of the inferiority complex. Or so I think. There, people don't have that. They are the masters of their own country. The issues of Palestine, Arabs, those were also political games of all these Arab sheikhs. When this territory was being divided, the Arabs could have created their own country then, but they didn't let them. Because they were being used in these games with Israel, England, etc.

But I can say one thing: what they turned this desert into, it is just amazing. I stayed with my friend, whom I used to work with, in Bat Yam, a city south of Tel Aviv. The seashore there is very high, precipitous; when I was there the first time they were putting dirt there, planting plants and putting in these tubes. Every 25 cm, that's what I calculated, there was a hole, they would pour water in that hole and it went straight to the root [patented Israeli irrigation system]. I was there several years later and the entire seashore was blooming, lush vegetation, lots of flowers, the entire area was nicely developed. That's just something you don't see anywhere else.

I also visited a kibbutz. It is true that the people who set these up were very ideological, but these kibbutzim were not communes. Yes, people worked together, but they had everything they needed and they studied, whoever wanted to leave, could leave, etc.

Apart from that, it's a country like any other, people like everywhere, except there is a difference between European Jews and African, Asian Jews, difference between Sephardi [41](#) and Ashkenazi Jews. And there are lots of them there. When I was once staying with this friend of mine, it was the Easter [Pesach] holidays. And she says, 'Come, I'll show you a synagogue of Abyssinian [Ethiopian] Jews.' And there was this woman walking there, an Abyssinian – what a beauty she was! European features, because they don't have African features, but black as tar, such a beautiful face, full figure; it turned out she had four or five children, she was walking to meet her husband, who was a

curator in the museum. And the clothing of these Abyssinian Jews...

When it comes to politics, there is a large difference with regards to their attitude to political issues. Firstly, social-democrats and socialists there are mostly Europeans and these most backward ones, the religious ones, are the African and Asian Jews. It was said here all the time that you can communicate in Polish in Israel. But that's not true, not true. When I was taking a tram or bus and I asked something in Polish, no one answered, in German - no one, in French - yes; there were many Jews from Morocco and they understood French.

When someone mentions szmalcownicy [42](#), criminals from Jedwabne [43](#) or others, I understand that, I know, but you can't look at any nation from the point of view of perversions, which exist in every society. Myself, I am very critical of the role of Jewish militia in ghettos [cf. Jewish police] [44](#). I understand it was necessary to maintain some order, but these people betrayed others to save themselves and their families. Why am I supposed to evaluate them differently than people who for 1,500 years were under the pressure of the anti-Semitic activity of the church?

I respect Golda Tencer very much [actress of the Jewish Theater, singer, president of the Shalom Foundation]; intelligent woman, energetic. I respect Szurmiej [Szymon Szurmiej, director, actor and president of the Jewish Theater since 1969], he is someone. There were some disagreements and other issues there in the meantime; also they are more into Yiddish and I have distanced myself from that, I can't go back and throw away decades of my life. I say this, because there were different kinds of Jewish people. Traditional Jews were a whole different world for me. I couldn't understand that world. Because I was in circles where you read Russian and Polish literature; my generation went to Polish schools, gymnasia. There were no lectures, no study of Jewish religion, culture or tradition.

Did I want to break away from Jewishness? No. When I came to the partisan unit, I gave them my name, last name, everything. But my current name, the one I have since 1939, is mine, because I chose it. And this is how it stayed my entire life. I don't have anything more to say about Jewishness.

Glossary:

## **[1](#) Bialystok ghetto**

It was set up following the German invasion of the city (26th July 1941), also for Jews from surrounding towns, some 40,000 people in total. In February 1943, during the first liquidation campaign, when around 10,000 people were sent to Treblinka, an attempt at resistance was undertaken. On 16th August 1943, during the final liquidation of the ghetto, an uprising broke out, led by M. Tenenbaum and D. Moszkowicz (who both committed suicide following the failure of the uprising). Within 5 days all the inhabitants of the ghetto were taken away, some to Treblinka and some to Majdanek.

## **[2](#) Partitions of Poland (1772-1795)**

Three divisions of the Polish lands, in 1772, 1793 and 1795 by the neighboring powers: Russia, Austria and Prussia. Under the first partition Russia occupied the lands east of the Dzwina, Drua and Dnieper, a total of 92,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1.3 million. Austria took the southern part

of the Cracow and Sandomierz provinces, the Oswiecim and Zator principalities, the Ruthenian province (except for the Chelm lands) and part of the Belz province, a total of 83,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 2.6 million. Prussia annexed Warmia, the Pomerania, Malbork and Chelmno provinces (except for Gdansk and Torun) and the lands along the Notec river and Goplo lake, altogether 36,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 580,000 souls. The second partition was carried out by Prussia and Russia. Prussia occupied the Poznan, Kalisz, Gniezno, Sieradz, Leczyca, Inowroclaw, Brzesc Kujawski and Plock provinces, the Dobrzyn lands, parts of the Rawa and Masovia provinces, and Torun and Gdansk, a total of 58,000 km<sup>2</sup> and over a million inhabitants. Russia took the Ukrainian and Belarus lands east of the Druja-Pinsk-Zbrucz line, altogether 280,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 3 million inhabitants. Under the third partition Russia obtained the rest of the Lithuanian, Belarus and Ukrainian lands east of the Bug and the Nemirov-Grodno line, a total area of 120,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 1.2 million inhabitants. The Prussians took the remainder of Podlasie and Mazovia, Warsaw, and parts of Samogitia and Malopolska, 55,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1 million. Austria annexed Cracow and the part of Malopolska between the Pilica, Vistula and Bug, and part of Podlasie and Masovia, a total surface area of 47,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1.2 million.

### **3 Stalingrad Battle**

17th July 1942 - 2nd February 1943. The South-Western and Don Fronts stopped the advance of German armies in the vicinity of Stalingrad. On 19th and 20th November 1942 the Soviet troops undertook an offensive and encircled 22 German divisions (330,000 people) and eliminated them. On 31st January 1943 the remains of the 6th German army headed by General Field Marshal Paulus surrendered (91,000 people). The victory in the Stalingrad battle was of huge political, strategic and international significance.

### **4 Haganah (Hebrew**

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

### **5 Common name**

Russified or Russian first names used by Jews in everyday life and adopted in official documents. The Russification of first names was one of the manifestations of the assimilation of Russian Jews at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. In some cases only the spelling and pronunciation of Jewish names was russified (e.g. Isaac instead of Yitskhak; Boris instead of Borukh), while in other cases traditional Jewish names were replaced by similarly sounding Russian names (e.g. Eugenia instead of Ghita; Yury instead of Yuda). When state anti-Semitism intensified in the USSR at the end of the 1940s, most Jewish parents stopped giving their children traditional Jewish names to avoid discrimination.

### **6 1905 Russian Revolution**

Erupted during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, and was sparked off by a massacre of St. Petersburg workers taking their petitions to the Tsar (Bloody Sunday). The massacre provoked

disgust and protest strikes throughout the country: between January and March 1905 over 800,000 people participated in them. Following Russia's defeat in its war with Japan, armed insurrections broke out in the army and the navy (the most publicized in June 1905 aboard the battleship Potemkin). In 1906 a wave of pogroms swept through Russia, directed against Jews and Armenians. The main unrest in 1906 (involving over a million people in the cities, some 2,600 villages and virtually the entire Baltic fleet and some of the land army) was incited by the dissolution of the First State Duma in July. The dissolution of the Second State Duma in June 1907 is considered the definitive end to the revolution.

## **7 Polish-Soviet War (1919-21)**

Between Poland and Soviet Russia. It began with the Red Army marching on Belarus and Lithuania; in December 1918 it took Minsk, and on 5th January 1919 it drove divisions of the Lithuanian and Belarusian defense armies out of Vilnius. The Soviets' aim was to install revolutionary governments in these lands, while the Polish side had two territorial programs for them: incorporative (the annexation of Belarus and part of Ukraine to Poland) and federating (the creation of a system of nation states sympathetic to Poland). The war was waged on the territory of what is today Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Poland (west to the Vistula). Armed combat ceased on 18th October 1920 and the peace treaty was signed on 18th March 1921 in Riga. The outcome of the 1919-1920 war was the incorporation into Poland of Lithuania's Vilnius region, Belarus' Grodno region, and Western Ukraine.

## **8 Kursk battle**

The greatest tank battle in the history of World War II, which began on 5th July 1943 and ended eight days later. The biggest tank fight, involving almost 1,200 tanks and mobile cannon units on both sides, took place in Prokhorovka on 12th July and ended with the defeat of the German tank unit.

## **9 Nozyk Synagogue**

The only synagogue in Warsaw not destroyed during World War II or shortly afterwards. Built at the beginning of the 20th century from a foundation set up by a couple called Nozyk, it serves the Warsaw Jewish Community as a prayer house today. The Nozyk Synagogue is near Grzybowskiego Square, where the majority of Warsaw's Jewish organizations and institutions are situated.

## **10 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.

## **11 President of the Republic of Poland in exile**

The office of the President of the Polish state was transferred abroad on 17th September 1939, during German and Soviet occupation of the country. Until July 1945 the president in exile was officially recognized by most ally countries and other states. The seats of the government were: Paris, Angers (after November 1939), and London (after June 1940). The office of president was held by: I. Moscicki, W. Raczkiwicz, A. Zalewski, S. Ostrowski, E. Raczynski, K. Sabbat, R. Kaczorowski. In December 1990 Kaczorowski handed over the insignia of power to the newly elected president of the Republic of Poland, Lech Walesa.

## **12 Jozef Haller's troops**

During World War I Jozef Haller fought in Pilsudski's legions. In 1916 he was appointed commander-in-chief of the 2nd Brigade of Polish Legions, which in February 1918 broke through the Austro-Russian front and joined up with the II Polish Corps in Ukraine. In August 1918 Haller went to Paris. The Polish National Committee operating in France appointed him commander-in-chief of the Polish Army in France (the 'Blue Army'). In April 1919 Gen. Haller led his troops back to Poland to take part in the fight for Poland's sovereignty and independence. He commanded first the Galician front, then the south-western front and finally the Pomeranian front. During the Polish-Bolshevik War, in 1920, he became a member of the National Defense Council and Inspector General of the Volunteer Army and commander-in-chief of the North-Eastern front. After the war he was nominated General Inspector of Artillery. During the chaos that ensued after Poland regained its independence and in the battles over the borders in 1918-1921, the soldiers of Haller's army were responsible for many campaigns directed against the Jews. They incited pogroms and persecution in the towns and villages they entered.

## **13 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.

## **14 Maccabi World Union**

International Jewish sports organization whose origins go back to the end of the 19th century. A

growing number of young Eastern European Jews involved in Zionism felt that one essential prerequisite of the establishment of a national home in Palestine was the improvement of the physical condition and training of ghetto youth. In order to achieve this, gymnastics clubs were founded in many Eastern and Central European countries, which later came to be called Maccabi. The movement soon spread to more countries in Europe and to Palestine. The World Maccabi Union was formed in 1921. In less than two decades its membership was estimated at 200,000 with branches located in most countries of Europe and in Palestine, Australia, South America, South Africa, etc.

## **15 Corporations**

Elite student organizations stemming from Germany [similar to fraternities]. The first Polish corporation was founded in 1828. They became popular in the 1920s and 1930s, when over 100 were set up. In the 1930s over 2,000 students were members, or 7% of ethnic Polish male students. Jews and women were not admitted. The aim of the corporations was to play an educational, self-developmental role, to foster patriotism, and to teach the principles of honor and friendship. Meetings included readings and lectures, and the corporations played sport. The professed apoliticism of the corporations was a fiction. Several players fought for influence in the Polish Union of Academic Corporations - the Union of Pan-Polish Youth (Związek Młodzieży Wszepolskiej), the Nationalist-Radical Camp (Oboz Narodowo-Radykalny), and the Camp for a Great Poland (Oboz Wielkiej Polski). Before the war most corporations were of an extreme right-wing ilk. This also included anti-Semitic attitudes. Students in corporate colors participated in anti-government campaigns and hit squads, resorted to physical violence against Jews, and supported the "lecture-theater ghettos" at universities and the idea of the numerus nullus, a ban on Jews studying.

## **16 Majdanek concentration camp**

Situated five kilometers from the city center of Lublin, Poland, originally established as a labor camp in October 1941. It was officially called Prisoner of War Camp of the Waffen-SS Lublin until 16th February 1943, when the name was changed to Concentration Camp of the Waffen-SS Lublin. Unlike most other Nazi death camps, Majdanek, located in a completely open field, was not hidden from view. About 130,000 Jews were deported there during 1942-43 as part of the 'Final Solution.'. Initially there were two gas chambers housed in a wooden building, which were later replaced by gas chambers in a brick building. The estimated number of deaths is 360,000, including Jews, Soviets POWs and Poles. The camp was liquidated in July 1944, but by the time the Red Army arrived the camp was only partially destroyed. Although approximately 1,000 inmates were executed on a death march, the Red Army found thousand of prisoners still in the camp, an evidence of the mass murder that had occurred in Majdanek.

## **17 Hashomer Haleumi**

Rightist Zionist scout organization. The first Hashomer Haleumi troop was established in Warsaw in 1927, and others were subsequently founded in Pinsk, Cracow, Lwow and other towns.

## **18 Workers' University Society Youth Movement (OMTUR)**

Socialist youth organization linked to the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). Established in 1926, it organized cultural and sporting events, and acted against clericalism and anti-Semitism. It brought together young people from all walks of life. In 1932 it had some 6,500 members in 85 towns and cities. In the 1930s OMTUR activists underwent political radicalization and began cooperating with a radical peasant communist movement. Reactivated in 1944, in 1948 it numbered around 100,000 members. After the war it ran clubs, libraries and sports clubs. In July 1948 OMTUR was incorporated into the Union of Polish Youth (ZMP).

## **19 Anders' Army**

The Polish Armed Forces in the USSR, subsequently the Polish Army in the East, known as Anders' Army: an operations unit of the Polish Armed Forces formed pursuant to the Polish-Soviet Pact of 30th July 1941 and the military agreement of 14th July 1941. It comprised Polish citizens who had been deported into the heart of the USSR: soldiers imprisoned in 1939-41 and civilians amnestied in 1941 (some 1.25-1.6m people, including a recruitment base of 100,000-150,000). The commander-in-chief of the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR was General Wladyslaw Anders. The army never reached its full quota (in February 1942 it numbered 48,000, and in March 1942 around 66,000). In terms of operations it was answerable to the Supreme Command of the Red Army, and in terms of organization and personnel to the Supreme Commander, General Wladyslaw Sikorski and the Polish government in exile. In March-April 1942 part of the Army (with Stalin's consent) was sent to Iran (33,000 soldiers and approx. 10,000 civilians). The final evacuation took place in August-September 1942 pursuant to Soviet-British agreements concluded in July 1942 (it was the aim of General Anders and the British powers to withdraw Polish forces from the USSR); some 114,000 people, including 25,000 civilians (over 13,000 children) left the Soviet Union. The units that had been evacuated were merged with the Polish Army in the Middle East to form the Polish Army in the East, commanded by Anders.

## **20 Sanacja**

Sanacja was a coalition political movement in Poland in the interwar years. It was created in 1926 by Józef Pilsudski. It was a wide movement created to support 'moral sanitation' of the society and the politics in Poland prior to and after the May coup d'état of 1926. Named after the Latin word for sanitation (sanatio), the movement was formed primarily by former military officers disgusted with the corrupt nature of Polish politics. It represented a coalition of members from the right, the left, and centrists. Its main focus was to eliminate corruption within Poland and to minimize inflation.

## **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 Polish Socialist Party (PPS)**

Founded in 1892, its reach extended throughout the Kingdom of Poland and abroad, and it proclaimed slogans advocating the reclamation by Poland of its sovereignty. It was a party that comprised many currents and had room for activists of varied views and from a range of social

backgrounds. During the revolutionary period in 1905-07 it was one of the key political forces; it directed strikes, organized labor unions, and conducted armed campaigns. It was also during this period that it developed into a party of mass reach (towards the end of 1906 it had some 55,000 members). After 1918 the PPS came out in support of the parliamentary system, and advocated the need to ensure that Poland guaranteed freedom and civil rights, division of the churches (religious communities) and the state, and territorial and cultural autonomy for ethnic minorities; and it defended the rights of hired laborers. The PPS supported the policy of the head of state, Jozef Pilsudski. It had seats in the first government of the Republic, but from 1921 was in opposition. In 1918-30 the main opponents of the PPS were the National Democrats [ND] and the communist movement. In the 1930s the state authorities' repression of PPS activists and the reduced activity of working-class and intellectual political circles eroded the power of the PPS (in 1933 it numbered barely 15,000 members) and caused the radicalization of some of its leaders and party members. During World War II the PPS was formally dissolved, and some of its leaders created the Polish Socialist Party - Liberty, Equality, Independence (PPS-WRN), which was a member of the coalition supporting the Polish government in exile and the institutions of the Polish Underground State. In 1946-48 many members of PPS-WRN left the country or were arrested and sentenced in political trials. In December 1948 PPS activists collaborating with the PPR consented to the two parties merging on the PPR's terms. In 1987 the PPS resumed its activities. The party currently numbers a few thousand members.

### **23 People's Army (Armia Ludowa, AL)**

Polish military organization with a left-wing political bent, founded on 1st January 1944 by renaming the People's Guard (set up in 1942). It was the armed wing of the PPR (Polish Workers' Party), and acted against the German forces and was pro-Soviet. At the beginning of 1944 it numbered 6,000-8,000 people and by July 1944 some 30,000. By comparison the partisan forces numbered 6,000 in July 1944. The People's Army directed the brunt of its efforts towards destroying German lines of communication, in particular behind the German-Soviet front. Divisions of the People's Army also participated in the Warsaw Uprising. In July 1944 the Polish Armed Forces (WP, Wojsko Polskie) were created from the People's Army and the Polish Army in the USSR.

### **24 Office for Public Security, UBP**

Popularly known as the UB, officially established to protect the interests of national security, but in fact served as a body whose function was to stamp out all forms of resistance during the establishment and entrenchment of communist power in Poland. The UB was founded in 1944. Branches of the UBP were set up immediately after the occupation by the Red Army of the Polish lands west of the Bug. The first UBP functionaries were communist activists trained by the NKVD, and former soldiers of the People's Army and members of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR). In many cases they were also collaborationists from the period of German occupation and criminals. The senior officials were NKVD officers. The primary tasks of the UBP were to crush all underground organizations with a western orientation. In 1956 the Security Service was formed and many former officers of the UBP were transferred.

### **25 White Guards**

A counter-revolutionary gang led by General Denikin, famous for their brigandry and anti-Semitic

acts all over Russia; legends were told of their cruelty. Few survived their pogroms.

## **26 German Invasion of Poland**

The German attack of Poland on 1st September 1939 is widely considered the date in the West for the start of World War II. After having gained both Austria and the Bohemian and Moravian parts of Czechoslovakia, Hitler was confident that he could acquire Poland without having to fight Britain and France. (To eliminate the possibility of the Soviet Union fighting if Poland were attacked, Hitler made a pact with the Soviet Union, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.) On the morning of 1st September 1939, German troops entered Poland. The German air attack hit so quickly that most of Poland's air force was destroyed while still on the ground. To hinder Polish mobilization, the Germans bombed bridges and roads. Groups of marching soldiers were machine-gunned from the air, and they also aimed at civilians. On 1st September, the beginning of the attack, Great Britain and France sent Hitler an ultimatum - withdraw German forces from Poland or Great Britain and France would go to war against Germany. On 3rd September, with Germany's forces penetrating deeper into Poland, Great Britain and France both declared war on Germany.

## **27 CZS Samopomoc Chlopska**

Central Union of Cooperatives - Peasant Mutual Aid, rural cooperative organization founded in 1948, bringing together voivodship and district unions and local cooperatives. An institution connected with the centrally planned economic system. It was disbanded in 1990.

## **28 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact**

Non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, which became known under the name of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Engaged in a border war with Japan in the Far East and fearing the German advance in the west, the Soviet government began secret negotiations for a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939. In August 1939 it suddenly announced the conclusion of a Soviet-German agreement of friendship and non-aggression. The Pact contained a secret clause providing for the partition of Poland and for Soviet and German spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.

## **29 Jews welcoming the Red Army**

Poles often accuse the Jews of enthusiastically welcoming the Soviet occupiers, treating it as treason against the Polish state. In reality welcoming committees were formed not only by Jews, but also by Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. Some Jews active in left-wing organizations took literally the slogans promising that Soviet rule would bring equality, liberty and justice. Of course not all Jews were uncritical with regard to Soviet promises. Older people remembered the Russian pogroms of the Tsarist period (before the 1917 revolution), the wealthy feared for their property, and religious people were afraid of repression. But information relayed back by those who had fled to central and western provinces of the ruthless treatment of the Jews by the Germans made the Jews pleased at the halt of the German advance eastward.

## **30 Great Patriotic War**

On 22nd June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War. The German blitzkrieg, known as Operation Barbarossa, nearly succeeded in breaking the Soviet Union in the months that followed. Caught unprepared, the Soviet forces lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November 1941 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The war ended for the Soviet Union on 9th May 1945.

### **31 Komsomol**

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread of the ideas of communism and involve the worker and peasant youth in building the Soviet Union. The Komsomol also aimed at giving a communist upbringing by involving the worker youth in the political struggle, supplemented by theoretical education. The Komsomol was more popular than the Communist Party because with its aim of education people could accept uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

### **32 Zamenhoff Ludwik (1859-1917)**

The creator of Esperanto, the most successful of the artificial languages. Born in Bialystok, an oculist by profession, a devoted Zionist, and a polyglot himself he started working on the international language as a high school student and completed it by 1878. The aim of his Esperantist movement was to foster fraternity among the nations. His aspirations grew to create the universal world religion as well that he would call Hillelism, in honor of Rabbi Hillel, the great rabbi of the 1st century. The Esperantist movement has proven to be successful, people have learned and widely used his language, both spoken and written, in great number ever since.

### **33 Wehrmacht (German Armed Forces)**

Between 1935 and 1945, Wehrmacht was the official name of the German Army, which consisted of land, naval and air forces. Apart from the soldiers of the Wehrmacht, the members of the Waffen-SS also participated in actions during WWII. The Waffen-SS grew out of the paramilitary SS (Schutzstaffel = 'protective echelon') established by Hitler as a personal bodyguard in 1925. Placed under the Wehrmacht, however, the Waffen-SS participated in battles from 1939. Its elite units committed massacres at Oradour, Malmedy, Le Paradis and elsewhere.

### **34 The Jewish Historical Institute [Żydowski Instytut Historyczny (ZIH)]**

Warsaw-based academic institution devoted to researching the history and culture of Polish Jews. Founded in 1947 from the Central Jewish Historical Committee, an arm of the Central Committee for Polish Jews. ZIH houses an archive center and library whose stocks include the books salvaged from the libraries of the Templum Synagogue and the Institute of Judaistica, and the documents comprising the Ringelblum Archive. ZIH also has exhibition rooms where its collection of liturgical items and Jewish painting are on display, and an exhibition dedicated to the Warsaw ghetto. Initially the institute devoted its research activities solely to the Holocaust, but over the last dozen or so years it has broadened the scope of its historical and cultural work. In 1993 ZIH was brought under the auspices of the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. It publishes the Jewish

Historical Institute Quarterly.

### **35 Waleśa, Lech (b**

1943): Leader of the Solidarity movement, politician, Nobel-prize winner. Originally he was an electrician in the Gdansk shipyard and became a main organizer of strikes there that gradually grew to be nation-wide and greatly influenced Polish politics in the 1980s. Co-founder of the Solidarity (Solidarność) trade union in 1980, representing the workers (and later much of the Polish society) against the communist nomenclature. He was one of the promoters of the thorough reconstruction of the Polish political and economic system, the creation of a sovereign democratic state with a market economy. In 1983 he received the Nobel Peace Prize. From 1990-1995 he was president of the Republic of Poland.

### **36 'Solidarność' Production Co-operatives**

An association established in 1946 to co-ordinate the work of production plants run by legally functioning Jewish parties. It also provided re-qualification and training for employees, including repatriates. In 1949 there were 200 Jewish co-operatives operating within the 'Solidarność' organization in Poland. They operated until 1968 (with a break from 1950-1956).

### **37 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], Władysław Gomułka, 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.

### **38 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.

### **39 Communist Union of Polish Youth (KZMP)**

Until 1930 the Union of Communist Youth in Poland. Founded in March 1922 as a branch of the Communist Youth International. From the end of 1923 its structure included also the Communist Youth Union of Western Belarus and the Communist Youth Union of Western Ukraine (as autonomous regional organizations). Its activities included politics, culture and education, and sport. In 1936 it initiated the publication of a declaration of the rights of the young generation in Poland (whose postulates included an equal start in life for all, democratic rights, and the guarantee of work, peace and universal education). The salient activists in the organization included B. Berman, A. Kowalski, A. Lampe, A. Lipski. In 1933 the organization had some 15,000 members, many of whom were Jews and peasants. The KZMP was disbanded in 1938.

### **40 The 1st Kosciuszko Infantry Division**

Tactical grouping formed in the USSR from May 1943. The victory at Stalingrad and the gradual assumption of the strategic initiative by the Red Army strengthened Stalin's position in the anti-fascist coalition and enabled him to exert increasing influence on the issue of Poland. In April 1943, following the public announcement by the Germans of their discovery of mass graves at Katyn, Stalin broke off diplomatic relations with the Polish government in exile and using the Poles in the USSR, began openly to build up a political base (the Union of Polish Patriots) and an army: the 1st Kosciuszko Infantry Division numbered some 11,000 soldiers and was commanded first by General Zygmunt Berling (1943-44), and subsequently by the Soviet General Bewziuk (1944-45). In August 1943 the division was incorporated into the 1st Corps of the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR, and from March 1944 was part of the Polish Army in the USSR. The 1st Division fought at Lenino on 12-13 October 1943, and in Praga in September 1944. In January 1945 it marched into Warsaw, and in April-May 1945 it took part in the capture of Berlin. After the war it became part of the Polish Army.

### **41 Sephardi Jewry**

(Hebrew for 'Spanish') Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin. Their ancestors settled down in North Africa, the Ottoman Empire, South America, Italy and the Netherlands after they had been driven out from the Iberian peninsula at the end of the 15th century. About 250,000 Jews left Spain and Portugal on this occasion. A distant group among Sephardi refugees were the Crypto-Jews (Marranos), who converted to Christianity under the pressure of the Inquisition but at the first occasion reassumed their Jewish identity. Sephardi preserved their community identity; they speak Ladino language in their communities up until today. The Jewish nation is formed by two main groups: the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi group which differ in habits, liturgy their relation toward Kabala, pronunciation as well in their philosophy.

### **42 Szmalcownik**

Polish slang word from the period of the German occupation (derived from the German word 'Schmalz', meaning lard), referring to a person blackmailing and denouncing Jews in hiding. Szmalcowniks operated in all larger cities, in particular following the liquidation of the ghettos, when Jews who had evaded deportation attempted to survive in hiding. In Warsaw they often formed organized groups that prowled around the ghetto exists. They picked out their victims by

subtle signs (e.g. lowered, frightened eyes, timid behavior), eccentric clothing (e.g. the lack of the fur collar so widespread at the time, or wearing winter clothes in summer), way of speaking, etc. Victims so selected were threatened with denunciation to the Germans; blackmail could be an isolated event or be repeated until the victim's financial resources ran out. The Polish underground attempted to combat the szmalcowniks but in vain. To this day the crimes of the szmalcowniks are not entirely investigated and accounted for.

### **43 Jedwabne**

Town in north-eastern Poland. On 10th July 1941 900 Jews were burned alive there. Until recently the official historiography maintained that the Germans were the perpetrators of this act. In 2000, however, Tomasz Gross published a book called 'Neighbors,' in which he indicted Poles as the perpetrators of the Jedwabne massacre. This book sparked off a discussion that embroiled academics, politicians and the media alike. The case was also investigated by the Institute for National Remembrance. This was the second such serious debate on Polish involvement in the extermination of the Jews. The Jedwabne debate attempted to establish the number of Jews murdered, to define the nature of the incident (pogrom or Holocaust), and to point out the direct perpetrators and initiators of the crime.

### **44 Jewish police**

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