

# Tomasz Miedzinski

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Warsaw

Poland

Interviewer: Anka Grupinska

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*I met Mr. Miedzinski in Grzybowo, contemporary Warsaw's mini Jewish quarter. (Grzybowo is home to most of the Jewish organizations, the synagogue, a theater, a kosher shop, and a restaurant run by Israelis.) We spent many hours talking in the welcoming Schorr Foundation library. Mr. Miedzinski agreed to the interview because he considers it his duty to tell others.*

My name is Tomasz Miedzinski and I come from Horodenka, a small town in eastern Galicia [1](#). Once I was called Tewie Szwach. The name in my papers was Tobiasz. Before the war all my immediate family lived in that town, both my paternal grandparents and my maternal grandparents. I was born in 1928.

I don't remember my grandma, my father's mother; she died in the early 1930s. I don't even know what her name was. My grandfather - my father's father - was called Abram Szwach. Granddad Awrum, that's what we called him, was a tailor by trade. I know that for some time after World War I my grandparents lived in Zaleszczyki [Zalishchyky, present-day Ukraine]. I remember my grandfather as a very old man: hunched and hardly able to walk. I suspect that in 1937-1938 he might already have been 87 or 88. Granddad Awrum lived with his youngest son, who was called Kopel Szwach. Kopel had his own house, you see. Kopel was a carpenter, like almost all the men in the family, in fact. Kopel was about four to six years younger than my father. My father was born in 1898. He was called Josef Szlojme, Jozef Salomon [the second is a Polish version of the names]. There were at least six children in my father's family. But the only ones I knew were the eldest, Uncle Icek, who ran a fruit stall at the bazaar with his wife; Uncle Kopel; an aunt who lived in Zaleszczyki, but I can't remember her name, and Aunt Estera, the wife of Chaim Frajer - they lived in Horodenka.

I remember my grandparents on my mother's side very well, because until I was six I was brought up by them. My granddad was called Berl Kupferman. Kupferman is like Miedzinski [the stem of both the Jewish and the Polish names means copper]. Berl Kupferman came from a village called Kolanki, between Horodenka and Zaleszczyki. He was a furrier. He was short, with a beard, a man of exceptional goodness and very proud - that's how I remember him. My grandmother's brother, Hersz, also lived in Kolanki. Grandma was called Menia. Her maiden name was Gutman. I think she was born in the 1870s, and I think she was from Horodenka. Granddad married into Horodenka, you see. They had six children: two sons and four daughters.

Granddad Berl took part in World War I; he was a soldier in the Austrian army [see KuK (Kaiserlich und Koeniglich) army] [2](#). He was on the Italian front [3](#) when they used gas bombs, and he partially lost his sight. And then after the war he got diabetes and went blind altogether. But that didn't stop him being a shammash in a prayer house. Mama always told us how at 5.00 or 5.30 in the morning,

winter or summer, he would walk the several hundred meters with his stick to the prayer house and clean and tidy up there. And he would walk past our windows, and my mother, who on Fridays always got up in the early morning hours to bake bread for the whole week, would look out of the window and by the light of the streetlamp would see Granddad trudging, often through the snow, and feeling the way with his stick. Sometimes he would fall into the ditch somewhere along the way - there were ditches in our town because there wasn't a sewage system - and then Mama would have to dash out to help him out of the ditch and show him the way.

Granddad Berl lived with Grandma Menia and their youngest daughter, who was called Frajda. Frajda was born in 1914. She was a tailor. She got married in 1939 or 1940, I think, to Hersz Wajcman. Aunt Frydzia, that's what we called her, had her own Singer sewing machine. Their middle daughter, Sara, born in 1902 or 1903, emigrated in the early 1920s to the United States. There she married Natan Oxhorn, and they basically spent their whole lives there, had children, and grandchildren - an American family. My mama, Chaja Klara, was born in 1900. And then there was a fourth daughter, called Cypora, who some time in the mid-1920s emigrated to Uruguay. We kept in touch with her and Aunt Sara during the war. The oldest son was called Frojnm and was a tailor, and the youngest son, the youngest child in the family, was called Szlojme and was a tailor too. Frojnm and Szlojme lived in Horodenka with their families. I knew them all personally; we saw each other every day.

Tailors, furriers and carpenters, those were the trades in our family. Grandma Menia helped out with the furs too. She mended peasants' sheepskins and did it very neatly; that was her contribution to the family income. The peasants would bring us a sack of potatoes for the winter, or sometimes a few pence. I helped Grandma with that a little. Sometimes I would tar the coarse threads - rub them with tar to make them harder and impregnated. We used tar for black sheepskins and paraffin for light-colored ones. I threaded the needles, because Grandma's eyes were bad by then.

Father was tall, Mama was of medium height. Mama was pretty; she had black hair cut short. For me there was no woman more beautiful. In the winter she would always put a woolen shawl on her head. Father wore a peaked cap, and a gray hat with a brim on holidays. Father was slim - he'd worked very hard since the age of 14, so he was muscular and a very strong man. I think he was handsome. At home they used to tell us that my mom was supposed to go the States, and she got the affidavit [papers enabling emigration], but then she fell in love with my father and passed up the trip in favor of her sister Sara. They didn't get married by shidduch. Times had moved on by then. Perhaps they met in a club or something.

Mama completed elementary school. And during World War I she spent a year in Austria, because Granddad was in the army at the time and Grandma was escaping from the Cossacks [4](#) with small children. When the Germans came, Mama always said that it was impossible, that the Germans, with their culture, with their history, Goethe, Heine... [commit all the crime they did]. And so we didn't escape. When the Germans attacked the Soviet Union, they reached us, Horodenka, within a few days. And then my parents said that no, we were staying, but that Rywka, the eldest, she should escape with the Wajcmans. If something were to happen to us, then at least she would survive.

Our mom was so gifted at sewing that she could patch up anything. If any of our clothes were handed down from older children to younger ones, they were always neatly patched. I remember one of our mistresses, called Liebster, who taught us religion in 1938. And there was this son of a horse-food merchant, who always came to school ragged, all dirty. And Mrs. Liebster would often shout at him: 'How can you come to school in such a state!? Come here, Tobiasz,' - that's what they called me at the Polish school - 'come here, show us what you look like.' And she would show all the children my carefully patched clothes. And I was very embarrassed, I felt humiliated.

Father made everything a carpenter could make: furniture, window frames, doors, coffins. He would sell it on Tuesdays at the market. The Ukrainian peasants would bring their produce to sell, and then they would wander round and buy tables, chests, chairs, benches or coffins. We helped Father. I remember that we used to walk to Ofenberger's wood yard, for instance, two kilometers or so away, and carry one or two planks back on our own backs. That way we saved on the price of the cart.

There were five of us children, and our house - my parents' house - took many years to build. I never hide the fact that ours was a poor family; there was often not enough food to feed five children and two adults. I was the middle son; there were a sister and a brother before me and two brothers after me. I was Grandma's favorite. I was a chatterbox, and always ready to help, and Grandma all but adopted me - I even slept in the same bed as her until I was six, until our house was finished and my parents took me back. When I was seven I started going to school; I went to the first grade in 1935, and then I left Grandma's home for good. In fact, it was really she who brought me up.

Do you know when a poor Jew eats meat? Either when the chicken is sick or when the Jew is sick. I think our parents tried very hard to make sure there was always food in the house. It wasn't fancy food, but we didn't go hungry. Mama baked the bread herself. In the new house, Mama made the dough on Thursday, and on Friday she got up at dawn to bake the seven loaves, large, two kilo ones. On the whole, wheat flour wasn't really used much; it was a mixture of wheat and rye, or rye - black bread. And one of those loaves lasted a day. We took a slice of bread and lard to school. Meat was the best, of course: chicken, or cold minced patties on Saturdays, these flat meatballs made from beef. Veal and poultry were very expensive. Under Soviet rule we started eating pork.

Mama cooked on the hob, on a brick stove. That stove heated the whole house, and when it was very cold Father put a cast-iron stove in. On the large cast-iron hob there were hotplates. Metal rings covered the fire, which never went out. Mama baked bread in the oven on stone slabs. First she put the dough into straw molds and then put them into the oven on a paddle. I was very fond of that brick stove, because you could climb up a little ladder onto the stove-corner and sleep there cozily in the warm.

For the midday meal we ate ayntopf [one course meal]: mostly potatoes, carrots and beans. It was so thick that the spoon stood straight up in it. On Saturdays there was always clear chicken soup with noodles, some kind of meat, mince. We rarely had fish, only at holidays, really. One dish was very popular - mamaliga. Mama always cooked mamaliga in a metal pot: a little salt, a little fat of some sort, sunflower oil, and then you very slowly tipped corn-flour into the boiling water, stirring all the time, until the soup was very thick. When it had cooled, you turned the pot upside-down onto a slat and it came out in a single lump. And you could eat it in one of two ways. Either you cut

it into little cubes and ate it with milk, usually for breakfast or supper, and then it was called mamaliga with milk. Or you made slices using a special utensil, a kind of guillotine: two wooden handles attached to a thin steel wire, and you cut the block into slices using the wire. In Ukrainian it was called kulesha. We loved mamaliga with white beet jam, also made by Mama. Sugar beets were very popular because there was a sugar factory in Horodenka, and in fall when the peasants brought them in from the fields on their carts, we would gather the ones that fell off. And we used them to make jam, which lasted the whole winter.

My parents were very keen that my elder brother, Mojsze Mendel, should get an education. He was born in 1926. He was an unusually gifted boy. Then, of course, we still didn't have electricity. We had kerosene lamps at home. Mojsze Mendel, for instance, could make an electric bell using a battery and a few bits of some electric wire. And that caused a stir on the whole street. He was very talented mathematically. We went to a boys' school; there weren't any co-educational schools. There were Polish and Ukrainian grammar schools. Our arithmetic teacher, Lejb Rajf, also taught math at the Polish grammar school. And once there was this incident, in 1938, when my brother was in the 4th or 5th grade, when Rajf sent a trap from the Polish grammar school for my brother, so that he could show the grammar school kids how to solve a particular problem. He wanted to shame them by showing them that a 5th-grader could do things like that. Well, two or three days later, the boys from the grammar school lay in wait for him as we were coming back from cheder in the evening; they threw a coat over his head and beat him up terribly. And that was the price of solving a math problem.

Szmulek, my younger brother, was born in 1932, and Mordechaj in 1934. I can't say much about Szmulek and Mordechaj; they were just small children. Szmulek went to cheder with me, but the youngest didn't have the chance. My oldest sister was called Rywka. She was born in 1924. Before the war she went to the Polish elementary girls' school. There wasn't really a Jewish school, just a semi-private Hebrew school and we couldn't afford it. After the Germans attacked the Soviet Union in 1941 [the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War] [5](#) Rywka didn't go to grammar school; she went to nursing school. Shortly afterwards she escaped to the Soviet Union with Aunt Frydzia and her husband Herman Wajcman. Only Rywka and I survived the war. She lives in Israel today.

I remember Grandma Menia's house from my earliest childhood. It was probably built either before World War I or just afterwards. It was a two-story house and it had three rooms. One was rented out to a poor family with two children, and another to another family with children. As well as Grandma, Granddad and Frydzia, who lived on the second floor, my family lived downstairs; we had a room with a veranda which overlooked the garden. And then there was the carpentry bench as well, because Father worked at home.

So we lived in this one room. Try to picture it: a room of about 16 square meters, a kerosene lamp hanging in the middle. True to the adage that the cobbler's children are the worst shod, some rickety old sticks of furniture. Off to one side there was this peasant stove, which we cooked on winter and summer. There was hardly room to turn round in there really. Everybody slept together - the boys with Father in one bed, one older brother slept on a fold-down bed on the floor - my sister slept with Mama - and sometimes there wasn't room for the fourth, so they'd roll a straw mattress out on the floor. I was with Grandma. And the youngest, Mordechaj, was born in that dark room. There's a joke: why do poor people have so many children? Because wherever Dad goes, Mom is right there. There weren't any windows, just the door straight out onto the yard, and

another door into the other room where the tenants lived. It was very cramped.

The lavatory, made with planks, was down the garden. Once a year at night a cleaner came who took the excrement out and scattered it in a field somewhere. I remember that, because for two or three days afterwards the smell hung over the whole street. And so the lavatory cleanout was moved to the winter, so it could be hacked out with something metal, a rod, rather than scooped out with a spade.

Sometime in the mid-1930s my parents came to the conclusion that they needed their own place, and they started working towards building their own house. And they bought a site at 60 Rynek Street - either in installments, or perhaps my father was to pay it off in carpentry. That didn't mean my parents had got rich. No. But a house was a must; they had to make the effort. So there in Granddad's yard, my parents and Granddad Berl, my blind grandfather, made the bricks themselves. There was earth, sand, clay and horse manure. All that was mixed together in a pit and made into shapes, these rectangular blocks. And I remember that the yard was always full of those bricks. They dried in the sun. And that was the material used to build our house. The foundations were built of stones brought from all over the neighborhood. The peasants that did business with Father, who ordered carpentry work from him, had carts and collected the stones. That type of cooperation was called sharvark. And then the walls were built on top of those foundations with our bricks, and a few furnace-fired bricks were used as well.

When Pilsudski [6](#) died, in 1935, we were already living in that unfinished house. My parents were very keen that the house should have a tin roof, and not a shingle or tiled roof, and they were successful. The first story and the second story were finished: two rooms and makeshift stairs. There were two rooms upstairs too. The most beautiful room, because it was sunny, was occupied by a more distant aunt, Sara, and her husband. They were to live there free for the rest of their lives, because she had lent \$50 for the building of the house. We moved into the one room where there was a bread oven; there was a stove with hotplates on which meals were cooked, and then under the window was the carpentry bench and Father worked at that bench. Two rooms were rented out to some paupers. It wasn't much of an improvement, but we felt somehow more sure of ourselves, because we were in our own house. Just before the war Father even had a helper and bought new tools. Mama had a Singer sewing machine. The sub-tenant freed up a room and our situation improved. This was just before the war.

Our house looked sturdy and good, although it might have seemed a flimsy technology. It is no longer there. It was taken down by the neighbors when the Germans made our town Judenfrei [7](#), when we were driven out. The Ukrainians took the building materials and the tin from the roof. And I saw the stones and bricks scattered around when I went back to Horodenko in 1944. There was just a pile of rubble in the place where our house had stood.

I remember Horodenka well. Rynek Street was in the center. It was a street of single-story detached and semi-detached houses. There were fewer two-story houses and so ours stood out a little. It was a typical Jewish street. The only non-Jewish resident, Mr Dylewski, a Ukrainian, had a restaurant three doors down from us. The street ran along one side of a large square down to the town bathhouse. Jewish artisans lived and worked on Rynek Street. Most of them were carpenters. Here and there was a cobbler or a little shop where you could buy all sorts of small things. There was a baker, too, and a butcher's shop run by Catholics. They had non-kosher meat and cold cuts:

sausage, blood pudding, scraps.

The main street in Horodenka was cobbled. That road was on the route from Kolomyja to Zaleszczyki. There were a few detached houses - one of the people who lived there was the rof, who had a house with a garden and an orchard. And a little further on was the elementary school that we went to before the war. That was a large, several-story building with a large yard where we could play during the breaks. Further on were detached houses; lawyers and doctors lived there. The court and the prison were nearby. On the right was the Ukrainian grammar school, which was converted into a boys' ten-grade school in the Soviet period, and further on, outside town, was the sports stadium, and there football matches and some festivities were held. Three bridges linked the town to its suburbs. The river flowed under the bridges and there were even two mills along the way. In the area around the stadium lived the majority of the Jewish poor in wooden or tin huts. That was stinking squalor - the streets didn't have drains. You didn't even want to walk that way. I had two friends there, brothers; they studied very hard at school. They lived in terrible poverty. Their father traded in old bric-a-brac, he bought old pots, alte zachen. They were killed in the first Aktion [first liquidation of the ghetto]. One of them was called Mojsze, but I can't remember their surname.

On the whole the houses in Horodenka were made of brick or stone, though some, in the suburbs, were mixed, stone and wooden blocks, but most of them were houses with tin roofs. Some of them, like our neighbor's, who was a cattle-food merchant, had shingle roofs. Only very occasionally were the roofs tiled, because that was a material that was unknown then. The street itself was graveled. There were some streets that were so muddy and full of puddles after rain that they were hard to cross.

At the beginning of the 1930s there was no street-lighting, but just before Pilsudski's death [1935] electric lamps started to go up. I remember that once there were electrical wires on the streets, on 1 May we children had fun tying red rags to string and throwing them up onto the wires, and then later the police or the fire brigade had trouble getting the red rags down.

In Horodenka there was a cinema, and it was there that I saw my first film on the big screen. Aunt Frydzia took me with her fiance, who was called Szpilfogel; he was the goalkeeper in the Jewish football team. He was tall and hid me under his coat to go in, because I was too young for that film. The film was called 'Prosecutor Andreyev', Russian. That was 1936, or maybe 1935. And during the Soviet occupation there were barracks in that cinema hall. In the cellars they stored barrels of cabbage, gherkins in brine and tomatoes, and when the Russians escaped and the Hungarians occupied the town, the people brought the food out, and I took home a bucket of green tomatoes in brine, which was something that had never been on our menu before.

I think that in Horodenka and on the outskirts of the town there must have been between 4,000 and 4,500 Jews. Not all of them were artisans; there were a few farmers and petty merchants, who didn't live on the Jewish streets. The whole town numbered 10,000-12,000 citizens. About 3,000-3,500 Ukrainians lived on the outskirts; only the Ukrainian intelligentsia lived in the town itself - doctors, teachers and lawyers. And there were more or less 2,500-3,000 Poles: all the administrative posts, schools, all the civil servants.

There were a lot of Zionist organizations, in fact all the parties were represented in the town. Hashomer Hatzair [8](#) was strong. I don't remember Betar [9](#). There was Left Poalei Zion [10](#) and Keren

Kayemet [11](#). Not far from our house a Bund [12](#) club was under construction for many years, a huge building where the Jewish school, Yidishe Shul, was later. During the period of Soviet rule the Bund was disbanded, and its activists arrested, deported, and never heard of again. And the school was converted into the town club. I remember that there was a small Jewish hotel in our town, run by a real dragon. Miserable rooms, they were. All that was on the main street. And not far away was the Orthodox church and the Hebrew school.

In the run-up to 1st May the artisans and workers held illegal demonstrations, but there was never an official one - that was banned. Even the Polish socialists, I mean the members of the Polish Socialist Party, if they went out on a demonstration, were only given permission on a certain street. On the whole the Jews didn't get involved. The Bundists avoided demonstrations too, because they knew that the Endeks [13](#) or the anti-Semites would attack them. There were various incidents. Some people, the Jewish youths from Zukunft, for instance, or from the Zionist parties, would put stones into old tights and whirl them around like a club. That was how they defended themselves against the Endek hit squads. In any case, the police always arrested the leading activists before 1st May.

If 3rd May celebrations were held [the anniversary of the signing of the Polish constitution in 1793], we children, Jewish, Polish and Ukrainian, went on marches with our schools. Our teacher, Smiechowski, was the leader of a branch of the Riflemen. He always walked at the head, with his saber, and we admired him, because he looked wonderful in his uniform. But Endek groups would attack the Jews. So the Jewish youths began to organize vigilante groups and there were often skirmishes and arrests.

In Horodenka there was a synagogue, which it took many years to build, one of the most beautiful in southern Galicia. It was finished sometime in the mid-1930s, and had a beautiful portal. It could hold several hundred people easily. There were few Hasidim in the town, but there were Orthodox Jews, and there was their rov, with sidelocks, and he wore the streimel. They prayed in the large synagogue.

Our house was very secular, a socialist artisan household. My father was a Bund sympathizer. Before the war we spoke Yiddish, both inside and outside the home, although we did know Polish and Ukrainian as well. There were many homes like ours at that time. Granddad Berl, the shammash, wasn't an Orthodox Jew either. There were no Orthodox Jews in our family. Of course we observed the holidays, every Saturday. Granddad Awrum would put his prayer shawl on then. On our street lived carpenters and other artisans. The Torah was kept in one of their houses and Saturday prayers were always held there. But on more important festivals, Yom Kippur, or Sukkot, for example, we would go to the big synagogue, or to Beyt [Bet] Hamidrash. The prayer house where Granddad Berl was the shammash was called aklous, or aklois [stibl]. The smallest type of prayer house. It was a small, single-story building. Everyone had their own place there, their own shtender: these book stands with drawers for prayer books. That was where the artisan poor prayed. When I went with Father to prayers, it wasn't really to pray - I was still small; I never had my bar mitzvah - but to meet my friends. My brother had his bar mitzvah, and the ceremony was held there in that artisan aklois.

Neither Mama nor Grandma wore a wig. Before the high holidays a few women got together and went to the mikveh, which was in a separate building near the synagogue. The mikveh was for

women, and there was a bathhouse, or rather a sauna, perhaps, for the men. We had hot steam baths there. There were steps up to the very ceiling, and in the back there was a stove and glowing coals. You went there once a week, on Friday afternoons, to bathe and relax in the steam, and afterwards, for fun, some people would go into the mikveh. I went there with the men and thrashed myself with the switches. That was the only way to have a decent bath. But it wasn't the most hygienic of places. The mikveh was the same one for men and women, but they had different times. Our Jewish shtetl wasn't very religious.

There was one mohel in the town. I remember the circumcision of my brother Mordechaj very well. The ceremony was held in Grandma's house on Zeromskiego Street. All the closest family took part: uncles, aunts, their children, and some friends of my father, artisans. I think that was in 1932, I was four. I remember a shiny box and a razor-sharp knife that the mohel's assistant took out of the box. It was a shock for me, despite the fact that we had all been through the same thing, of course. My brother screamed, but the mohel said that it was very good that he was screaming, that he would be strong. And then there was some kind of refreshment: cake, and a glass of wine, homemade, probably. Grandma made apple wine, this kind of fermented apple drink, because there weren't any grapes in Horodenka, grapes grew in Zaleszczyki.

I had a kind of semi-legal bar mitzvah, because by then the Russians were already in the town. At that time we weren't officially allowed to celebrate Jewish festivals. The synagogues were closed. Some of the rabbinic intelligentsia had been deported along with the Polish civil servants and officers somewhere way out east. So we had a family get-together and Granddad gave me a pocket watch called an 'onion' [a kind of watch that you put into your pocket and do not wear on your wrist. It is still called an onion in Polish]. In fact, it was that watch that saved my life later on. By then I was a member of the pioneers, a communist children's organization [see All-Union pioneer organization] [14](#). I was far from religious.

We kept a kosher kitchen until the mid-1930s, and after that only at festivals. It was getting harder and harder to find kosher food. There were indications of the later famous Prystor decrees [15](#). That was after the death of Pilsudski, in 1936, 1937 and 1938. The Jews were being denied more and more privileges. We had kosher chicken and other birds [poultry], because there was still a shochet, a ritual slaughterer, in the town. I even used to be sent to the shochet myself.

Pesach, I remember, we celebrated. On the first and last day of the holidays, my father didn't work, of course. We tidied the workshop and there was a festive atmosphere. We cleaned the house of chumetz [chametz], so that there wasn't a trace of bread; we even had to empty out our pockets to shake out all the crumbs. The evening was solemn, though, and we read the Haggadah. I remember that there was always liver with egg and onions, and matzah. There was goose dripping. Every year Mama kept a goose, fattened it up for three weeks before the holidays, and then the goose was slaughtered in the kosher fashion, and the feathers were used for pillows. There was fish, carp Jewish style, sweet, with raisins. I remember that quilts were arranged all round the table where we sat, and we sat on the quilts. I don't know why, whether that was part of the tradition. And it was very cramped, because with our parents there were seven of us. We celebrated the holidays right up until the Russians came.

I went to cheder from 1933, maybe 1934, until 1939, because when the Russians came they closed down the cheders. And in 1935 I started in the first grade of elementary school. In the mornings we



went to elementary school, in the afternoon we had something quick to eat at home and dashed off to study the Torah and the language [Hebrew]. It wasn't a pleasure for us, more a duty, but those were the rules and we had to abide by them. When the Russians came the school system was changed, because they had one ten- year school, and we had elementary school, grammar school and high school. So they gave us a ten-year school and put everyone back a year, because they considered their standard of teaching to be much higher. And in June 1941 our education came to an end. I completed the 5th grade. There was a Hebrew school in Horodenka as well, but it was elitist, not within our reach. It was mostly children of Zionists that went there, or of people who were planning to emigrate to Palestine in the future. And those were wealthier people than us. Those children had little in common with us, the poor.

Berl Gefner, my melamed, was an important figure in Horodenka, because his appearance alone set him apart from the Jews. He was tall, must have been about 1 meter 90 centimeters, sturdily built, with a beard, and full of verve. He wasn't among the most Orthodox, but he was probably paid by the kehila or the board of the Jewish community. His little school was called Talmud Toyre. He really did devote an awful lot of time to working with children. The cheder was outside the town, quite a way, towards the [Christian] Orthodox and Jewish cemeteries. We went there on foot, of course.

Gefner had one son, and he very much wanted to give him an education, wanted to send him to Lublin, to the yeshivah. And our cheder was a large room with desks that you could keep a Gemara or prayer book in. There was a blackboard that stood on a stand. There were at least 25 or 30 of us. I don't remember there being any pictures on the walls. In 1936 and 1937 we were given tea, and I remember that the baker would bring us fresh rolls in a basket, and everyone got one for tea. During the liquidation of Horodenka's Jewry, just before he was shot, Gefner said: 'Es vet kimen di royte armye, zi vet rakhnemen far ins,' that the Red Army would return and avenge our deaths. He got a shot in the head, of course, and fell into the pit.

Between 1939 and 1941 we were under Soviet rule, because in 1939 after the famous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact [16](#), our lands, Western Ukraine, were occupied by the Soviet army. To be honest, that pleased a lot of Jews, many of whom then believed in the famous slogans about equality and elimination of unemployment, and above all we believed that there would be no more nationalism and racial discrimination. I was an 11-year-old child then, at elementary school.

In 1939 Father worked as usual. Guilds were being set up, but my father put off joining. Jewish life had changed. Places of prayer had closed down voluntarily, because there was no official ban on religious practices. There was discrimination against the Polish intelligentsia, who were often arrested and exiled, as were well-known Zionist and Bundist activists. Only later did we find out that these were deportations deep inside Russia. They took our teacher, who before the war had been a civil servant at the Town Hall, a man of exceptional distinction and integrity; I remember that we were very sorry to lose him.

On 1st July 1941 Hungarian troops entered Horodenka. Hungary was a German satellite, and at that point it was easier for them to occupy southern Ukraine from Subcarpathia [17](#). There was an armed skirmish in Horodenka - some quite heavy fire, and a dozen or so Hungarian soldiers and seven Soviet soldiers were killed. The Hungarians were taken away at once, but the bodies of the Soviet soldiers lay in the streets despite the fact that it was terribly hot all day and all night, and

only the next day was the order given to bury them. Some of the Hungarian units advanced further, in the direction of the Dniester, Horodenka was left with an interregnum, and then previously little-known groups of Ukrainian nationalists sprang into action. They created their own system of authority, and Engineer Zybczyn, an anti-Semite, was made chief official.

Before the war the Ukrainians had had their own schools, cultural center and labor cooperative. When the Soviet army pulled out, the first persecutions of the Jews began. My grandfather Berl was also imprisoned, in the stead of his son-in-law Herman Wajcman, who had been in the Soviet authorities in 1939-1941, but had managed to flee the Germans. On 4th or 5th July [1941] horrifying news reached us from the villages outside Horodenka. The Ukrainians had organized a pogrom of the Jewish population. The Jews were rounded up - they were mainly peasants, owners of little shops, and cattle traders - and transported to the banks of the Dniester. The adults were bound together in groups with barbed wire, the children had stones tied around their necks, they were marched onto a raft, and from that raft thrown into the river. They drowned all of them that way. Scores of people. Two women survived; they were washed up wounded somewhere a long way off, and some good person, a Ukrainian, hid them. A few days later the women came to Horodenka and told their story. After that bodies started to be washed up. Some of them even in Zaleszczyki.

The Ukrainians in Horodenka were preparing their first pogrom of the Jews. It was first and foremost the communists and Jewish intelligentsia that they wanted to remove; but the pogrom never took place. The Hungarians arrested and executed the Ukrainians' ringleader, Waskula; he was the Ukrainian police commandant. I remember when they found his body and brought it back to Horodenka. That funeral was a demonstration of power by the Ukrainian nationalists. I stood behind a fence with a few friends and watched it in terror. The funeral column cortege processed for hours in absolute silence. Activists from Ukrainian organizations had come from all over Stanislawow province to show the Germans and the Hungarians their power. That was August 1941.

After that the Jews' position eased slightly: the Hungarian authorities released all the prisoners, among them our Granddad Berl. My father had more work, because the Hungarian soldiers started going to carpenters to order crates in which they would send their families food and items bought from rich Jews. I remember those crates, they were called 'lada' in Hungarian. In exchange they brought bread, tins of smoked meat and tobacco. It was our job, the children's, to find food. At that time we could go out; there wasn't yet a ghetto, just the Jewish quarter. But that all lasted a short time, because the Hungarian authorities were not in power there long.

Already in early October 1941 the Hungarian unit was withdrawn from the town and sent east, and the Germans took over the town. There was an SS man, Sturmbahnführer Fritz Dopler, an incredible sadist, who had one leg slightly shorter. On his initiative, terrible persecutions of the Jews began. As police commandant an Austrian captain was appointed, called Reuter. It turned out that my father had served in the same regiment as him in the Austro-Hungarian army. Thanks to him Father was employed in the police workshops. Father had access to the military casino and collected the leftovers from the tables there and brought them home in pans. We were still living in our own house. Captain Reuter would warn Father of 'Aktions'; he would say: 'Jozef, it would be better if you stayed in the workshop for the night tonight', and Father always found a way of letting us know. Whenever there was an 'Aktion' we would always hide in shelters: every carpenter had a

stock of planks and these were stood up around the walls. It happened fairly frequently, but at first they were looking for specific people. The first general round-up wasn't until December 1941.

They began to transport Hungarian Jews through Horodenka eastwards. We managed to get an awful lot of them out of the trains and they stayed in Horodenka. The ghetto was bounded by barbed wire. A Jewish auxiliary police was set up. Over 3,500, up to 4,000 Jews lived in the Judenviertel [Jewish quarter] in Horodenka. Horodenka had a hospital, where injured German soldiers were brought to convalesce. In the first weeks of the German occupation the following episode took place: about ten or twelve convalescing pilots went out onto the street to have some fun. They rounded up some Orthodox Jews, with their dayan at the fore, locked them in the big synagogue and ordered them to light a bonfire. Into that bonfire they threw the Torah, and they ordered the Jews to gather round it and dance round the bonfire, and then they pulled out their bayonets and ordered them to cut each others' beards off. A large group of onlookers gathered, and, well, we children wanted to see it close up as well. Nobody was killed that time. That was the start. Similar incidents took place in Kutyn, Obertyn and Sniatyn.

Rumors were going round that something was being prepared. On 3rd December a decree was issued by the chief official that on the morning of 4th December at 7.00, all the Jews, old and young, with their children, were to gather on the square outside our house, the market square, because there were to be injections against typhus. Tables were set up at certain points, and there were Jewish doctors and Jewish nurses. Around 7.30 there were already about 2,500 people on the square. Among them we saw from our window Grandma Menia leading Granddad Berl by the hand; we saw many of our relatives, friends and neighbors from our windows. Everybody was going for those injections. People said that after the injections young, strong people were going to be transported east, to forced labor camps. Suddenly, around 7.30-8.00 lorries drew up from all sides, and out of them jumped Germans and Ukrainian policemen. The whole of that huge square was fenced in, because during the period of the Soviet rule they had been planning to make it into a park, and that park was surrounded by police. And with shouts and yells and beatings they began to herd the Jews into the big synagogue through a single entrance. Because we could see what was happening through the window, Mama said to Father and to us: 'You' - meaning Father, Mojsze Mendel and me - 'go up into the loft, and the little ones' - meaning Szmulek and Mordechaj - 'and I will stay here, because they won't do anything to us.'

A moment after we had obeyed Mama, gone up into the loft and hidden under the planks, we heard the familiar voice of a Petliurist [see Petliura, Simon] [18](#). He was called Vasil Chepurda, a man who made a living chopping wood, bringing water from the well, lighting the stove on Saturdays - a shabesgoy. And Chepurda started shouting at our Mama, 'You so-and-so, get out there at once!' And Mama said to him, 'But Vasil, you know us, why are you acting like this?' But he drove Mama and the children out of the house. It turned out that the Germans had a lot of Chepurdas. In that way they herded several hundred people out of their homes and into the synagogue. And we lay up there in the loft for over 24 hours, and then suddenly, through a chink in the wall we saw our uncle Froim Kupferman, the tailor, my mom's eldest brother, running towards the house from the direction of the synagogue.

What happened in the synagogue we only found out a few days later. Some Germans had got 'their' Jews out with the permission of the Gestapo. Beside Uncle Froim, a dozen or so locksmiths, carpenters, glaziers, people they still needed, were released. By all accounts Dantesque scenes

took place in that synagogue. Over 2,600 people had been rounded up, it was cramped, packed, the stench - they relieved themselves where they were standing - the screams and cries of the Jews: 'What are you doing? This is a holy place!', beating, without food or water... In any case, a lot of people died, suffocated there. That lasted all day on the 4th and all night. Not until 5.00 or 5.30 in the morning did lorries draw up outside the synagogue and they started to load people onto them. They were taken about a dozen kilometers to the village of Siemakowce, where huge pits had been dug the day before. There they were undressed, made to walk another 50 meters or so through the snow, and with a shot, usually in the back of the head, they were killed on the spot. Out of that whole mass of humans murdered there, seven people managed to survive; they climbed out of the pit in the night and found their way back to Horodenka.

They were six adults and one child. For ten days later, our uncle, Hersz Gutman, from the village of Kolanki, brought back our eleven-year-old brother Szmulek on a cart. He was still in shock, but we managed to get out of him the story of what had happened there. Our Mama had thrown the children into the pit, jumped in herself and covered both brothers with her own body. She was killed. Mordechaj too. Szmulek, lying underneath her, was only grazed slightly. He had lain among the corpses all day, and in the evening, when the shooting had stopped, he got out of the pit. There was a lot of clothing there, because some of them had undressed in the designated place and gone on almost naked, some had shed their clothes as they went; in any case he found some rags there, put them on, found some shoes, and went in the direction of the village in search of human settlements. He reached a farm, climbed inside a haystack and was detected early in the morning by a dog and found by a good farmer. He took the child home, washed and fed him and gave him some hot milk, and kept him there for three days. After three days he extracted from him the information that our uncle Hersz Gutman, my Grandma Menia's brother, ought to be living in the village of Kolanki. The peasant drove him to our uncle in his cart. Uncle Hersz kept Szmulek at his home for a few days and in the end after about ten days brought him - his horses had not yet been confiscated - to us in Horodenka, and we couldn't believe the miracle.

A couple of weeks later a group of Germans from Kolomyja came to Horodenka and caught five of the adults who had survived the synagogue and took them to Kolomyja and executed them there by firing squad, so that there would be no trace. Only one woman remained, the wife of the ritual slaughterer, a very beautiful woman. And my little brother. The Jews who remained - there were perhaps 500, maybe 600 of them - were still living in their homes. My father was working in the town police station under the same Reuter. The ghetto was reduced in size. There were quarries in Horodenka and the Germans decided to pave the road from those quarries to the sugar factory, which was a few kilometers outside the town. Ukrainians who owned carts received some sort of payment for it, but the Jews were forced to work from twelve years of age. I became a carter's helper and my elder brother shoveled broken stone. We worked ten to eleven hours a day and got 200 grams of clay-like bread and some kind of grain soup. We left the Judenviertel in a group at 7am and returned in the evening.

At the beginning of August they took several dozen people somewhere outside Horodenka and shot them there. And in September 1942 came the next, third and last liquidation. We had a real shelter, in which eleven people could hide, and we hid in it in August and September. Chaim Frajer, my uncle, who had moved in with us, helped to build it. Chaim escaped, he crossed over onto the other side of the Dniester and survived for some time. He was a cobbler and had a very sharp rasp

in his pocket. He said he wouldn't give in; he looked like a Catholic. During an 'Aktion' in the town of Tluste [Tovste, today Ukraine] a Ukrainian policeman recognized him and Chaim pulled out his rasp and jabbed him between the eyes, grabbed his machine gun and ran away. But some other policemen shot him. Those who were caught in Horodenka in September were taken to the cemetery and shot, others were taken to Lwow, to the Janowska Camp [19](#). Those who survived that, like us, were ordered to report to the Kolomyja ghetto, which was about 45, 46 kilometers away, within 48 hours, and they could take only one suitcase. And so Horodenka was declared 'Judenfrei'.

To get to Kolomyja some people hired carts. Our neighbors let us put our luggage on their cart. We walked. There was no chance of hiding. We didn't know anybody who would have been willing to risk their life to hide us; we didn't have any property to buy ourselves free. We were among those who were doomed to extermination.

And we reached Kolomyja. The ghetto there was already sealed, we had no stocks of food and we weren't prepared for the approaching winter. Fortunately for us, our mother's cousin lived there. I think he was called Zalman, but we called him Ziama, Ziama Gutman. He was a jeweler and was employed by the Germans. I suspect that he was employed to melt down teeth. He had managed to win the Germans over to him. He had this house where two families lived. In the yard was a little wooden recess with a loft, and he put us up in that loft. Our uncle Hersz Gutman from Kolanki was already there, with his elder daughter; his son had already been murdered by Ukrainian nationalists. There were a few thousand people in the ghetto. They were living everywhere: in the ritual slaughterhouse, in the cheder, in the Jewish school. Typhoid fever and typhus were rife; incredible starvation everywhere. There wasn't a nettle to be seen, because people cooked nettles. The bark had been stripped from the trees. By some miracle my father again found employment as a carpenter in the municipal offices, and received his ration - a pot of soup. My older brother was in contact with a group of youths; he was 16 by then. They resolved to try their luck in Romania. One night, a little group of four or five of them slipped out of the ghetto and disappeared without trace. I suspect that they were caught somewhere on the border and murdered.

And on a single day, a Sunday at the beginning of October 1942, we called it Bloody Sunday, an 'Aktion' was organized in all the ghettos that were still in existence from Kolomyja to Lvov. Because Sunday was not a working day there were always a lot of people around, always crowds on the streets, the Jews, as usual, would be politicking; people checking who was left alive. But that Sunday there was a hollow kind of silence. And through a chink in our recess we saw that transports of Jews were already being led away. People were walking in a column, downcast, distraught, swollen, stupefied, they were going without protest. We were dragged out of our recess by Ukrainian policemen and made to join the column.

On a square where before the war had been a wood yard, perhaps 5,000 people had been gathered. Something that I find incredibly hard to talk about, because I still dream about it at night: a baby was lying wrapped in a swaddle and no-one was claiming it. A young Gestapo went up to the baby, picked it up by its legs, and smashed its head against a fence pole. The wail, the cry of those standing nearest - even his fellow soldiers looked at him with distaste, but of course there could be no reaction from us. A few dozen specialists were kept back at the last minute, among them our father, and the rest of us were herded to the station, where cattle wagons were waiting. Those who tried to escape were shot on the spot. My brother Szmulek and I got separated.

After some time the train set off. Every third wagon had a watchtower in which a German with an automatic pistol stood guard. We didn't know which direction we were being taken in. At one point we managed to dismantle the grille at the little window hole and people started to elbow each other out of the way to get at least a little fresh air. Children were trampled, bodies were trampled, all in feces... That went on for many hours. People started jumping out one by one, shots rang out.

I resolved that I would rather die from a bullet or under the wheels of the train than suffocate alive. I pushed my way to the window over the backs of all the other people. Suddenly I saw a light; we were nearing a large illuminated station. I didn't want to jump at that point, but I was pushed forcibly out of the window and fell onto the embankment, luckily without doing myself any damage. It turned out that we were in Stanislawow. The Germans were rounding up Jews there, and I was noticed and of course joined onto another column. And there, in that misfortune, a miracle occurred. Because there was no space left in the Stanislawow wagons, some of the Kolomyja wagons were opened up and they started pushing more people in them. And as I stood in the lights of the station I suddenly heard my name being called. It was Szmulek.

The train moved off. They were all being transported to Belzec [20](#), but we didn't know that then. Because we were together again, we resolved to escape. A plank next to the door was pulled out and two by two people started jumping out. I agreed with Szmulek: 'You jump out first and start walking forward; I'll jump out after you and walk towards you.' I pushed him out, though he was very frightened, a twelve-year-old kid, and he disappeared into the dark night. I was pushed out forcibly. I hit my head on a tree trunk, but a few minutes later I came to my senses somehow. I remembered that Szmulek had jumped out, too, of course, and that we were supposed to be walking towards each other. As I jumped I had lost my cap. Ten minutes or so later, as I was walking in Szmulek's direction, I tripped over something soft, and it turned out to be my cap, and I had 300 zloty sewn into that cap; you could survive for a whole day on 10 zloty. I also still had the watch from my grandfather. That was all I possessed. Ten minutes later I saw what looked like a giant walking towards me. And it was my little brother. What now? We knew that the train had been traveling in the direction of Lwow, so we decided to go that way.

We wandered around in the woods for hours. Just before evening the next day we heard the thud of horses' hooves. Two peasants on horseback had ridden into the wood in search of escapees. For each Jew caught there was a reward: a kilo of salt and a bar of soap. We hid amongst the leaves, chilled to the bone, and stayed alive on sugar beets. Later we met a woman who took pity on us and gave us a piece of bread and some soft white cheese - such delicacies after so many months. Further on our way we heard someone chopping wood in the distance, so we approached him, a lumberjack. 'Aaah,' he said, 'Little Jews. What have you got?' he asked. 'I haven't got anything.' 'Well, you must have something.' 'Well, I've got a watch.' And when I showed him my watch his eyes lit up. 'If you give me that watch, I'll let you go.' And so my bar mitzvah watch saved our lives.

Two days later we reached Lwow. We knew there was still a ghetto there. Who is a Jew always drawn to? To other Jews. Well, but how to get in there? In the end, somewhere near the railway station we saw a Jewish policeman leading a group of a few dozen Jews with armbands on to work, and we asked them the way to the ghetto. That was probably sometime during the last ten days of October 1942. The ghetto had not been totally fenced off by then. We decided to go to the Jewish police, as we didn't have anywhere to go. They took us in and gave us a piece of bread. We had to tell them everything that had happened in Kolomyja. From there we sent a telegram to our father:

'We are well, in Lwow.' And the telegram arrived in the ghetto, but Father was no longer there.

We found out that in the cellars of 28 Zamarstynowska Street, there was a young man from Kolomyja, he was called Nachman Nusbaum, and that he took in stray boys of our age, 12-17, and looked after them. There were twelve of us kids, and we had our shakedown there, and we would go out looking for food; some of the older ones hired themselves out to work. Nachman was an interesting figure. He was maybe 20, 22 years old. He was passionate about literature by Korczak [21](#) and Antoni Makarenko [22](#). He had resolved that if he survived the war he would do what Korczak had done in Warsaw and open an orphanage in Galicia. Nachman had found a wooden milk pail from somewhere, and he would always take the older boys to the soup kitchen, bring back half a pail of soup and share it out very fairly among the kids in the cellar.

One day I went out to work in the city in a group of 20, and all of a sudden some Germans rounded us up and took us off to the concentration camp on Janowska Street [Janowska Camp]. There were about 3,000 people in those barracks. I met some of the older residents of Horodenka there. After more or less two weeks I went out with a gang to load coal at the railway station in Lwow. After work I hid in a heap of planks under some coal. At night I got back into the ghetto and went back to the cellars on Zamarstynowska Street. I found Szmulek there, but Nachman wasn't there any longer. One day he had gone out into the town, that is the ghetto, and never came back.

Szmulek and I resolved to try and get back to Kolomyja, with the thought that our father had stayed behind there. I think it must have been in mid- November 1942 when we took the train, pretending to be Poles, back to the ghetto in Kolomyja. Gutman, our distant relative, was still alive, with his wife, but their two small children had died in one of the transports. We moved back into our recess, but this time we really had very good conditions, because we were alone. Our father was no longer there. He had gone out to work one day and never come back. Ziama suspected that they had been taken to a village called Szeperowce, several dozen kilometers from Kolomyja. There are the graves of more than 70,000 people murdered from all over the Stanislawow and Kolomyja districts there. Towards the end of November or at the beginning of December my brother left the recess in search of food and never came back. I was left alone. I decided to escape again, onto the eastern bank of the Dniester, to the area of Czortkow, Buczacz [Chortkiv, Buchach, today Ukraine]; we knew that there were still Jewish settlements there. Thanks to Gutman, who bribed the policeman at the gate, and dressed as a Hucul [Carpathian peasant], in a sheepskin waistcoat, I got out of the ghetto. I could speak Ukrainian well and looked the part. By train, without a ticket, I reached Czortkow.

In Czortkow I spent a few days, and then I set off for Tluste, because I had heard that in the Tluste ghetto there were still a few Jews from Horodenka. There, the mother of a boy who had been murdered, who had worked for a rich Ukrainian before he died, got me a job as a farm-hand. From there I ended up in Rozanowka, in a labor camp. That was fall 1943. I escaped from the camp and in the next village was taken on in the service of the local chief administrative official. But before the holidays I had to take a bath in a big tub in the barn, and the official's daughter noticed that I was circumcised. The Ukrainian didn't want a Jew murdered in his backyard, so he gave me something to eat and told me to be on my way.

I got into a forced labor camp in the village of Lisowce, between the Dniester and Zbruch rivers. It was a camp for the Jews that had survived the liquidation of the ghettos in the Tarnopol region.

There were several of these camps: Kamionka, Borki Wielkie, Lisowce, Rozanowka, Holowczyne. After a few weeks, three of us escaped from the camp. My two companions were murdered by Banderovtsy [see Bandera] [23](#). I was alone. I heard that there were partisan units. And I started to search for them. I met two divisions that didn't want to take me on, because 'Jews are cowards'. In the end I wound up in a group of partisans that was all that was left of the scattered army of Sydir Kovpak. He was the leader of a huge partisan group that had made it as far as the Carpathians and only there been smashed. It was with that group that I saw liberation.

One day we got news that Horodenka had been occupied by Soviet troops. So a few of us decided to cross the Dniester, either on foot or with the Soviet soldiers, who were traveling in motor vehicles or on carts. We were a few dozen kilometers from Horodenka, and we wanted to see if anyone had survived there. I had had no contact with anyone from Horodenka since fall 1942, when I escaped from there. I had tended to avoid such contacts so that no-one should recognize me, God forbid, and denounce me.

I returned to Horodenka in mid-1944. A group of Jews who had survived collected; Jews who had been hidden by Ukrainian families, some of them had come back from the front. My cousin Josel the son of Icek, my father's eldest brother, came back to Horodenka wounded. He had nobody left either, and we lived together. Now he lives in Israel.

In fall 1944 I got in touch with my sister, who was in the Urals, in the Soviet Union. She, like many other residents of Horodenka, in fact, had written to the town council asking whether they knew what had happened to such-and-such a family. And I had a good friend at the post office, with whom I arranged that if there were any letters from Jews to Jews or about Jews, she would give me those letters. And I was the first person to take charge of that whole Jewish pseudo-office thing. Many of Horodenka's Jews received information about the fate of their family from me. Those letters were these little war-time triangles, folded like clown's hats. And they reached the addressees without franking. There were no envelopes then, sometimes people would even write in the margins of newspapers. And one day I got my sister's letter asking whether the authorities knew what had happened to the Szwach family.

Towards the end of 1944 the Komsomol [24](#) secretary invited me to see him. And he offered me a secondment to the naval officers' school in Cherson, near Odessa and the Black Sea. For me, the war ended then. That was at the time when the First Kosciuszko Division was still in existence, and Anders had led the Polish army east through Persia. As it happened, I didn't pass my practical exams in the naval college and they fired me.

By then my sister had moved from the Urals nearer to Poland, to Ukraine, and she was living in a place called Snigirevka, near Mykolayv. My brother-in-law, Majer Lichtensztajn, worked in a mechanics workshop; he was a good wood-turner. The Wajcmans were there too, with their twins. I went to visit them; it was the first time we had seen each other for many years. I spent some time there, I met Jewish families who had come back from evacuation way out in Asia or the Urals. And I started training as a metalworker and wood-turner in the same workshop.

As soon as military operations ended we were able to go back to Poland. We left in January 1946, and arrived in Klodzko in February. Our repatriation journey took almost four weeks, in very primitive conditions, in cattle wagons. When we first arrived we were in a little village called Gieszczce Puste, and then we went to Klodzko. A Committee of Polish Jews was set up and Wajcman



became its chairman. A fairly large group of Jews settled in Klodzko after the war. A number of artisan cooperatives were founded: a tailors' cooperative, a cobblers' cooperative, and there was a branch of the ORT [25](#). Joint [26](#) began to send us some aid, food and other necessities, and some people started to work. We were all given some apartments that had belonged to Germans, that were more or less furnished. And there in Klodzko I started work for the Jewish Committee as head of the youth division. We organized events for young people: various types of events, festivals, ghetto ceremonies; there was a coordination commission for Jewish organizations. That was 1946. [In 1948 Jewish organizations were to be abolished.]

I was a member of the ZWM - the Fighting Youth Union [27](#), and I was made an instructor with the municipal board. And, if you please, I - a Jew - was elected chairman of a branch of the ZWM numbering over 180 members. In the summer of 1947 I went to Wroclaw and lived in the Korczak Memorial Boarding House at 30 Krasinskiego Street. There were about 120-125 of us there. Most of us were Jewish orphans. The young people who lived in that house attended Polish schools, the ORT, or the artisan school run by the Jewish Committee. I was working, a little in a wagon factory and a little helping to rebuild the city. And I was studying. We did the whole of the grammar school program in one year and the whole of the high school program in the second year. After two years' study, in 1948, I sat my school-leaving exam. And of course I was also active in the community. I was appointed to the committee organizing the Uniting Congress of Youth Organizations in Poland. And in 1948, on 22 July, in the Slask cinema auditorium, the Uniting Congress of Youth Organizations was held, and the Polish Youth Union was created. On Saturdays and Sundays we organized 'Sobotniki': these were voluntary work programs; we were rebuilding important buildings in Wroclaw, including the main building of Wroclaw University, the Polytechnic on Kosciuszkowski Bank, part of the wagon factory, and other public facilities in Wroclaw.

In 1948 I was offered a move to Warsaw, to a school for officers involved in training and political affairs. I graduated from that school in 1949. It was an accelerated, six-month course; at the time they were looking for people of a similar class who had a future as officers. On graduation we received the rank of ensign and I was sent to work on the Training Board at the Ministry of National Defense. I organized educational courses for young recruits, chiefly literacy courses. I went on several further training and pedagogical courses myself.

In 1950 I started a degree course at the Academy of Political Sciences, and after my first year I was told that I was suitable material for an inspector of schools for Polish emigre children in France. I moved to France in 1951 and was made attache at the Consulate General, responsible for areas including education and culture, for the Paris region. And it was then, just before that move, that I was given the hint that my name wasn't very suitable for an inspector of schools, because I was called Szwach, which means 'weak' [in Yiddish]. And the powers-that-be found that inappropriate. And they said to me: 'After all, Comrade, your mother's maiden name is a perfectly good name: Kupferman - all you need to do is Polonize it and there you are! You shall be Miedzinski. I thought that they were right, that Szwach - Weak - could not be responsible for educating young Polish emigrants, but Miedzinski certainly could.

When I was offered the job of inspector of Polish schools in the Paris region, I had a fiancée. I was still studying at the Academy of Political Sciences but I was living with a friend in one room, so there was no chance of my starting a family. I was supposed to go to France a married man, those were the rules at the ministry, but for various reasons I had to make the decision to go within 48

hours. My fiancée was a modest girl, her name was Jadwiga Podlewska and she came from a working-class family in Czestochowa. She was born in 1931. She was Polish. After a few months in Paris I came back to Poland, we got married, and in early 1952 we left Poland together. Our son Zbigniew Jozef was born in Paris in 1953. Our second child, Elzbieta Klara, was born in Warsaw in 1956. My wife worked as a civil servant in the archives department and brought up the children. Later on she worked as a knitter. She died suddenly, unexpectedly. I came home one evening after some meeting and she was sitting in a chair. That was in 1986.

I always been a regular at the Jewish Theater. I remember it from the post-war years on Marshal Pilsudski Square, when Ida Kaminska [28](#) acted there. I also used to read *Folksztyme* [29](#). I think it was after 1968 that one of my students, Szmulek Tenenblat, became editor-in-chief of *Folksztyme*. That was a boy I brought to Wroclaw from Klodzko. A very clever boy, he went to the Jewish school in Wroclaw and then to Warsaw University. Here, on Grzybowski Square, at the Jewish Theater, I met Jolanta Kaczkowska, a widow. Three years after the death of my first wife we got married. Jolanta trained as a surveying engineer and worked in the Jewish Theater for a few years; now she is retired. My present wife is Jewish; she was born in the Warsaw ghetto in 1941.

In the 1950s the diplomatic service was looking for confident people with a solid class background who wouldn't betray the Polish People's Republic. And in my case they were certainly not mistaken. After two years the French decided that I was far too active, that I wanted to build socialism in France, and they said 'Take that Miedzinski away.' At the time it so happened that my wife was on vacation in Poland with our small child, so I packed my bags and in two weeks I was back in Poland. I was in France until 1953.

We lived in Warsaw, in very difficult conditions. I didn't want to stay in the Foreign Ministry, and decided that I would go back to the army. And I stayed there until 1960, and managed to make the rank of captain. I worked in the education and training department, I was involved with political education and the repolonization of young people from France who had come back to Poland and gone into the army. I also organized literacy classes. In 1960 intensive purges began in the army, and they offered me a move to a border garrison, knowing that I would refuse. I did refuse, and within practically two months I was demobilized, and in 1961 I was possibly the youngest retired officer in the Polish army. I was 33.

I started work as a civilian. I worked for some time in the GDR Cultural Center. I worked there for barely a year and a half, because I came to the conclusion that I had had bad Germans for four or five years, good Germans for a year and a half, and that was enough Germans to last me a lifetime. And overnight, in February 1963 I was taken on at the Ministry of Higher Education, and I worked there for nearly 15 years. Until 1976. In 1976 I was offered the post of director of the office organizing the World Congress of Russian Studies Graduates, and then I became full-time secretary of the Central Board of the newly established Polish Russian Studies Society, and I worked there until I retired.

In 1956 my family moved abroad. Herman Wajcman lost his job in the Ministry of Agriculture and Central Buying, in fact he was even arrested on charges of cooperation with Israel. He left alone, because they said to him, 'If you leave the country we will forget all this and end the matter.' They gave him a one-way passport very quickly, and it wasn't until a few months later that they let his wife and children go.

In 1968 I was at the Ministry of Higher Education and in charge of a department that organized academic cooperation with other socialist countries. I traveled a lot to those countries, even accompanying ministers on their travels. In 1968 purges began in the ministry. The xenophobic, nationalistic and anti-Semitic atmosphere got worse. True, some directorial posts were held by people of Jewish origin, departmental directors and assistant directors, but they were specialists in their field. The Party got these primitive activists to give critical speeches about some Jewish employee of the ministry. Meetings like that could go on for 23 hours. They had material like that on me, too. But they couldn't have anything against me: I had brought up my children so that until 1967 they didn't even know they had Jewish blood. It was only when it all started that I decided to tell the children about their background, because I didn't want their school or people on the street to do it for me. My son accepted it calmly, and only now, 35 years later, during a visit to Horodenka, did he tell me that he did experience several times people shouting at him: 'You Jew!' I personally have never been the victim of anti-Semitism. Nobody has ever suggested in the least that they have anything against it..., I've never been made to feel like that directly.

It never affected me directly, although I still feel uncomfortable about it. I was clean, I never gave them any grounds to come out and remind me that I have a few millimeters missing in my pants. I didn't stay long in that department after that, only a few months, and then I decided that I ought not to give them any chance to accuse me of having contacts with other countries, even though they were socialist countries, and I asked the minister to transfer me to a domestic department. About ten or twelve people in my ministry lost their jobs.

In 1988 I went to Israel for the first time. I hadn't seen my sister for decades, since probably 1956, I can't remember exactly, when they emigrated. I wasn't allowed a passport for a long time; because I was professionally active the powers-that-be ruled that I didn't have time to go abroad, although I had a completely civilian job. I didn't get a passport until I retired. It was a very emotional reunion with the whole family: my sister's children and her grandchildren. And I found my cousin, the only one of the whole family who survived, Mojsze Frajer. His mother and my father were brother and sister. They had escaped when the Soviet army retreated... Chaim Frajer and Estera Frajer, who was my father's sister, had three children and she was pregnant with the fourth. They were all killed, only Mojsze got lost during a bombardment and survived. He was ten or eleven then, and some Soviet soldiers took him way out to near Stalingrad and left him in a children's home there. He survived the war in Kazakhstan. After the war he left the children's home and went to Israel. We are still in touch to this day. Israel was a great surprise to me: that Jews walk around with their heads held high, no-one makes a secret of their background - they are at home in their own country. I liked the fact that mothers were proud that their children were going into the army. And it was always said that Jews were weapon-shy, uniform-shy. I didn't see much of the country that time, because I wanted to spend all the free time I had with my family. I stayed in Petach Tikwie. I was there two weeks. After that I went back several times.

In 1991, together with Arnold Mostowicz, a doctor from the Lodz ghetto, we founded the Association of Jewish Combatants. In 1993 I went to Israel as the vice-president of the Association, because we had minted a medal to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising [30](#), and for the first time with the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Polish embassy in Tel Aviv we organized a meeting with the participants of the rising who were in Israel. In 1996 I went to the Jewish World Congress in Jerusalem. But I never thought of leaving. I

have always felt that my life is linked to Poland; I had my family here and we lived happily side-by-side here; I've never had any negative experiences beside 1968. I'm still active in the Association, I'm the vice-president. Somebody has to be here to tend the graves of our murdered nation!

## Glossary

### **1 Galicia**

Informal name for the lands of the former Polish Republic under Habsburg rule (1772-1918), derived from the official name bestowed on these lands by Austria: the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria. From 1815 the lands west of the river San (including Krakow) began by common consent to be called Western Galicia, and the remaining part (including Lemberg), with its dominant Ukrainian population Eastern Galicia. Galicia was agricultural territory, an economically backward region. Its villages were poor and overcrowded (hence the term 'Galician misery'), which, given the low level of industrial development (on the whole processing of agricultural and crude-oil based products) prompted mass economic emigration from the 1890s; mainly to the Americas. After 1918 the name Eastern Malopolska for Eastern Galicia was popularized in Poland, but Ukrainians called it Western Ukraine.

### **2 KuK (Kaiserlich und Koeniglich) army**

The name 'Imperial and Royal' was used for the army of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as for other state institutions of the Monarchy originated from the dual political system. Following the Compromise of 1867, which established the Dual Monarchy, Austrian emperor and Hungarian King Franz Joseph was the head of the state and also commander-in-chief of the army. Hence the name 'Imperial and Royal'.

### **3 Italian front, 1915-1918**

Also known as Isonzo front. Isonzo (Soca) is an alpine river today in Slovenia, which ran parallel with the pre-World War I Austro-Hungarian and Italian border. During World War I Italy was primarily interested in capturing the ethnic Italian parts of Austria- Hungary (Triest, Fiume, Istria and some of the islands) as well as the Adriatic litoral. The Italian army tried to enter Austria-Hungary via the Isonzo river, but the Austro-Hungarian army was dug in alongside the river. After 18 months of continuous fighting without any territorial gain, the Austro-Hungarian army finally succeeded to enter Italian territory in October 1917.

### **4 Cossacks**

an ethnic group that constituted something of a free estate in the 15th-17th centuries in the Polish Republic and in the 16th-18th centuries in the Muscovite state (and then Russia). The Cossacks in the Polish Republic consisted of peasants, townspeople and nobles settled along the banks of the Lower Dnieper, where they organized armed detachments initially to defend themselves against the Tatar invasions and later themselves making forays against the Tatars and the Turks. As part of the armed forces, the Cossacks played an important role in Russia's imperial wars in the 17th-20th centuries. From the 19th century onwards, Cossack troops were also used to suppress uprisings and independence movements. During the February and October Revolutions in 1917 and the

Russian Civil War, some of the Cossacks (under Kaledin, Dutov and Semyonov) supported the Provisional Government, and as the core of the Volunteer Army bore the brunt of the fighting with the Red Army, while others went over to the Bolshevik side (Budenny). In 1920 the Soviet authorities disbanded all Cossack formations, and from 1925 onwards set about liquidating the Cossack identity. In 1936 Cossacks were permitted to join the Red Army, and some Cossack divisions fought under its banner in World War II. Some Cossacks served in formations collaborating with the Germans and in 1945 were handed over to the authorities of the USSR by the Western Allies.

## **5 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.

## **6 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 Wawel Cathedral in the Royal Castle in Cracow.

## **7 Judenfrei (Judenrein)**

German for 'free (purified) of Jews'. The term created by the Nazis in Germany in connection with the plan entitled 'the Final Solution to the Jewish Question', the aim of which was defined as 'the creation of a Europe free of Jews'. The term 'Judenrein'/'Judenfrei' in Nazi terminology referred to the extermination of the Jews and described an area (a town or a region), from which the entire Jewish population had been deported to extermination camps or forced labor camps. The term was, particularly in occupied Poland, an established part of the official and unofficial Nazi language.

## **8 Hashomer Hatzair in Poland**

From 1918 Hashomer Hatzair operated throughout Poland, with its headquarters in Warsaw. It emphasized the ideological and vocational training of future settlers in Palestine and personal development in groups. Its main aim was the creation of a socialist Jewish state in Palestine. Initially it was under the influence of the Zionist Organization in Poland, of which it was an autonomous part. In the mid-1920s it broke away and joined the newly established World Scouting Union, Hashomer Hatzair. In 1931 it had 22,000 members in Poland organized in 262 'nests' (Heb. 'ken'). During the occupation it conducted clandestine operations in most ghettos. One of its members was Mordechaj Anielewicz, who led the rising in the Warsaw ghetto. After the war it operated legally in Poland as a party, part of the He Halutz. It was disbanded by the communist authorities in 1949.

## **9 Betar**

Brith Trumpledor (Hebrew) meaning the Trumpledor Society. Right-wing Revisionist Jewish youth movement. It was founded in 1923 in Riga by Vladimir Jabotinsky, in memory of J. Trumpledor, one of the first fighters to be killed in Palestine, and the fortress Betar, which was heroically defended for many months during the Bar Kohba uprising. In Poland the name 'The J. Trumpledor Jewish Youth Association' was also used. Betar was a worldwide organization, but in 1936, of its 52,000 members, 75 % lived in Poland. Its aim was to propagate the program of the revisionists in Poland and prepare young people to fight and live in Palestine. It organized emigration, through both legal and illegal channels. It was a paramilitary organization; its members wore uniforms. From 1936-39 the popularity of Betar diminished. During the war many of its members formed guerrilla groups.

## **10 Poalei Zion (the Jewish Social-Democratic Workers' Party Workers of Zion)**

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

## **11 Keren Kayemet Leisrael (K**

K.L.): Jewish National Fund (JNF) founded in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel. From its inception, the JNF was charged with the task of fundraising in Jewish communities for the purpose

of purchasing land in the Land of Israel to create a homeland for the Jewish people. After 1948 the fund was used to improve and afforest the territories gained. Every Jewish family that wished to help the cause had a JNF money box, called the 'blue box'. In Poland the JNF was active in two periods, 1919-1939 and 1945-1950. In preparing its colonization campaign, Keren Kayemet le-Israel collaborated with the Jewish Agency and Keren Hayesod.

## **12 Bund**

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

## **13 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.

## **14 All-Union pioneer organization**

a communist organization for teenagers between 10 and 15 years old (cf: boy-/ girlscouts in the US). The organization aimed at educating the young generation in accordance with the communist ideals, preparing pioneers to become members of the Komsomol and later the Communist Party. In the Soviet Union, all teenagers were pioneers.

## **15 Prystor Decree**

In pre-war Poland the issue of ritual slaughter (Heb. shechitah) was at the heart of a deep conflict between the Jewish community and Polish nationalist groups, which in 1936-1938 attempted to outlaw or restrict the practice of shechitah in the Sejm, the Polish parliament, citing humanitarian grounds and competition for Catholic butchers. In 1936 Janina Prystor, a deputy to the Sejm (and wife of Aleksander Prystor (1874- 1941), Polish prime minister 1931-1933), proposed a ban on shechitah, citing principles of Christian morality. This move had an overtly economic aim, which was to destroy the Jewish meat industry, which meant competition for Christian butchers. Prystor met with fierce resistance among Jewish circles in the Sejm. In the wake of a debate in the Sejm the government decided on a compromise, permitting shechitah only in areas where Jews made up more than 3% of the local population.

## **16 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.

### **17 Subcarpathia (also known as Ruthenia, Russian and Ukrainian name Zakarpacie)**

Region situated on the border of the Carpathian Mountains with the Middle Danube lowland. The regional capitals are Uzhhorod, Berehovo, Mukachevo, Khust. It belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy until World War I; and the Saint-Germain convention declared its annexation to Czechoslovakia in 1919. It is impossible to give exact historical statistics of the language and ethnic groups living in this geographical unit: the largest groups in the interwar period were Hungarians, Rusyns, Russians, Ukrainians, Czech and Slovaks. In addition there was also a considerable Jewish and Gypsy population. In accordance with the first Vienna Decision of 1938, the area of Subcarpathia mainly inhabited by Hungarians was ceded to Hungary. The rest of the region was proclaimed a new state called Carpathian Ukraine in 1939, with Khust as its capital, but it only existed for four and a half months, and was occupied by Hungary in March 1939. Subcarpathia was taken over by Soviet troops and local guerrillas in 1944. In 1945, Czechoslovakia ceded the area to the USSR and it gained the name Carpatho-Ukraine. The region became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1945. When Ukraine became independent in 1991, the region became an administrative region under the name of Transcarpathia.

### **18 Petliura, Simon (1879-1926)**

Ukrainian politician, member of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Working Party, one of the leaders of Centralnaya Rada (Central Council), the national government of Ukraine (1917-1918). Military units under his command killed Jews during the Civil War in Ukraine. In the Soviet-Polish war he was on the side of Poland; in 1920 he emigrated. He was killed in Paris by the Jewish nationalist Schwarzbard in revenge for the pogroms against Jews in Ukraine.

### **19 Janowska Road Camp**

It was set up in Lwow in October 1941. One part was the SS accommodation and the prisoners' barracks (people later sent to the extermination camp in Belzec were held here), and the other part housed production workshops. Created as a labor camp for Lwow Jews, it became an extermination camp. Jews from Eastern Galicia were brought here. Owing to a real threat of an armed uprising, the Germans liquidated the camp in a lightning campaign on 20th November 1943. Only a few people managed to escape.

### **20 Belzec**

Village in Lublin region of Poland (Tomaszow district). In 1940 the Germans created a forced labor camp there for 2,500 Jews and Roma. In November 1941 it was transformed into an extermination camp (SS Sonderkommando Belzec or Dienststelle Belzec der Waffen SS) under the 'Reinhard-Aktion', in which the Germans murdered around 600,000 people (chiefly in gas chambers), including approximately 550,000 Polish Jews (approx. 300,000 from the province of Galicia) and Jews from the USSR, Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Holland, Germany, Norway and



Hungary; many Poles from surrounding towns and villages and from Lwow also died here, mostly for helping Jews. In November 1942 the Nazis began liquidating the camp. In the spring of 1943 the camp was demolished and the corpses of the gassed victims exhumed from their mass graves and burned. The last 600 Jews employed in this work were then sent to the Sobibor camp, where they died in the gas chambers.

### **21 Korczak, Janusz (1878/79-1942)**

Polish Jewish doctor, pedagogue, writer of children's literature. He was the co-founder and director (from 1911) of the Jewish orphanage in Warsaw. He also ran a similar orphanage for Polish children. Korczak was in charge of the Jewish orphanage when it was moved to the Warsaw Ghetto in 1940. He was one of the best-known figures behind the ghetto wall, refusing to leave the ghetto and his charges. He was deported to the Treblinka extermination camp with his charges in August 1942. The whole transport was murdered by the Nazis shortly after its arrival in the camp.

### **22 Makarenko, Anton (1888-1939)**

Soviet pedagogue and writer, in 1920-35 organizer and director of care institutions for homeless young people (the Maxim Gorky Work Colony near Poltava, and the Felix Dzierzhinsky Commune in Charkov). From 1935 he devoted himself largely to writing and popularizing his ideas. He was the creator of a method of collective education by involving the individual in the life of an organized, self-governing community of carers and their charges subject to a defined system of standards and cooperating to achieve targets (particular emphasis was placed on productive work), and guided by a communist ideology. He employed the principle of linking challenges with respect for the individual. He described his pedagogical research in works including *An Epic in Education* (1933-35), *Lecture for Parents* (1937), and *Pennants on Towers* (1938). The Makarenko system, applied in the USSR and other communist countries (in particular in the 1950s and 60s) has been an object of great interest and study in many countries, and has often been a subject of fierce debate.

### **23 Bandera, Stepan (1919-1959)**

Politician and ideologue of the Ukrainian nationalist movement, who fought for the Ukrainian cause against both Poland and the Soviet Union. He attained high positions in the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN): he was chief of propaganda (1931) and, later, head of the national executive in Galicia (1933). He was hoping to establish an independent Ukrainian state with Nazi backing. After Germany attacked the Soviet Union, the OUN announced the establishment of an independent government of Ukraine in Lvov on 30th June 1941. About one week later the Germans disbanded this government and arrested the members. Bandera was taken to Sachsenhausen prison where he remained until the end of the war. He was assassinated by a Soviet agent in Munich in 1959.

### **24 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.

## **25 ORT**

(Russ. - Obshchestvo Razpostranienia Truda sredi Yevreyev) Society for the Propagation of Labor among Jews. Founded in 1880 in Russia, following the Revolution of 1917 it moved to Berlin. In Poland it operated from 1921 as the Organization for the Development of Industrial, Craft and Agricultural Creativity among the Jewish Population. It provided training in non-commercial trades, chiefly crafts. ORT had a network of schools, provided advanced educational courses for adults and trained teachers. In 1950 it was accused of espionage, its board was expelled from the country and its premises were taken over by the Treasury. After 1956 its activities in Poland were resumed, but following the anti-Semitic campaign in 1968 the communist authorities once again dissolved all the Polish branches of this organization.

## **26 Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)**

The Joint was formed in 1914 with the fusion of three American Jewish committees of assistance, which were alarmed by the suffering of Jews during World War I. In late 1944, the Joint entered Europe's liberated areas and organized a massive relief operation. It provided food for Jewish survivors all over Europe, it supplied clothing, books and school supplies for children. It supported cultural amenities and brought religious supplies for the Jewish communities. The Joint also operated DP camps, in which it organized retraining programs to help people learn trades that would enable them to earn a living, while its cultural and religious activities helped re-establish Jewish life. The Joint was also closely involved in helping Jews to emigrate from Europe and from Muslim countries. The Joint was expelled from East Central Europe for decades during the Cold War and it has only come back to many of these countries after the fall of communism. Today the Joint provides social welfare programs for elderly Holocaust survivors and encourages Jewish renewal and communal development.

## **27 Fighting Youth Union (ZWM)**

Communist youth organization founded in 1943. The ZWM was subordinate to the Polish Workers' Party (PPR). In 1943- 44 it participated in battles against the Germans, and hit squads carried out diversion and retaliation campaigns, mainly in Warsaw, one of which was the attack on the Café Club in October 1943. In 1944 the ZWM was involved in the creation and defense of a system of authority organized by the PPR; the battle against the underground independence movement; the rebuilding of the economy from the ravages of war; and social and economic transformations. The ZWM also organized sports, cultural and educational clubs. The main ZWM paper was 'Walka Mlodych'. In July 1944 ZWM had a few hundred members, but by 1948 it counted some 250,000. Leading activists: H. Szapiro ('Hanka Sawicka'), J. Krasicki, Z. Jaworska and A. Kowalski. In July 1948 it merged with three other youth organizations to become the Polish Youth Union.

## **28 Kaminska, Ida (1899-1980)**

Jewish actress and theater director. She made her debut in 1916 on the stage of the Warsaw theater founded by her parents. In 1921-28 she and her husband, Martin Sigmund Turkow, were

the directors of the Varshaver Yidisher Kunsteater. From 1933 to 1939 she ran her own theater group in Warsaw. During World War II she was in Lvov, and was evacuated to Kyrgyzia (Frunze). On her return to Poland in 1947 she became director of the Jewish theaters in Lodz, Wroclaw and Warsaw (1955-68 the E.R. Kaminska Theater). In 1967 she traveled to the US with her theater and was very successful there. Following the events of March 1968 she resigned from her post as theater director and emigrated to the US, where she lived until her death. Her best known roles include the leading roles in Mirele Efros (Gordin), Hedda Gabler (Ibsen) and Mother Courage and Her Children (Brecht), and her role in the film The Shop on Main Street (Kadár and Klos, 1965). Ida Kaminska also wrote her memoirs, entitled My Life, My Theatre (1973).

### **29 Folksztyme /Dos Yidishe Wort**

Bilingual Jewish magazine published every other week since 1992 in Warsaw in place of 'Folksstimme', which was closed down then. Articles are devoted to the activities of the JSCS in Poland and current affairs, and there are reprints of articles from the Jewish press abroad. The magazine 'Folksstimme' was published three times a week. In 1945 it was published in Lodz, and from 1946-1992 in Warsaw. It was the paper of the Jewish Communists. After Jewish organizations and their press organs were closed down in 1950, it became the only Jewish paper in Poland. 'Folksstimme' was the paper of the JSCS. It published Yiddish translations of articles from the party press. In 1956, a Polish-language supplement for young people, 'Nasz Glos' [Our Voice] was launched. It was apolitical, a literary and current affairs paper. In 1968 the paper was suspended for several months, and was subsequently reinstated as a Polish-Jewish weekly, subject to rigorous censorship. The supplement 'Nasz Glos' was discontinued. Most of the contributors and editorial staff were forced to emigrate.

### **30 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (or April Uprising)**

On 19th April 1943 the Germans undertook their third deportation campaign to transport the last inhabitants of the ghetto, approximately 60,000 people, to labor camps. An armed resistance broke out in the ghetto, led by the Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) and the Jewish Military Union (ZZW) - all in all several hundred armed fighters. The Germans attacked with 2,000 men, tanks and artillery. The insurrectionists were on the attack for the first few days, and subsequently carried out their defense from bunkers and ruins, supported by the civilian population of the ghetto, who contributed with passive resistance. The Germans razed the Warsaw ghetto to the ground on 15th May 1943. Around 13,000 Jews perished in the Uprising, and around 50,000 were deported to Treblinka extermination camp. About 100 of the resistance fighters managed to escape from the ghetto via the sewers.