

Estera Migdalska

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Warsaw

Poland

Interviewer: Anna Szyba

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Mrs. Migdalska is a young-at-heart person concerned with her seriously ill husband whom, during the interview, she leaves alone at home. She has a very nice smile and a photographic memory - pitiful that those "photographs" cannot be exposed... We meet at the Schorr Foundation at Twarda Street in Warsaw. She is a great storyteller, though she sometimes gets sidetracked, as there are many memories she doesn't want to omit. She is happy she can tell her story to me, because, she says, she has never brought herself to write it down. She loves talking about the pre-war times and about her children. She is not very eager, though, to talk about her husband's family.

[My family history](#)

[Growing up](#)

[During the war](#)

[After the war](#)

[Family life](#)

[Anti-Semitism after the war](#)

[Recent years](#)

[Glossary](#)

[My family history](#)

My name is Estera Migdalska and I was born on 1st May 1930 in Warsaw. My father's name was Elias, and my mother was called Sara, her maiden name was Denenberg. Both my father's family and the one from my mother's side were religious. My father's family lived in Kielce [a town about 180 km south of Warsaw].

My father's mother was called Ruchla, nee Swizer; I don't know where she was born. She was still alive in 1939; they said she was 70-80 years old then. She died during the war. I remember she was religious, with all the restrictions, as she even wore a wig; she didn't have her own hair, some gray, short remnants. She was a very lovely, very warm, very charming grandmother. She loved her grandsons and granddaughters very much and I have very fond memories of her.

My father's father, Jankiel Dajbog, Grandmother Ruchla's husband, I don't know when he was born either; he died when I was around four [in 1934 or 1935]. I remember very little of him, as I visited Kielce maybe twice during his lifetime. I know that he was very rigorous and stern; in fact all men from the Kielce branch of the family were like that. I don't know whether it was their harsh life, or personality-related factors.

My grandfather from Kielce taught children Hebrew. In fact, he was brought to Kielce from Brest-Litovsk [until 1939 a city in Poland, now in south-western Belarus, some 100 km from the Polish

border] to organize primary education for children. I don't know whether it was to be for cheder, but I can find out because in the book about Kielce [published by the Kielce Compatriot Society in Israel in 1957] there is a page devoted to Grandfather. It says there that the Hebrew classes were primitive - lacking a curriculum and teaching methods, but that starting the teaching of the language in Kielce was nonetheless to his credit. My father went to Kielce for Grandfather's funeral. Grandfather was buried at the Jewish cemetery.

I don't know how many siblings Grandmother Ruchla had, but I know she had a sister in Pinsk [until 1939 a city in Poland, now in south-western Belarus, close to the Ukrainian border]. I don't remember her name, but her husband's surname was Wertheim. I didn't like her because she just kept on picking on all those grandchildren of hers, with whom I was friends, and on me too, she was just kind of demanding. I remember she once admonished me for combing my hair on a Saturday, that she didn't expect something like that of me. I couldn't understand that because at home no one prohibited me from washing myself or combing my hair on Saturdays. Not even my grandmother, her own sister!

I don't know how many siblings Grandfather Jankiel had. He certainly had a brother in Brest, but I never saw him. I was once in Brest as a child to visit that family. My father was traveling throughout Poland at the time, I have the impression he didn't have a job, and he was using the time to visit his various relatives. I knew his [Grandfather Jankiel's brother's] two sons: Jasza and Sjomka Dajbog.

My mother's father, Hersz Denenberg, was an inland ship-owner. Together with my grandmother and my mother they lived in Kiev [today the capital of Ukraine], though they were from Pinsk, but he had a vessel of some kind in Kiev. And they were basically well-to-do, but then in, 1917, the revolution in Russia [1](#) broke out, the ship was confiscated, and they returned to Pinsk. I know that long afterwards my mother was trying to recover that ship through legal action, but I don't know whether she achieved anything or not.

My grandfather from Pinsk died when I was six, in 1936. I remember I went to the hospital to say goodbye to him, but he was no longer recognizing anyone. That was the one and only Jewish funeral that I have ever attended. Very traditional. After bringing him from the hospital, they placed Grandfather on the floor. I don't remember whether it was a day or two, how long it is you lie there. [Editor's note: Traditionally, the deceased person is buried on the day of death or the following morning]. Some Jews came and they held prayers. My mother sat barefooted on a little kind of stool; it even has a religious name, the thing [shivah].

Then they came, put him on a plank bed, he was wrapped in a shroud, and they carried him on that bed through Pinsk, and I remember they stopped by the synagogue. I guess that stop's purpose was for those from the priestly origin to go out, they bade him farewell there, they didn't go to the cemetery. I guess my mother was from the priestly caste. Later, at the cemetery, I remember how they were arranging him and putting those potsherds on his eyes. He was buried at the Jewish cemetery in Pinsk.

I certainly spoke Yiddish with my mother's father Hersz, and with Grandfather Jankiel probably too. I can compare the two. The one, my father's father, was, let's say, a singing man, but also a hard one, stern and demanding. My maternal grandfather, in turn, was a very kind, very nice man.

Grandfather Hersz's wife, my grandmother, my mother's mother, was called Estera Rachela, her maiden name... I don't know, Denenberg after her husband. My mother told me she was 18 when Grandmother Estera died [in 1918]. When they returned to Pinsk, Grandmother fell ill and then she died.

There was always a story about how Grandmother had those beautiful earrings on, how my mother took them off, and in the early years of her marriage she brought them to a pawnshop, and through all those years until 1939 I remember there was the problem that she couldn't buy them back, and it was so painful for her. We had a portrait of Grandmother Estera at home. I can still see it - the tall woman in the photo, in a lacy collar, but, above all, a tall hair-do, I don't think it was a wig, rather a kind of bun.

Grandmother Estera had a sister, Nojma Bojm, who lived in Pinsk, and a brother, who lived in Warsaw at Towarowa Street. I don't remember his name. I remember a gray-haired man, with a very shapely face, a trimmed white beard and white hair. As he was a widower, he had a housekeeper, and I think she was Jewish. And I remember sitting on some platform in their kitchen and her treating me with various kinds of tidbits. I also remember that Grandmother Estera's brother had two daughters, and that the apartment was rather large, but the furniture was heavy, so the overall impression was kind of cramped. I think those two daughters weren't married because we always met them there. I know it was always a great event when we went to visit Uncle. I don't remember them visiting us, my mother's other relatives would often come, in fact, our home was always full of people.

My father was born in Kielce in 1895. He had four siblings. Uncle Ajzyk was born in 1898. He lived in Kielce. He probably worked as a bookkeeper, there was some industry in Kielce. He had two children. He must have married much earlier than my father, as by 1925 he already had a son, and in 1928 his daughter Hela [from Helena] was born. Soon after giving birth to Hela, Aunt died in the course of a medical procedure. Today, as an adult person, I think it may have been an abortion. She probably died the same year that I was born [1930], so I only know her name was Ida, and I remember her photo, also a very interesting person in that picture.

Aunt died and Uncle Ajzyk Dajbog married a very beautiful Russian-Jewish lady. She was called Usja, it was an abbreviation of some name. I remember that she was a very beautiful lady. She was wonderful to me, very kind. Uncle Ajzyk probably married some good money there, because he had a large apartment at Glowackiego Street in Kielce, with a bathroom, two entrances, and a maid. It was a home with the kind of luxuries I could only dream of, and I loved to go there.

My aunt was extraordinarily good to me, and to my grandmother too. I loved her very much, but her family was acting strange and had an unsympathetic attitude, I believe, towards Abramek [from Abram] and Hela. They didn't like their father's new wife either. The marriage produced Michas [from Michal], who, when the war started, was perhaps six years old. And Aunt Usja's family was very much looking after that Michas, while continuously sneering at Hela and Abramek. And my memories of them aren't very nice.

The next one after Uncle Ajzyk was Aunt Gienia, born in 1901, I don't know what her husband's surname was. His first name was Maks, their son was called Aronek [from Aron], and already a couple of years before the war Aunt moved in with the boy at Grandmother's. It surely wasn't that Uncle Maks had died, so they must have divorced. For what reason, I don't know. Before she came

to live with Grandmother, I had visited them, they lived in the countryside. I remember feeding the hens, so it must have been a farm of some sort. Uncle Maks was a Jew, but he looked like a peasant, something in the vein of Tevye the Milkman [main protagonist of Sholem Aleichem's 'Tevye and His Daughters' and the musical 'Fiddler on the Roof']. Aunt Gienia was a teacher, I don't know what specialty.

After Aunt Gienia came Uncle Noach, born in 1903, who was the only one of the whole Kielce family to survive the Holocaust, and I spent many years with him after the war. When the war broke out, he had already been married for some time. His first wife, Marjem, nee Ostrowicz, came from a Jewish family, a rather well-to-do one too, I guess, as her father had a farm. They had one son, Julek [from Julian], who was a year younger than me [born in 1931]. Uncle Noach had completed a cadet school and was a reserve officer. And I remember how he came once for some military exercise in his uniform, and I felt so proud.

The youngest of my father's siblings was Uncle Srul, born in 1907, who secured a university degree. Uncle Noach completed a junior high school, and Srul completed a high school and entered a university. He graduated from the law faculty around 1935, and married Aunt Dora in 1939, right before the war. I happened to be in Kielce on vacation when I learned [about their wedding]. One of the first bombs that were dropped on Warsaw hit their apartment and while they luckily happened to be outside, I remember Father telling me the apartment got completely destroyed, and how he had to share his clothes with them.

In fact, Father had been helping them earlier as well, as Uncle Srul had lived with us. There was an incredible hunger for knowledge in that family, a drive for everyone to learn and get ahead in life as far as possible. Perhaps in all Jewish families... but here it was really exceptionally strong. My father completed only four grades and had to go to work because my grandparents weren't coping, they had five children, plus the two of them, that was seven mouths to feed. Still, I remember from before the war that my father was a brilliant autodidact and achieved a lot educating himself and reading a lot.

My mother was born in 1900, and she came from the Kresy [common name for pre-war Poland's eastern territories], namely from Pinsk. She was the only child, born more than twenty years after her parents had gotten married, when they no longer thought they'd ever have a child. All my relatives in Pinsk, whenever I'd be there, would always be telling me how they were celebrating my mother's birth, how long it took, a week or two, and how my grandparents would basically do just everything for her.

My mother completed a high school in Kiev, and I remember that, at home, on the cupboard there rested a medal on a chain, and that it was a distinction for excellent performance at the high school finals. I actually studied the medal often, but I don't remember what it showed. And I think Mother could even play the piano, I remember a photo at home somewhere showing her playing and Father standing beside her, listening.

I suppose my parents' marriage had been arranged, in fact, I guess it was typical for Jews in those spheres. My mother came from Pinsk, my father from Kielce, but that's no proof yet [that their marriage was arranged] because the sister of my grandmother Ruchla lived in Pinsk. My mother was five years younger than my father. I don't know when precisely they got married. I was born in 1930, and there was one child before me that died at birth, so I guess they got married around

1927. So neither was my mother very young then, nor was my father very young. I remember no stories about their wedding. Perhaps they weren't telling me about that yet because I was only nine [by the time the war broke out].

I remember my mother as truly religious. Perhaps she wasn't that strict, didn't wear a wig, but she was, let's say, a progressive religious Jewish lady. I remember her praying. Whenever we were sick, she'd pray for our health. I remember that on Friday she'd light the candles, I remember there were mezuzot at home, and when she was carrying me to bed in the night, I always knew I'd kiss the mezuzah.

My father was a bookkeeper. In my early years, I remember, he worked at a cosmetics plant, it was called L'ami de Paris. It burned down, probably because someone set it on fire. I remember my father had a lot of trouble because of that, he was being summoned for interrogations. During the period when he worked there, my mother walked door-to-door with the cosmetics, trying to sell them. During that time, she'd leave me [with a nanny]. I know this didn't last long, because Mother proved a poor salesperson. I don't remember a nanny at our home, so I had to be very little then. But later I got in touch with that nanny again because at some point my mother helped them get a basement apartment in our house, and the nanny with her daughters moved in there.

Around 1935, Father got a job at a radio-technical company at Elektoralna Street, where he worked until 1939. I'm sure they were making radios because from time to time Father would bring home radios for testing. And I think he was friends with the boss because when in 1939 we went for a stroll to the Saski Gardens, the gentleman took a lot of photos of me.

My father was the most important person in the house, which was because of tradition, I think. I remember everyone had their place at the table and if I sat on Father's chair when he wasn't home and my mother saw it, she'd be very angry at me. Everything was subordinated to Father. However hungry we'd be, we'd always wait until he came back and only then sit down to have dinner. I remember him as very exacting and always expecting me to be a top student. He was always giving me parables on how it was necessary to study and all.

Growing up

I was born and lived at 32 Dzielna Street. Dzielna was a cobbled street, and many a time I got hurt on those cobbles. Our apartment had two rooms with a kitchen, a toilet, no bathroom. A washtub stood in the kitchen and there we took our baths. It wasn't a very large apartment, which means we were hardly well off. My father contributed to the marriage only what he was earning, and the estate of my mother's father had been divided into plots and handed out to the peasants, so Mother didn't contribute much either.

There were four of us: my mother, my father, me, and my sister. We also had subtenants, because you had to make some extra money. All the rooms were always occupied, especially that you entered the sleeping room from the kitchen. We slept in the sleeping room but also used the kitchen and the dining room on a normal basis. The tenants slept in the dining room, there were two sorts of couches there. My father's brother, Uncle Srul, slept in the kitchen.

I remember precisely how the apartment looked like, the photos on the walls, the pieces of furniture. On the desk stood a big, old-fashioned crank-powered gramophone. I loved it when they

always played Jewish songs, and Father would sing Jewish songs to me. I remember a light-colored wardrobe. A mirror was set in its door, and when Father was shaving himself or knotting his tie, he'd always sing. I was supposed to feed him the lines of the text. I remember which songs he sang, the one that comes to mind above all is 'Margaritkes.' And the earliest one I remember is 'Lulinke, main kind,' a lullaby; they had been singing it to me even before my sister was born. We had this thick songbook, I liked to browse through it, though of course I couldn't read.

To this day I have a fondness for Jewish songs. Those songs are on records today, and when I am somewhere and I don't even know what song it will be, as soon as I hear the first chords I feel warmth filling my body and a moment later I hear a song from my childhood playing.

My sister and I were the first generation in our family born in Warsaw. I was less than three years old when my sister Chana was born on 6th February 1933. I remember she was born in our apartment, and I remember the moment when I suddenly terribly wanted to see my mother, and they let me in and I snuggled up to her. Then they took me to the kindergarten for the rest of that day, the place was called 'Freblowka' [from the teaching system developed by F. Fröbel]. And when I got back home from there, my father, all happy, told me I had a sister. That's how I came to remember it, for I actually felt a kind of grudge, and felt it for quite a long time afterwards. This means there was some envy there.

My parents went to synagogue, though not on every Saturday but rather on the main holidays, for example Rosh Hashanah or Judgment Day [Yom Kippur]. On those days, my mother went no matter what, and then she'd go to the bevy. I think I accompanied her once or twice. I don't remember precisely where the synagogue was. I think it was a prayer house near our house, at 7 Dzielna Street. I remember it was in the courtyard. And just before the war, when I was older, I remember standing with my father in front of the synagogue. Obviously you could hear everything from there, I don't know whether it was full or my father didn't want to go inside. Besides, I know that Father didn't fast on that day at all, and he even told me, 'Just don't tell your mother!' He went there because of tradition, not because of any spiritual need.

Our home was absolutely kosher, Mother observed it not only for her own sake but also to avoid a situation where some relative would visit us and they wouldn't be able to eat dinner with us. I remember how she'd kosher the cutlery if we happened to mix the dairy ones with the meat ones. In the kitchen, under the sink, a hole was cut out in the planks, there was soil there, and you put a fork or a knife there, and after it had been there for some time, it was kosher.

Mother permitted us to eat out. For Christmas Eve, the nanny would take me to her home. Mother knew I'd be eating something there and would only ask me that I don't bring anything home. Father didn't have anything against that at all, because, if he could, he'd probably not even eat kosher at home.

I remember how Mother would bless us with a living fish or chicken, swirling it around our heads. You stood in the kitchen over the sink so that if the fish slipped out of your hand, it would land in the sink. I don't remember whether it was because of some holiday, or simply because of Mother's spiritual need. Perhaps it was a regional tradition stemming from the Kaparot, because Mother came from the Kresy. It was usually a fish, because you had to kill the animal afterwards, and with a chicken you had to go to a shochet, whereas a fish you could kill yourself.

Our home was very traditional and all the holidays were celebrated the traditional way. Guests were always invited. Not necessarily from the family, often friends or our subtenants. As Father was the eldest member of the family, he was obviously well acquainted with the ritual, and it was him who'd hold the Pesach seder, or organize the Chanukkah. That, or explaining the Purim, as he was doing for us, the children. So the knowledge about tradition was being passed on to us by our not-very-religious father rather than by Mother. Father simply had the ambition of making us familiar with the Jewish tradition. I knew the biblical stories about the various holidays. Except the fact that I had a course on that at school, I learned a lot from my parents who had been telling me those stories as kind of children's tales.

My favorite holiday was Pesach, because of how long it lasted, of the special food, the preparations, the people, the laughter, the songs. I'm sure Mother always hired some help before Pesach. If anyone, it was Gienia, the daughter of my nanny. The next holiday I remember well was Chanukkah. As each day you lit one candle more than the previous one, I'd light one candle the first day, then my sister would light two the second day, then I'd light three, and there'd be a quarrel: 'Yes, but I lit only two yesterday, and she's lighting three.' Father would say then, 'Yes, but tomorrow you'll be lighting four.' We loved lighting the candles. We'd be choosing them, picking the color, and so on.

Of the Pesach dishes, I liked matzah fried with eggs very much, or scrambled eggs with matzah flour. And I remember that one year my grandmother from Kielce came for Pesach to spend the holiday with her oldest son; Grandfather was already dead, and those other sons of hers didn't observe the holiday were closely. She came, and I remember she made me those scrambled eggs with matzah flour. I know certainly that I didn't always like the fish. Broth with meatballs! And I very much liked roast duck. In fact, all my children love it to this day. But probably my most beloved dish was the chulent. And it would probably still be, as I miss it very much, but I haven't been able to find such chulent anywhere. When my mother made chulent, it'd be taken to the bakery, because you have to bake it in those ovens.

From time to time we'd all go to eat out; there was this family-run Jewish restaurant, very good, right near the Jewish Theater on Dzielna [2](#), in the direction of Karmelicka Street. I remember we went there from time to time, and they also had good chulent. During the war, well, I probably didn't even remember there had ever been a thing called chulent. After the war, there still were some Jewish restaurants. If I went to one, I'd always order chulent. Before 1968 [3](#), you could get chulent at the Amika on Kredytowa Street. After 1968, the [Amika] staff all left. And in those Jewish restaurants of today, the new ones, it's not the same thing at all. It neither looks nor tastes anywhere near like the old chulent. I can't make chulent myself, even though my friends tried to teach me.

And, in Pinsk, there was one more dish that I've never seen around here. For dinner they served not potatoes, but potato cake, baked in those Russian ovens as well. It was called teigachtz. I loved it, I could eat it cold between the meals, rush into the kitchen, grab a slice and run back to play. It didn't have to be hot. I don't know how they made it, but it could have been grated potatoes mixed with boiled potatoes. I've tried to order it in several places, but it's not the same.

And one more thing: cabbage with raisins. It's also very good, and I often served it at my home in adult life. I made it from memory only, as I never saw a recipe anywhere. You prepare it more or

less like Christmas Eve cabbage, and then it's only a matter of adding raisins and sugar. The flavor should be sweet-and-sour. You can also make it with sauerkraut. So if I cooked sauerkraut for Christmas, I'd leave some for bigos [Polish traditional food, similar to Irish stew] and some for the cabbage with raisins.

Our family read a lot, and the whole house was full with books by Sholem Aleichem [4](#) and other Jewish books, though not necessarily by Jewish authors. I read 'Pinocchio' [fictional character that first appeared in 'The Adventures of Pinocchio' by Carlo Collodi in 1883] and 'Robinson Crusoe' [novel by English writer Daniel Defoe (1659/1661-1731), first published in 1719 in Yiddish. Whatever there was in Yiddish, my father would make sure I read it. However, I can't say how familiar my parents were with Polish literature. My father was very serious about Jewish culture, the writers, I was also being taken to Jewish theater. I saw Bobe Jachne, I guess it was by Goldfaden [5](#). There was this theater on Dzielna [Scala] and I saw it there.

Of course, Father also read the papers. I know he read one Polish one, and I'm not sure whether it wasn't 'Nowosci.' But how the Jewish one was called I don't remember at all. I remember I was learning the letters of the alphabet from those papers and I'd cut out the letter 'n' because I liked it very much.

We spoke mostly Yiddish at home, my parents certainly spoke Yiddish to each other, and Father certainly spoke Yiddish to us, while Mother talked to us in Polish. My parents thought it very important that we knew Yiddish but that we weren't isolated from Polish either. I don't know about my sister, but I understood both Yiddish and Polish well, so if my parents didn't want us to understand a conversation, they'd switch to Russian. Every time I returned home from my grandfather in Pinsk and started talking, my mother, I remember, found my [eastern] accent offensive. Mother completed a Russian high school but her native tongue was Yiddish, just like Father's.

There was always a lot of talk at home about World War I. I knew that Poland had been partitioned [6](#) and became independent, I was raised on that. On 11th November [7](#), we'd go with Father to the Victory Square and watch the ceremonious change of guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. I remember Pilsudski's funeral [8](#), Pilsudski's death. In fact, as far as Pilsudski is concerned, we knew a lot about him as children. He was a kind of hero for us, a moral authority. And I remember the funeral day in May 1935. Some ceremony was being held in the church, I stood at the fence, there was a crowd of people, and the mood was mournful.

I remember 1st May. [Editor's note: workers' holiday established by the 2nd International, celebrated annually since 1890 with mass rallies, demonstrations, parades, etc. It was illegal in pre-war Poland.]. I remember how I was five years old and it was my birthday and my father said he was taking me to see the parade. And I remember Mother was really scared, but Father just took me and we went to Smocza Street, I remember he gave me a piggyback ride. Joining the parade was out of the question, of course, because as soon as it would reach Nalewki Street, the police would step in.

In his youth, my father belonged to the Zionist organization Hashomer Hatzair [9](#), and later, after he had left it, he sympathized with the Bund [10](#), though I don't think my parents were Bund members as such. Father wasn't a member for sure, though I know that he was involved in union work at his company, and that union meetings were often held at our home; if they had some problem to

discuss, they'd hold a meeting, and Father would preside.

In our house, two floors above us, was located that famous communist public library called [Zycie 11](#), and the police would very often raid the place; in fact, the library is even mentioned by Mrs. Ronikier in her book 'In the Garden of Memory,' I think her grandmother used to borrow books from there [Joanna Olczak-Ronikier, 'In the Garden of Memory,' 2002]. So the general mood and the atmosphere were definitely leftist.

My political consciousness was growing to the rhythm of my contacts with our subtenants. Those subtenants were usually KZMP [12](#) members. They liked me very much, and would talk to me about the Soviet Union, about communism. One guy was actually a KPP [13](#) member, and if he needed to hide away from the police, he'd hide with us.

Among our subtenants were two cousins of ours from Brest: Sjoma and Jasza, the sons of Grandfather Jankiel's brother. They came to Warsaw in search for work. Sjoma was a KZMP member, a bricklayer, a genuine proletarian, a worker. I loved him very much, and after the war I never happened upon any trace of him. A wonderful young man, ailing, hard-working, carrying the bricks on that yoke. And it was him who was telling me all those wonderful stories about life in the Soviet Union.

Jasza worked at some confectionery factory as a simple worker. Shortly before the war, it could have been 1937 or 1938, he was getting married. And as he had no other family here except us, and the wedding was traditional, my mother was the one to stand with him under the chuppah. I remember I was so proud Mother was the most important person during the ceremony, kind of standing in for his own mother.

The wedding took place at Nowolipie Street. And I remember, you know, children love sweets, that there was food and drink, there was halva in all possible forms. It was all at the same place: the wedding and the buffet. I guess that's how the Jewish weddings looked like, as that's the only one that I've ever seen. I remember the bride sitting with a white cloth over her face, though I don't remember whether it was the groom who was taking it off or somebody else. During the war, Jasza spent time in a Soviet labor camp and after the war, when he was passing through Poland, we met.

I remember my Warsaw neighborhood from my childhood, it wasn't very interesting: Dzielna, Gesia, Smocza, it was an area where rather poor people lived [all these streets were located in the Jewish quarter before the war]. I remember we lived on the ground floor and the windows of our room faced a small kind of garden that the janitor kept there. I remember we played in the yard, but it was a mixed kind of story. It was like that: there were Polish kids, and there were Jewish kids, and mostly I was playing with the Jewish ones. I don't even know which group was more numerous. There were often conflicts in that yard, but there were also friendships. I remember boys who had a bicycle and everyone could in turns take a ride on it, but I also remember that they wouldn't always allow me to.

We were friends with a Polish girl that lived in the front. Her name, if I remember it well, was Lilka. And I remember a situation where she took some toy away from me that was mine and I wanted it back, and told her to give it back to me. And at that point her grandmother, I think it was, came out and I remember how she twisted my ear for supposedly being a liar. I remember we always played very nicely, also at her home. I don't remember her coming to play with me at my home. Perhaps

because we were the poorer ones and couldn't offer the conditions [she was used to]. Their apartment, in turn, was beautiful, a really luxurious place.

It is somehow symbolic that we lived virtually two steps away from the Pawiak [14](#), and I think it was actually the female ward, the 'Serbia' [common name for the building within the Pawiak facility where in 1939-1945 a female ward was located]. We were one house away. A guard from the Pawiak lived in our house. I remember her leaving for work, always in uniform. And virtually opposite our gate was a church, the one that survived after the whole ghetto had been destroyed. [St. Augustin church, 18 Nowolipki Street. During the German occupation, already in the ghetto area, it was open for several months for Catholics of Jewish origin]. When I was little, my nanny would sometimes take me there, and there were no conflicts, only sometimes some devotees would be standing at the gate and would start shouting at Nanny for bringing a Jew to the church.

I remember I was on the beach one day [in Warsaw] and some hoodlums set their sights on me, a Jewish child, and they threw me into water. I couldn't swim; I could have been six or seven, it was before the war. And again the nerves, someone pulled me out. Also I remember that when you went to the Krasinski Gardens, you'd often meet with aggression. Father came from work one day all shaken - someone had given him a beating. He had been walking through the Saski Gardens. Only later I did find out it was the period in 1937, 1938, when university students were attacking Jews, and it was them who beat him up [15](#).

As for the Warsaw of my childhood, I remember visits to an amusement park, very nice. There was one in the Praski Park. I remember walks down the Vistula bank. In 1939, we went for a walk on the Vistula, the river had flooded, we went to see how it looked, and I remember I returned with my new shoes all wet, because, on our way back, the river was already so high, you had to wade in water.

I remember I liked Marszalkowska Street very much. My parents would take me and my sister for a stroll and we'd walk down Marszalkowska. The beautiful shops, the shop window displays, and the detail that I remember best are Singer sewing machines. There was a large store, a window display, and human-size dolls sitting at those machines. There was also a confectionery store on Marszalkowska with windows that you couldn't see and I'd always be fooled when father said, 'Come on, reach out, treat yourself!' and I'd hit the glass with my hand trying to snatch a candy.

We also had other relatives in Warsaw besides the ones I've already mentioned. Mother had some cousins from her side, though I don't know whether maternal or paternal. They lived at Ogródowa, I often visited them. They visited us often too. They were called the Lauenbergs. Those were Aunt Fania, Uncle Eliaz, and their daughter, Raja. I remember I even once went with them to Swider [one of pre-war Warsaw's favorite summer resorts, some 30 km east of Warsaw] for vacation.

I think other Lauenbergs from the same line lived on Waliców [street in Warsaw's Wola district]. Those were better off, I know that mother went to them from time to time to ask for a loan. They lived close to my school at Krochmalna. I'm not sure but I think they kept a pharmacy. Eliaz Lauenberg's mother and his brother Nachman lived in Pinsk. Nachman's son, Dawid, everyone called him Dodek, was in Pinsk when the war started, then he was arrested by the Russians, sent to Siberia, from where he somehow managed to get through to Palestine.

When I turned six, my father decided it was time for me to go to school. He came one day and said, 'Tomorrow you go to school.' And he took me to a school at 36 Krochmalna Street [a seven-grade Bund school] that was called Yidishe Folksshule, or Yiddish Popular School. He was proud I'd be studying Yiddish. As there was also a kindergarten there, my sister went there with me. We were on the same floor.

I remember the school as one of the best periods in my life. Wonderful, warm, friendly, sympathetic. Very much pro-community. With such great teachers. There were three schools of the kind in Warsaw, at 36 Krochmalna Street [the Chmurner], at Karmelicka [no. 29, the Grosser], and at Mila [no. 51, the Michalewicz]. I have no idea where precisely the one at Mila was, but the one at Karmelicka I visited once, as that was from where I was leaving for a summer camp. All three were elementary schools, that is, seven grades. And I remember my parents' plans to send to me to a gymnasium to Vilnius, as there was a YIWO [16](#) center there.

A school apron was obligatory for all students. It made us all identical. We didn't wear coats, like the high school ones with insets, which I regretted very much, but I had a short navy blue coat with a light-colored collar, and I remember I wore a badge on my beret, I'd swear it looked like an open book and four letters C-I-Sh-O, which stood for Centrale Yidysze Shulorganizatsye [17](#). I think the school was operated by the CISHO. And I think the Bund was its patron. I certainly remember it was leftist. I know the police often visited the place, at least that's what my mother, who was on the parent committee, told me. Some of the teachers were Bund members for sure.

I remember songs we were singing, those were revolutionary songs, and I remember that when the war in Spain [18](#) broke out, and we went with the whole class to the Saski Gardens, we wore red bowknots tied to our coats. There is something I wonder about that we weren't afraid we'd be beaten up, but still we went there and sang about Madrid, about Barcelona, there is a Yiddish song about it.

The school was a per-fee one, it wasn't a public school. I only remember there was talk that the fees varied depending on how much a given family could pay, so that no child would be excluded. Most of my classmates came from mid-income families, and there were a few from more affluent homes, who cared about the quality of teaching and character formation, as that was what the school was known for. There were a few students from poorer homes, too, such as myself.

It was a co-ed school. We certainly learned to write and read, also arithmetic. I didn't know the Hebrew alphabet when I went to school, so it was there I started to learn it. First with play-dough, I remember, we were making those letters, I'd bring them home and show them to Father. We didn't study religion, but rather Jewish history and tradition. I remember there was a course where we'd read all those Bible-based legends.

Typically for the lower grades, I had only one teacher, Ms. Zonenszejn [or Zonszajn]. A woman in her thirties, I guess. It seems to me that if she entered here now, looking the way she did back then, I'd recognize her. I remember what the headmaster looked like, a slender woman, but I don't remember her name. We had a music teacher, a tall dark-haired man. Someone else taught us eurhythmics. A lady played the piano, we did the exercises to the music. That was taking place in the large hall. I liked my teacher very much. And I liked the eurhythmics lady, and the music man. [Marek Edelman, remembers that the headmaster's name was Oruszkes, and the music teacher was called Tropianski.]

It wasn't so in that school that everyone ate when they wanted; instead, after the third lesson, there was the long break, everyone pulled out their lunch on a napkin, waited, and the teacher stopped at every child to check what you had. Sometimes this or that kid had nothing, and in such a case we'd share with them. I remember one time when I wasn't hungry and lied I had forgotten my breakfast, I suddenly had more than I had actually brought with me. Then the [teacher] would wish us 'bon appétit' and we'd all eat together. Such equality was very strictly observed.

There was no school on Saturday. You could take per-fee music classes. It cost little, while permitting many children to start their music education. It is there I started playing the piano. We didn't have a piano at home. I went to practice at school, or to the teacher's home somewhere in Waliców. The theory classes took place at the teacher's home. On Saturdays, we went for 'solfeggio' and music theory classes at school. We hurried for those classes after dinner. We went by foot, as we were so poor we didn't even go to school by tram, to save the few pennies, and it was a long way. It had to be a special occasion for us to take a tram or a horse cab. If we were really very tired, we took the '0' bus that stopped near our street.

Sometimes, perhaps twice during the school year, we went with school to a TOZ [19](#) bathhouse at Gesia Street. It was a kind of swimming pool, and I guess our clothes went to the disinfection chamber, as we had to wait for them.

I completed three grades before the war, and that school really gave me a lot, as I later went through all kinds of foster homes, various situations, dormitories. Everyone knows me as a person well prepared for social intercourse, helpful, conscientious – it all came from there, and I always told my children that I had been taught all that at that school, that's what I think, perhaps at home too, but most of such altruistic things I learned at school.

In my class, I was close friends with Wisia Folman. She was, I guess, the only classmate I kept in touch with outside school. She was an only child. Her mother was a pediatrician, her father also a doctor, I think, and they lived at Chlodna Street. Their home wasn't Orthodox, but I guess something of the tradition must have survived there, that they didn't feel assimilated, if they sent the girl to a Jewish school. They probably also wanted to bring her up modestly, nicely, with a lot of knowledge. Not as a petty bourgeois. I remember that at her home we spoke Polish. Wisia was one of those better-off kids at school. They not only had a maid but even a governess! I remember her as a pretty girl. A very nice, very pleasant home where I used to spend a lot of time. Upon my mother's consent, they'd take me to cinema. Wisia also invited me for her birthday party, a very sumptuous one. There were a lot of kids, the guests received gifts. The last time I saw Wisia was in 1939. I don't know what happened to her.

Wisia's governess was Jewish, I remember she even played in a Jewish show for students at the Nowosci Theater [20](#). I also played at the Nowosci. In 1939, for the end of the school year, our music school staged 'A szlitrn weg' [Sled Way]. It was a children's symphony, written by some German composer. Virtually all students took part. I played the triangle. Generally, if we went anywhere with school, it was to the Nowosci, I think the school had an agreement of some sort with it. Perhaps because the theater was owned by Ida Kaminska [21](#).

Once, and only once, I went to a summer camp organized by my school. In 1939, my parents decided I'd go, perhaps because I had grown up somewhat, or perhaps because you had to be of a certain age, because I don't remember any smaller kids there. It was during the summer recess, in

July. We gathered [in the school building] at Karmelicka. The hygienist examined us for cleanliness, there was some paper to fill.

The camp was near the Medem Sanatorium [22](#), so it must have been Miedzeszyn [town 20 km south of Warsaw]. We were divided into age groups. I'd swear I was in the youngest group because we wore panties but no bra, and the next group wore bras. A certain story is actually connected to this. I wore no bra, and yet, at the age of nine, I had already developed sizeable breasts. Those older boys in charge of distributing food would every time be just keep gaping at me, until finally one day the teacher took me to the side and asked me to wear an undershirt and shorts. It was only then that I got embarrassed, because I had had no idea that something was wrong.

Everything was so organized. I remember each day of the camp, all identical. I don't even know whether I could tell Saturday from Sunday, Sunday from another day. Washing. Irrespective of the weather, there were tubs outside, some taps, after which we'd gather for the roll call. We'd sing a song, a very revolutionary one. Then some notices or letters would be read out.

Then the breakfast. The house where we lived had porches, with tables and benches placed alongside them. I don't think they had to observe kashrut or non-working Saturdays, as no one checked on us at all. It was because of that socialistic, irreligious philosophy, I guess, that they didn't pay attention to kosher food. There were also duties. Simple tasks that were to prepare us for real life. After dinner we took a rest, everyone had to be quiet. You had money deposited by the teacher, and after dinner you could take some, there was a small store, you could buy something. But they'd also look to see whether each child had money for that chocolate bar. The atmosphere was very good.

What I also remember from that summer camp is that on the day of departure for Warsaw I got a fever, fell sick, had to lie in bed, and I didn't return home. I was very happy because I didn't feel like returning at all. I won a few days for recovering, then a few days until someone would turn up who'd take me home. I stayed with the next batch. I think one girl from my batch had paid for two, so she was there with me. I know it was a great time. I wonder now how come it was that neither of my parents came for me. Was the budget so tight they couldn't afford the train ticket? Or did they simply not care? I don't remember my parents as not caring [for us]. And here they waited for an opportunity for someone to take me to Warsaw.

For vacations I often went to relatives to Kielce and Pinsk. I don't remember how long those stays lasted. Perhaps it was weeks, perhaps a month, perhaps it was days. I don't recall ever going with my parents. My father would take me to the train station and find someone who was going in the same direction. He'd buy a special guardian booklet next to your ticket, fill it, and I'd travel in the company of a stranger. There, in turn, someone would pick me up at the station. I could have been five or six. I guess it was a question of money because I don't remember Father ever going with me to Kielce. He went for Grandfather's funeral, that I remember. He was with me in Kielce, that I also remember, but that was the only time.

Pinsk was a place where I felt at home. I remember it with great fondness and great longing. I simply felt at ease there. Grandfather had a house, and that house was kept by my grandmother's sister, Nojma Bojm, because he was a widower. You woke up, went out to the backyard, there were friends - you didn't go to the downtown. There was a garden. I remember sweet corn, which I loved, and cucumbers. I see it all kind of radiantly.

Uncle Eliasz Wertheim, the son of the sister of Grandmother Ruchla (the one that forbade me to comb my hair on Saturday), this is my father's maternal-side cousin, lived in Pinsk. He and my father were close friends. Uncle Eliasz had a small factory that made wax pencils, color ones. They were made in the courtyard. I very much liked to go there and watch the whole process. When I was in Pinsk, I think I was actually spending more time with them than at Grandfather's.

Eliasz had four children; one of his sons, Szymek [from Szymon], was a year older than me, his daughter Gitele, or Gitla, was a year younger, and with those two I was very close. He also had two elder children, daughter Klara, and son Fajwel. In 1940, the elder daughter got married. A beautiful girl. With the elder son [Fajwel] they must have had some major problems, I remember he had been sent to Otwock to a reformatory and once escaped from there and came to us, to Warsaw. My mother took him back there so as to avoid any trouble.

I had many girl friends in Pinsk. I played with kids from the nearby houses, as those were Jewish houses, as in a shtetl. It seems to me that Belarussian kids were coming too, though I'm not sure. Nor can I recall which language we spoke when playing, I think it was a mixed kind of one, as each of us knew both Polish and Yiddish. I know one thing, though, that upon returning to Warsaw, I had a nasty, eastern accent, I was drawling, singing. In Kielce, however, I was still the well-behaved, quiet, good child that obeyed the adults. It was a bit more stern there [than in Pinsk], though Grandmother was very kind and loved me very much. And I have fond memories of Kielce, because I had many cousins there, many relatives, which I didn't have in Pinsk.

During the war

When the war broke out [23](#), I was in Kielce. After returning from the summer camp I spent a few days at home, after which they put me on a train the usual method and I went to Kielce. It was August, and towards the end of the month I was supposed to go back home. War hung in the air, the mobilization had already been announced, and you couldn't get into a train, all were crammed with soldiers.

During that time, my father's brother, Uncle Ajzyk, got his mobilization orders. I remember how we went to see him off, it wasn't 1st September yet. He went to the front. He was subsequently taken prisoner of war, but the Germans released them and he returned home. I know nothing more of either him, Grandmother, or Aunt Gienia. None of my relatives survived from the Kielce ghetto [24](#). And when I was supposed to go back home, I couldn't any more. I think Kielce was bombed right on 1st September, as I remember that three or four days later, the Germans were already in town, communications with Warsaw had been cut off.

I returned to Warsaw sometime towards the end of the year [1939], some lady was going back and she took me with her. What I remember from the trip is that there were some Germans on the train and, knowing Yiddish, I understood a bit of what they were talking about. They were looking out the windows and wondering why everything was so destroyed, so ruined, and who the hell had done it.

It took us something like 48 hours to get to Warsaw on that train. We arrived, and there was a curfew, and what can you do, there's no way to go home. And I remember that lady fixed it somehow so that German soldiers escorted us off. This was the beginning of the war, so it wasn't yet like it was to be later. In any case, they didn't ask us whether we were Jews and they walked us off right to the front door.

When I came home, I could hardly recognize it, many things weren't there anymore, having been sold. Father had sold many books, but, instead of bringing the money home, and he was a collector of rare books, he'd only buy new ones. I know the budget was very tight, there was no income anymore, and no provisions had been hoarded up.

Before my return from Kielce, my father had made an attempt to run away with my sister, in a group with other people, to Pinsk, to wait things through there [25](#), and it was then he sold many things to have money for that. But my sister broke down, she got hysterical at the border, cried she wanted go back to Mama, and Father had to go back with her.

After my return, preparations started for another journey in that direction. My father and I set off somewhere in early 1940. Even before the ghetto was set up [26](#), because afterwards fleeing was no longer possible. It's hard for me to talk about it, because we left Mother behind. Obviously the calculation was that she would watch over those few things that we had left, that the war would soon be over. Perhaps there was no money to pay for us all – the guides charged per head, after all. What did Father hope for, how did he think we'd meet Mother again? I don't know, maybe he thought we'd find each other [after the war] if all of us survived. It's hard to say.

My sister stayed with Mother. The parting was very hard. Mother plead, begged for Father not to take me, I remember the argument in the kitchen when my father actually got angry: it was out of the question that I'd stay. I had to go to school. I don't remember being emotional in any way about leaving. Perhaps because that was precisely how I had been brought up – riding the train with this person, riding the train with that person, I don't know, perhaps I was simply unemotional.

We had to cross the bridge in the evening to get to Praga [Warsaw district on the right bank of the Vistula], sleep there, and then from one of the train stations we went in the direction of Sadowne [70 km east of Warsaw], and there we got off. There were six or seven of us. There were two kids, me and Mietek, the son of our neighbor, a tailor. We were in one group with my father's brother, the one that had studied law [Uncle Srul], and with Aunt Dora [his wife]. We got off, it was Sunday, a church opposite the station, a crowd of people in front of it. We got off that train, with backpacks, and were supposed to meet the guide. He was to take us over to the Russian side. You had to cross two borders, the German one, and then the Russian one.

Earlier, following the Ribbentrop pact [27](#), the Russians were letting people in, and many people fled then and got through the border easily. When we were fleeing, the Russians had already closed the border, and the Germans could basically arrest and murder us, and the Russians arrest us, certainly, or simply refuse passage. And that guide's job was to show us the way so that we'd meet neither the Germans nor the Russians.

And there, right in front of the church, a scene just like from that Lanzmann film ['Shoah' by Claude Lanzmann], those churchgoers attacked us. I don't remember whether those were the youths only, I remember they snatched our backpacks, we were robbed of everything. And only Aunt Dora refused to let go of her things, and we went back to Warsaw, to spend the night at Praga. From there Mietek and I went on foot to Muranow, back home. The adults had decided to send us forward, because they didn't want to stick their heads out in the case of a roundup [and it was necessary to let the families know about the unsuccessful excursion].

My mother almost fainted when she saw me. And that time she went with us to Praga. We spent a week there, and Mother again organized funds for an escape. I remember the second departure better because my mother and my sister this time came to the station to see us off. I had a heart-shaped brooch, you know, a little thing with a photo of Shirley, I think it was, [Shirley Temple, born 1928, American actress], and Hanka [from Chana] had always been pleading that I give it to her, and I'd always refuse. That time, at the station, she asked me again, I broke down, that's how I remember it today, and I gave it to her. And that was the last time... I can still see the scene, the platform, and me with Mother. I even remember how she was dressed. She was in a collarless coat, a dark one, and a small toque, a kind of small hat. I don't remember, though, how my sister was dressed.

And so we embarked on the same voyage again. This time in Sadowne we managed to find a guide who took us on a horse carriage to the other side of the bridge on the Bug river. The Germans somehow didn't bother us. Then we left the carriage behind and the guide started leading us through some woods and fields. It got dark, I remember we were walking, and there were some ditches, my father fell into one and pulled me with him, and we both got wet.

After that we're walking a long time through the woods, and suddenly, out of nowhere, there appear two guys on bicycles, and they're like, you know, typical szmalcowniks [28](#). They were Polish. As I remember it today, they were middle-aged individuals, in peaked caps, the so-called cycling caps. And they started demanding money, that we give them everything we have. We didn't have much to give them, we refused to give anything, and they simply rode away to let the German gendarmerie know, and all of us, including the two Poles and the guide, were subsequently arrested.

The Germans put us in a barn, on some hay, we lied on the floor. I cried all night - I was afraid, and Father was trying to calm me down. The extermination of Jews in those border areas had already begun. The ghetto in Warsaw had not been set up yet at the time when we were leaving, and here some cleansing, deporting was already under way. [29](#)

In the morning, the Germans took them all away, what they did to them - I don't know. Us they took somewhere through some woods, and at the edge of the woods told us to empty our pockets. They didn't take everything. And they told us how to go to circumvent the Russians. We didn't really believe them, and so we went in the opposite direction, until at some point we walked into the neutral strip, right in front of the German barrier, and the Germans guards go, 'Stop, where are you going?' We made up a story that we were fleeing from Russia to the other side. They said, 'Sorry, but you can't go, the border's closed.' They said they wouldn't let us through, but at least we knew which direction the Russians were.

Still, it was broad daylight, we couldn't [walk] on the neutral strip, so we turned, and there, still in the neutral zone, was some cottage, and we went there. We waited until it got dark, and the man that lived there agreed to take us through. We set off in the night, and suddenly we happened upon two Russian border guards, and we heard them ask, 'Where are you going?' in Russian.

Aunt Dora took matters in her hands from there and started talking to them. They said the border had been closed, it's forbidden, they can't let us through. But because in my pocket I had two wrist-watches that we were supposed to give to someone in Bialystok [a town 190 km north-east from Warsaw], she bribed them with those watches. The Russians were extremely greedy for

watches those days. And they took those watches, let us through, and told us, 'Now, if anyone stops you, tell them we've returned you because you wanted to cross to the German side.' And this way we crossed the border.

After that we parted with Aunt Dora and Uncle Srul, they went to Luck [a town 390 km south-east of Warsaw, today western Ukraine], and we went to Bialystok and from there by train to Pinsk, where we took up residence in Grandfather Hersz's house. Grandfather had died some time before, but Grandmother Estera's sister, Aunt Nojma Bojm, still lived in the house.

During that time, we kept in touch with Mother. The postal service still worked. Seldom, but letters from Mother were arriving, I was writing her, and my sister, whom we had left illiterate, sent us a postcard: 'Daddy, I'm writing this myself and with my right hand,' she was a lefty, you know. They were begging for food and writing about hunger; those letters were very desperate. Father must have been regretting bitterly leaving them there and fleeing just with me. Not that we should have stayed, but that, no matter what, we should have all fled together. He was doing all he could, wrote letters to Stalin, to Molotov [30](#). Tried hard, in his naïve belief, of course, that he'd manage to bring Mother and Hanka to Pinsk. I don't remember whether we sent them any food. If anyone sent them anything, it was Father who at the time was living separately. My aunt and I certainly couldn't afford to.

I lived for over a year in Pinsk [until June 1942], I went to school, and at first it was actually a Jewish school, but then they transformed it into a Russian one, and I didn't relocate because I wanted to stay with the same kids. In fact, those weren't Jewish kids only, which was probably why they transformed the school into a Russian one. I stayed, and that was a very good decision, because the knowledge of Russian would prove very important for me in my later life. My father worked out of town, coming only once a month to Pinsk to visit me at school, and he was very cross at me for not transferring to a Jewish school. In June, the summer holidays began, and, virtually a few days before Hitler invaded Russia [31](#), Father came for me and took me to his place [where he lived out of town].

In early July 1941 we again had to flee from the advancing Germans, this time into the Soviet interior, and somehow we ended up in the Kharkov area [a city in north-eastern Ukraine, close to the Russian border], thinking that the war wouldn't get that far and we'd be able to wait things through. We were there for a month or two, and in October, when a new German offensive started, we had to flee again.

This time it was on foot, walking through mud so deep you had to watch not to lose your shoes. We were walking like this for 10, 15 kilometers a day. Until we reached some train station and got by train to the Saratov district [city in Russia, some 1900 km east of Kharkov], and there father simply reported to the authorities and applied for work. They sent us to the countryside, a small town, a village, actually, called Balanda [730 km north-east of Saratov], and there we stopped, they already treated us as refugees. We settled there, it was late fall 1941.

On 13th July 1942 my father was taken for trench digging, to the work squads. I don't know whether he tried to extricate himself from that somehow or not, because he left me right on the spot. But he wrote: 'One has to fight somewhere, one has to do something, and you try to find some children's home.' But a year had passed before I found a children's home, and in the meantime I was going from place to place, babysitting or doing something else, for food, for

shelter. I was twelve years old and completely unprepared for living on my own, for hard work. After a year the head of the local education department got interested in me, she met me in a queue somewhere and asked why I wasn't in school, so I told her I didn't have the possibility, and she referred me officially to a children's home.

In 1943, I landed in a children's home in Balanda, and remained there until 1945. There were no Jewish kids there. Between 1941 and 1944 I met neither any Poles nor any Jews. In the children's home, I went to school on a regular basis. Life in the home was difficult. Most of the kids were abandoned children, usually aggressive ones. They threw knives, killed each other, even the little ones went to plunder with the older kids. It was very bad. But there was a small group of us, the war orphans, and we wanted to study, wanted to read, so we kept close to each other and supported each other, as otherwise it would have been very hard for me.

During that time I didn't know what was happening with my parents. I got only one letter from my father in August, and apart from that I didn't know what was happening to him. I didn't know what was happening to my mother. I knew that the ghetto had been set up, as we were exchanging letters even when I was in Pinsk, so I knew that Mother and Chana were in the ghetto. But you didn't hear yet of the Germans dissolving the ghettos. Some reports were coming through, though, so it certainly wasn't like I didn't worry.

In 1944, my teacher fell sick and asked me to go to the shop to buy bread for her. Waiting in the queue, I heard someone speak Polish. It was something like April, May 1944. I was very happy to hear Polish and approached the speakers shyly, and said I was also from Poland and understood everything they said, only I was no longer able to speak the language myself. Those were two Jewish women from Poland, and they asked me where I was staying, and a couple of days later they came to the children's home to ask the headmaster that she permit me to visit them every Sunday.

It turned out there were several refugee Jewish families in Balanda, including three from Poland. The third one was not only from Poland but actually from Kielce, and her name was Roza. It is in fact thanks to her that I returned to Poland at all. We started talking, Kielce wasn't such a big town, and finally she says she remembers the Dajbogs. That there was a family of this name. And these families started hosting me in turns every Sunday.

After the war

1945 came, and the Ukrainian territories were gradually liberated. Some of those families re-evacuated themselves; left. The Union of Polish Patriots [32](#) assisted them in those operations. There was actually talk of me repatriating too, but someone would have had to adopt me, as otherwise I wouldn't have been able to leave. I, however, didn't want to be adopted by anyone, because I was already a big girl, fourteen years of age. I simply knew I had parents of my own, that is, I still thought I had them. And I knew that if my father returned, he'd be looking for me, so I didn't go.

After all those families had left, only one stayed, a Ukrainian family, from Proskurov [a town in Ukraine, name changed in 1954 to Khmelnytsky]. Eventually, they also started preparing to leave. They came to the children's home to ask me what I intended to do, because they had arranged with the other families (each left some money for me) that whoever would be leaving the last,

they'd pull me out of that backwoods [Balanda]. And I decided to leave with them [for Proskurov].

I was taken care of by Aunt Roza Gershleibovna Sudman. A wonderful person, she was in Balanda with her parents, her father was a wonderful grandfather, who, just like my own, was called Hersz. And her mother, Chana. There was also Bronia, her sister. Roza's husband was called Lev Isakovich Shpilko [he and her brother were in the army at the time]. They had a daughter, seven years younger than me. Her name was Klava.

In Proskurov, we lived in a single house, but everyone had a place, a room, for themselves. The house had no sewer system, it was awful, old. Roza's parents were Orthodox Jews. In principle, they observed all the rules and bans. Roza's father was some kind of an activist at the community. Aunt Roza, though they had the money to pay for it, completed only seven grades and was unable to enlist for any high school because Jews weren't admitted. Her younger brother and younger sister several years later completed their high schools and graduate studies without difficulty.

So not only I did find myself among Jews again, I found myself back in the Jewish tradition. During the war, they observed only so many Jewish traditions they could, so as not to starve, and, in fact, it was permitted in such circumstances; Roza's father certainly didn't take his kippah off, he observed what he could. When we returned to Proskurov, Grandfather Hersz went to the synagogue again, he was the ritual butcher. He was the butcher and also the man in charge of circumcising children. For Yom Kippur, the whole family fasted. I was already past the age that exempts you from fasting so I fasted as well.

We spoke Russian. At home, my hosts spoke Russian, Ukrainian, and Yiddish. Roza spoke to her parents in Yiddish, but between themselves the youths spoke Russian. I hadn't spoken Yiddish since my parting with Father, but I understood everything. When asked, I'd reply in Russian.

Soon, sometime in 1946, Aunt Roza's husband returned from the war. He was taken at the same time and enlisted for the same work squads as my father, but he said he had never met him. He worked as the director of a scout center, he was a teacher. He was very fond of his family, a very warm man. He genuinely accepted me, I really don't know how, because the whole thing [their taking me into the family] had happened during his absence. I remember he was very proud that I was doing well at school.

I went to a normal Russian school in Proskurov. I don't know whether there were any Jewish schools in Russia at the time, in Proskurov there certainly weren't any. Klava went to the same school as I did. In fact, in the whole town there was only one Ukrainian school [and] one Russian one. The Ukrainian one was actually closer to home, but there I'd have to speak Ukrainian, which I didn't know.

In 1946, in the fall, suddenly there arrives a telegram for Roza Sudman, she calls me: 'Firochka,' the diminutive for Esfir [Russian for Estera], 'Firochka, read it,' because the telegram was printed in Latin letters. I remember the signature as if it was today: 'Noach.' And I faint, for the first and last time in my life. The next thing I remember is everyone tugging me and shouting: 'What happened, what happened?' And then I read it to them: 'I need information about Esfir, please.' And the signature: 'Noach.'

Uncle Noach was a reserve officer and he received a mobilization card in 1939, I think he was supposed to turn up at his unit somewhere in the Kresy. He couldn't get there, he found himself in Luck, and stayed there. His wife, Aunt Mania, was in Kielce with Julek. She was subsequently executed by the Gestapo for food trading, which is something I know from a book [Krzysztof Urbanski, 'The Extermination of the Jewish Population of Kielce 1939-1945,' Kielce 1994]. Of the living, I was the last one to see them all. When we were fleeing with Aunt Dora and Uncle Srul, they decided to go to Luck and stay with Uncle Noach.

In 1940, the NKVD [33](#) came to the place where Uncle Noach worked and took him straight from there to a transport. He managed to notify Aunt Dora and his brother, and they hurried to join the same transport, because they realized they'd all be taken away sooner or later and they wanted to be together. They were sent to Siberia and ended up in a camp.

Aunt Dora was pregnant [when they took them], and she gave birth in the camp to a girl, Hania, it was 1940. When an agreement was later signed by the Polish and Russian governments, they were released from the camp and settled compulsorily in Jambul [city in southern Kazakhstan, near border with Kyrgyzstan], Kazakhstan. [Editor's note: on 30th July 1941, Wladyslaw Sikorski, head of the Polish émigré government in London, and the Soviet ambassador in Great Britain, Ivan Maisky, signed a treaty on collaboration in the war against Germany.]

Noach worked in a de-lousing unit there and contracted typhus, and subsequently passed it on to his brother. During this time, the Polish army was organizing itself, Noach was sick with typhus, couldn't go with Anders [34](#). He recovered, but Uncle Srul died. A couple of months earlier, Hania, the little baby girl, had died, and several months after Srul's death, another daughter, Izia, was born. So that was literally a marathon: a child's death, the uncle's death, the little girl's birth in those conditions. Izia was born in 1943, Hania was born in 1940 in the camp. As soon as the 1st Kosciuszko Infantry Division [35](#) was organized, Uncle Noach joined it. He went with it the whole way down to Berlin, and from there returned to Warsaw.

It so happened Uncle Noach was in Wroclaw in the fall 1946, and somewhere on a street he was approached by that Kielce woman [from Balanda], Roza. 'You must be Mr. Dajbog from Kielce,' she says. 'I am.' 'Well, your niece is in this place.' And she gave him the address of my aunt Roza Sudman. Some two weeks after that telegram, I received a letter from Uncle, in which he wrote he was already in Poland, that he was in the army, and that my parents were dead. I was surprised, because I didn't know how he knew.

It turned out that, again, someone had been with my father, and that man survived, and found himself in Poland, and because they, Noe [from Noach] and my father, were identical like twins, that man accosted Uncle Noach whether he wasn't a Dajbog. Uncle Noach says he is, and the man pulls out my father's military ID photo. 'Yes, that's my brother,' says Noach. And the man says, 'It happened right before my eyes, it was near Stalingrad, we were digging trenches, there was an air raid, and he failed to dive into the trench before the bomb fell.' The official version I learned from the Soviet authorities was that my father was missing.

Uncle then started efforts to bring me back, I also started efforts to be repatriated. But repatriation had officially ended. Efforts for me to be able to be repatriated continued for a year, until 1947. In late 1947, an official letter arrived for the Proskurov education department to escort me to a gathering point near Moscow where the remaining formalities were to be completed. That

gathering point was a children's home, there wasn't much to eat, but there were children, orphans of some high-ranking officers, there's a school, there were music classes. We were a group of perhaps 15 kids. From small children to three older girls roughly of my age, and one more older girl from Bialystok.

If I'm not mistaken, at least six of us were of Jewish origin. There were two sisters, there was a girl with whom we became close friends, there was a girl from a Polish children's home that was returning to Poland, and, at some station, when the train was standing still, the other kids threw her out off the train because she was Jewish. She fell under a passing train and lost her fingers. The teachers didn't react at all [36](#). Her name was Zlata, I think. She had been left in a hospital, and now she was [returning] with our group. I don't think she had anyone.

There were all kinds of kids. Kids who had been in the camps, who had gotten lost in flight, had been in prison, or kids who had been alone so they tried to survive and in many cases broke the law. Finally they'd gathered the whole group, completed all the formalities, it took some three months, and in February we returned to Poland, to Warsaw.

Upon arrival, we were loaded onto trucks and taken somewhere to Swider, there was some kind of a children's home there. I think they must have set it up during that time - there wasn't anybody there except us, it was empty. They put us there and in the morning they started letting know the families.

My uncle came for me right the next day, I think. I immediately registered with the Jewish Committee [37](#), they were conducting kind of interviews there with young people, and they persuaded me to move to a dormitory, it was officially called the Józef Lewartowski Youth Home, on Jagiellonska Street, that I'd be with my peers, that I'd learn to speak Polish better. [Editor's note: the Józef Lewartowski Youth Home, supervised by the Central Committee of Polish Jews, was opened in January 1948 and closed down in 1952.] And here Uncle had a single room in a three-room apartment. There was him, there was his wife, a child was to be born in a few months' time. So I was actually happy to go there, and I stayed for three years at that dorm [on 28 Jagiellonska Street].

Above all, it wasn't a children's home. Soon we became friends, everyone had their war experiences, we were all equal, everyone helped each other. It was chiefly young Jewish people who lived there, but there were some Poles too. There was a guy named Staszek Kuczera. In principle, however, it was an institution supervised by the Jewish Committee and financed by the Joint [38](#). We had full board there. Good Jewish cuisine, though I don't think it was kosher, no one bothered about that anymore. From time to time some packages from the UNRRA [39](#) arrived.

A year later a whole group of young people starting education at various schools took up residence at the dorm. We called them the 'sprats' or the 'sardines,' for the girls were 14-15 years old, and we were 18, 19 years old. One sprat has stayed, she's involved in various organizations here. Some of the others have left Poland. And the people from the dorm have scattered away. I lived there for three years. The dorm inhabitants come here almost every year, some haven't left, some keep together in Israel, all come to visit.

During that time, I completed two grades of high school because on arrival I was good for first grade. I went to the best school in Warsaw, a great school, with wonderful professors, like Mr. and

Mrs. Libera, she was a Latin teacher, he was a professor of Polish. He helped me a lot in starting to speak and write Polish correctly. He practiced with me during the breaks, forcing me to write all kinds of essays, and, thanks to that, two years later I passed the high school finals, and passed them easily.

Family life

In 1950, I enlisted for the telecommunications department, today the electronics department, of the Warsaw Polytechnic. In 1954, I completed my studies and received the title of engineer. And I told myself it was time to go to work. I had already achieved more, remembering all the time about my father's hunger for knowledge, and about the dream for each generation to achieve more than then previous one. I did what I could. Then I went to work. First it was at the Kasprzak radio plant, but then our division was spun off, and the Warsaw Radio Company RAWAR was established. There I met my husband.

My husband's name is Marian Migdalski. He is Polish. He was born in Sandomierz in 1926. His mother died in the early 1930s. He had two brothers. The elder one, Zbigniew, worked with their father as a seasonal construction worker, and my husband was home, taking care of the younger brother, Julian. He spent the occupation years in Sandomierz. He was very eager to study. After the war he started making up for the lost time, completing several grades a year, and in 1949 he started studies at the Wroclaw Polytechnic, which he completed in 1953 and was sent to work in Warsaw. When I met my husband, he was a party member, and in my freshman year I also joined the party.

My husband knew from the very beginning about my Jewish descent. In fact, I've never hidden it. Neither from my neighbors nor from anybody else. I've always felt very strongly Jewish, have never been ashamed of it, and that's why I think I've always been respected, because it seems to me that people always knew that I was somehow strong, insensitive. If anyone acted anti-Semitic, I'd simply stop talking to such people.

We got married in 1954. The ceremony was non-religious. The wedding was a modest affair, little more than a simple party. None of us had anything. I had only started working, he had been working for a year but for an extra year had to provide for his brother so that he could study. So we were starting from scratch. My friends at Kasprzak bought us a blanket. I borrowed a pillow from the Dajbogs [Noach and Bronia]. There was nothing in the shops, I only managed to buy a kettle somewhere, and I remember we boiled water for tea in that kettle, and potatoes too, because you couldn't buy any pots anywhere.

In 1955, our daughter Hania was born, and the name wasn't accidental, of course, it was after my little sister Chana. I wasn't permitted to write Chana, but only Hania. I had always dreamt that if I had a daughter, it'd be Hania, and then if I had another baby, my husband would choose the name for it. In 1959, Andrzej was born, my husband chose the name, the first letter of the alphabet; I accepted it. I'm not worried that he's Andrzej, because my daughter Hania gave their children second names after my father and uncle Krzysztof's second name is Elias, Alik's [from Aleksander] is Noach. So the cause has been preserved.

I was always telling my children about the war. After all, they didn't have grandparents, didn't have aunts, didn't have uncles. So they learned what that war meant and that [their family] had been

murdered. Since the very beginning, since the moment they understood anything, they knew we were Jewish. In fact, I took them for all the ceremonies at the ghetto. My husband, if he only had time, went with us, naturally.

As far as religious holidays are concerned, that's precisely the problem of people like me who weren't taught much about tradition at home. I learned little at home, and my husband didn't contribute much Polish tradition either. So we had to be creative. I was able to say at home, if I knew, that it was the Chanukkah that day, but we still had the Christmas tree, though we never held the Christmas Eve dinner [a Polish Christian tradition] because I didn't know how you do it. My husband wasn't able to tell me, he doesn't bother about those things at all. My children, both Andrzej and Hania, hold the Christmas Eve dinner at their homes, and on Christmas Day they come to us for a special dinner. So it's always been a mixture of traditions, and I have to say that didn't give my children any foundations. They'd pick and choose what suited them for themselves.

My Hanka [from Hania] didn't have to pass the entry exams and she enlisted for a psychology course at Warsaw University. Andrzej didn't have it so easy. He had been talking about biology from the day he was born. And of course he went to study biology. Today he works at the Polish Academy of Sciences's Biophysics and Biochemistry Institute. He got married but they divorced. They have no children. They have long been divorced and now, for instance, she is in America, her parents are here, and he's taking care of them. He's generally a successful man.

In fact, my daughter is too. She has a degree in psychology. She's married. Her husband is a mathematician. A very talented man. He's a software developer. Shortly before the introduction of the martial law [40](#), they went for a vacation, the martial law met them in Canada, and they never returned. He works at a psychiatric hospital, he's the head therapist there. And my grandsons were born there, Krzysztof in 1983, and Aleksander, or Alik, in 1986. Their first language was Polish.

Hanka combines the different traditions at her home. There's a photo where her sons sit at the table in skullcaps, it's Pesach, but later it's Christmas, and their Polish friends come to visit them for Christmas Eve, and it's the proper Christmas Eve dinner, there's a tree. There was a Sunday school in Canada for lay, non-religious children, where they had lessons about, among other things, Jewish culture and tradition, the holidays, Hebrew classes too, if anyone wanted. Krzysztof and Alik attended that school.

The boys are grown up now, Krzysztof is halfway into his university studies, he has completed the third year. Alik has been a bit at odds with school. A very talented boy. He loves music, he's set up a music studio for himself, writes songs, alas, school's been less important for him, and it's been like that for a couple of years now. And he'll probably be continuing his education in evening courses now.

Another person who lives in Canada is Izia, the daughter of Aunt Dora and Uncle Srul. Hania has been in touch with her. After the war was over, Izia's mother, Aunt Dora, returned to Poland from Jambul, it was 1945. She accidentally got right into the Kielce pogrom [41](#). Soon afterwards they left for Palestine. When Izia was getting married, I received an invitation to attend her wedding in Israel, and of course I didn't get the passport, I couldn't go. [Editor's note: In the communist era in Poland, the passport was a privilege]. In 1969, Izia and her husband left Israel, settled in Montreal, then moved to Calgary. Izia teaches Jewish tradition and culture in Calgary.

I never talked to Aunt Dora about the pogrom. With Izia, on the other hand, I did last year, with the help of her daughter. She remembers that some man pulled her out [of the crowd during the pogrom], because she looked Polish. She started crying, 'Mommy!' so the man somehow also pulled her mother out, and hid them in the nearest gate. She remembers that, and doesn't even want to think about coming to Poland.

Anti-Semitism after the war

In 1968, I quit my job because the whole anti-Semitic campaign had started and it wasn't a nice place to be at the time. Besides, my husband believed I should quit, no one had been forced to quit, if there were any other Jews there, they stayed, but as long as I was there, it was awkward. Especially that my husband worked in an executive position, so that wasn't very good. [Editor's note: During the anti-Semitic campaign, 'family liability' was introduced, for instance, spouses of people of Jewish descent were being fired from their jobs]. I was trying to find a job for some time, but I saw strong reluctance against hiring Jews.

For three years I had no job, wasn't even trying to find one. One thing that the mood was as it was, and the other that during that time my son Andrzej got asthma and for three years I was virtually a nurse and a teacher at the same time, trying to make sure he wouldn't miss a year at school. In 1971, I got a job at the Vacuum Electronics Institute at Długa Street. I had worked for 15 years at RAWAR, and my second job until retirement, another 15 years, was at that institute.

The year 1968 was a very hard experience for me. Above all, Uncle [Noach] left. Upon returning to Poland after the war, he worked at the Defense Ministry's bookkeeping department until about 1955. Then he worked for a couple of years at Jewish cooperatives. He had two sons. In 1968, Marek was in his second year of studies, and Julek hadn't yet completed high school. Uncle said there was still time for at least them to have a peaceful life. That he no longer wanted the shocks, things like the Kielce pogrom, the Jewish Doctors' Plot [42](#), and all those things he had to go through.

His wife was Jewish. Basically, she was most Zionistic of us all. Uncle Noach had been a Zionist in his youth, but no longer at the time. But he said, well, he'd surely not create a new life for himself, to the contrary, he'd be changing things for worse as he was living on a retirement pension and he'd not transfer the pension to Israel – but at least he'd take the boys out. And in 1968 he emigrated with his sons and wife to Israel. For me, that was an incredible shock.

Many of my friends left, after all, many of the people I knew were Jewish. Virtually every day we went to the Gdanski Station [from which the trains carrying Jewish emigrants were leaving for Vienna, where they would decide which country they would ultimately emigrate to] to see them off. Uncle Noach left for Israel, said he was too old to go for any other country, but the younger ones were leaving for Canada, for the United States. They were receiving a passport saying that its bearer was not a citizen of Poland. From Vienna, they went to Italy, or Denmark, somewhere from where they'd go to their ultimate destination.

I wasn't afraid when the hate campaign was going on, and I kept in touch with those who had left. I told myself that if they tried to harass me, I'd be prepared, but still it hurt. Fortunately, I myself didn't have to make the decision to leave. Leaving simply wasn't an option. In another situation, I'd probably have been contemplating the decision, I'd probably have left, if only because of my uncle.

But I don't regret it that I'm in Poland, that I haven't left.

As far as my Jewish identity is concerned, I've never abandoned it. Perhaps I was more active in this area at some periods of my life and less in others. I've carried my Jewish identity from my childhood to this day. I've always had the sense, typical for all Dajbogs, that we don't have to assimilate, that we can be, as partners, as a minority, but still a member of this nation. Before going into retirement, I didn't really have the time to be particularly interested in the activity of Jewish organizations. In fact, Uncle Noach didn't venture into that area either. We certainly always attended the annual ghetto uprising celebrations [43](#). During that time, I was interested in books about Jewish issues, if only I could get my hands on something...

Recent years

I've been to Israel. Once, in 1979, illegally. [Editor's note: between 1967 and 1989 the Soviet bloc countries maintained no diplomatic relations with Israel]. I went simply through Vienna because I wanted to see my Uncle [Noach]. I knew he was ill, had a tumor, had been operated. And the second time I went with Andrzej in 1996, to attend the wedding of Marek's daughter, Michal. I spent two months [in Israel] then, Andrzej spent two weeks. I was taking single-day and several-day excursions throughout the country; I had very many friends there, so I had places to sleep in Haifa and near Haifa, in Tel Aviv, in Jerusalem. I was partly driven about. And I spent those two months very actively. I liked the country very much. I've never tried to go again, for various reasons. Andrzej has very nice memories of the trip. He'd join English-language tourist groups and do a lot of sightseeing. At the wedding, Michal held the chuppah, which made him feel very proud.

Hania was in Israel illegally before me, she wasn't even married yet. She decided to do it but we never dared to tell my husband about it. Firstly, because it hadn't been agreed upon with him, and secondly, because he'd surely have been scared. He did know about my illegal trip and he accepted it, so I guess he'd have accepted it in this case too. I actually didn't know, I only learned after she got back. I suspected something was going on, because she disappeared so suddenly, she was in London at the time, I guess. They arranged everything over the phone, she went there, and did a lot of sightseeing as well.

In 1975, I visited Roza Sudman in Proskurov. Her husband had died in 1956. Her parents were also dead. Since my return to Poland, my carers stopped writing me to avoid trouble with the authorities. In 1973, I was in Moscow and wrote them a letter, described my story and gave them my Warsaw address. About a month later I received a very warm letter from them, that I've kept to this day. Roza was inviting me to visit them, and I went there. I met her whole family, the students, the teachers, I was in fact received with all the honors, as a guest from the West.

In any case, there were still many people in Proskurov, but there was already a trend for Jews to be leaving, whoever could, he was leaving. Klava with her two sons and her husband are in Israel. Her sister Bronia is in the USA with her sons and her grandchildren and their families. I managed to meet them, because they visited me here in Poland.

In 1988, I retired and went for a year to Canada to nurse my grandchildren. On 4th July 1989, I stood in line before the consulate to cast my vote in those memorable elections. [Editor's note: On that day, Poland's first free parliamentary elections after the war took place]. I returned to Poland on 5th June, at the moment of those great changes that I welcomed with joy, because my problems

with the passport were finally over, earlier I could neither go to visit Noach, nor was I at Izia's wedding, nor did they let me go and visit Hania. I never received the passport at the first request. And now it's in my drawer. I can also invite people to visit me here. Most of my relatives I saw for the first time. Even my grandchildren I knew initially only from photos, though happily I was able to meet them even before 1989.

In Poland, I feel most at ease among Jews, and among some Poles too. After I retired [in 1988], I immediately got involved in Jewish life. I'm a member of the TSKZ [44](#), the Children of the Holocaust [45](#), the Jewish Historical Institute Association [46](#). In any case, I try to be as active as possible, I read a lot, books and magazines; I collect Judaica.

Glossary

1 Russian Revolution of 1917

Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

2 Scala Theater

One of pre-war Warsaw's five permanent Jewish theaters. Founded in 1926 by Henryk Ryba, it was located at 1 Dzielna Street and had 580 seats. The opening show was Dimov's sentimental comedy Joshke the Musician. Among the Scala's leading actors were Kac, Klajn, Barska-Fischer, Renina, Alzenberg. The manager was Mojzesz Lipman. At the Scala various theater troupes performed. It was basically a revue and comedy venue; performers included Sambation, Di Jidysze Bande, Azazel. Guest performers included Ida Kaminska's group and the Troupe from Wilna.

3 Anti-Zionist campaign in Poland

From 1962-1967 a campaign got underway to sack Jews employed in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the army and the central administration. The background to this anti-Semitic campaign was the involvement of the Socialist Bloc countries on the Arab side in the Middle East conflict, in connection with which Moscow ordered purges in state institutions. On 19th June 1967 at a trade union congress the then First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party [PZPR], Wladyslaw Gomulka, accused the Jews of a lack of loyalty to the state and of publicly demonstrating their enthusiasm for Israel's victory in the Six-Day-War. This address marked the start of purges among journalists and creative professions. Poland also severed diplomatic relations with Israel. On 8th March 1968 there was a protest at Warsaw University. The Ministry of Internal Affairs responded by launching a press campaign and organizing mass demonstrations in factories and workplaces during which 'Zionists' and 'trouble-makers' were indicted and anti-Semitic and anti-intelligentsia slogans shouted. After the events of March, purges were also staged in all state institutions, from factories to universities, on criteria of nationality and race. 'Family liability' was also introduced (e.g. with respect to people whose spouses were Jewish). Jews were forced to emigrate. From 1968-1971 15,000-30,000 people left Poland. They were stripped of their citizenship and right of return.

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

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

5 Goldfaden Abraham (1840-1908)

Poet, playwright, stage director, creator of modern Jewish theater in Yiddish. Started by writing Hebrew and Yiddish poems for press publications. Published *Dos Jidele*, a volume of song texts. In 1867, together with singers Izrael Grodner and Moshe Finkel, founded in Iasi (today's Romania) the first permanent Jewish theater, becoming its manager, director, and set designer. Initially staged vaudevilles and operettas, later started writing plays himself. The theater's success during an all-Russian tour contributed fundamentally to the development of Yiddish theater. In the 1880s, Goldfaden moved to Lvov, and in 1903 emigrated to the United States, where he set up a theater. He is the author of about 60 comedies and operettas, such as *The Recruits*, *The Two Kuni-Lemls*, *Raisins and Almonds*, *The Grandmother and the Granddaughter*, and drama plays such as *Shulamith*, *Judas Maccabeus*, or *Bar Kokhba*.

6 Partitions of Poland (1772-1795)

Three divisions of the Polish lands, in 1772, 1793 and 1795 by the neighboring powers: Russia, Austria and Prussia. Under the first partition Russia occupied the lands east of the Dzwina, Drua and Dnieper, a total of 92,000 km² and a population of 1.3 million. Austria took the southern part of the Cracow and Sandomierz provinces, the Oswiecim and Zator principalities, the Ruthenian province (except for the Chelm lands) and part of the Belz province, a total of 83,000 km² and a population of 2.6 million. Prussia annexed Warmia, the Pomerania, Malbork and Chelmno provinces (except for Gdansk and Torun) and the lands along the Notec river and Goplo lake, altogether 36,000 km² and 580,000 souls. The second partition was carried out by Prussia and Russia. Prussia occupied the Poznan, Kalisz, Gniezno, Sieradz, Leczyca, Inowroclaw, Brzesc Kujawski and Plock provinces, the Dobrzyn lands, parts of the Rawa and Masovia provinces, and Torun and Gdansk, a total of 58,000 km² and over a million inhabitants. Russia took the Ukrainian and Belarus lands east of the Druja-Pinsk-Zbrucz line, altogether 280,000 km² and 3 million inhabitants. Under the third partition Russia obtained the rest of the Lithuanian, Belarus and Ukrainian lands east of the Bug and the Nemirov-Grodno line, a total area of 120,000 km² and 1.2 million inhabitants. The Prussians took the remainder of Podlasie and Mazovia, Warsaw, and parts of Samogitia and Malopolska, 55,000 km² and a population of 1 million. Austria annexed Cracow and the part of

Malopolska between the Pilica, Vistula and Bug, and part of Podlasie and Masovia, a total surface area of 47,000 km² and a population of 1.2 million.

7 Poland's independence, 1918

In 1918 Poland regained its independence after over 100 years under the partitions, when it was divided up between Russia, Austria and Prussia. World War I ended with the defeat of all three partitioning powers, which made the liberation of Poland possible. On 8 January 1918 the president of the USA, Woodrow Wilson, declaimed his 14 points, the 13th of which dealt with Poland's independence. In the spring of the same year, the Triple Entente was in secret negotiations with Austria-Hungary, offering them integrity and some of Poland in exchange for parting company with their German ally, but the talks were a fiasco and in June the Entente reverted to its original demands of full independence for Poland. In the face of the defeat of the Central Powers, on 7 October 1918 the Regency Council issued a statement to the Polish nation proclaiming its independence and the reunion of Poland. Institutions representing the Polish nation on the international arena began to spring up, as did units disarming the partitioning powers' armed forces and others organizing a system of authority for the needs of the future state. In the night of 6-7 November 1918, in Lublin, a Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland was formed under Ignacy Daszynski. Its core comprised supporters of Pilsudski. On 11 November 1918 the armistice was signed on the western front, and the Regency Council entrusted Pilsudski with the supreme command of the nascent army. On 14 November the Regency Council dissolved, handing all civilian power to Pilsudski; the Lublin government also submitted to his rule. On 17 November Pilsudski appointed a government, which on 21 November issued a manifesto promising agricultural reforms and the nationalization of certain branches of industry. It also introduced labor legislation that strongly favored the workers, and announced parliamentary elections. On 22 November Pilsudski announced himself Head of State and signed a decree on the provisional authorities in the Republic of Poland. The revolutionary left, from December 1918 united in the Communist Workers' Party of Poland, came out against the government and independence, but the program of Pilsudski's government satisfied the expectations of the majority of society and emboldened it to fight for its goals within the parliamentary democracy of the independent Polish state. In January and June 1919 the first elections to the Legislative Sejm were held. On 20 February 1919 the Legislative Sejm passed the 'small constitution'; Pilsudski remained Head of State. The first stage of establishing statehood was completed, despite the fact that the issue of Poland's borders had not yet been resolved.

8 Pilsudski, Jozef (1867-1935)

Polish activist in the independence cause, politician, statesman, marshal. With regard to the cause of Polish independence he represented the pro-Austrian current, which believed that the Polish state would be reconstructed with the assistance of Austria-Hungary. When Poland regained its independence in January 1919, he was elected Head of State by the Legislative Sejm. In March 1920 he was nominated marshal, and until December 1922 he held the positions of Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army. After the murder of the president, Gabriel Narutowicz, he resigned from all his posts and withdrew from politics. He returned in 1926 in a political coup. He refused the presidency offered to him, and in the new government held the posts of war minister and general inspector of the armed forces. He was prime minister twice, from 1926-1928 and in 1930. He worked to create a system of national security by concluding bilateral non-

aggression pacts with the USSR (1932) and Germany (1934). He sought opportunities to conclude firm alliances with France and Britain. In 1932, owing to his deteriorating health, Pilsudski resigned from his functions. He was buried in the Crypt of Honor in the Wawel Cathedral of the Royal Castle in Cracow.

9 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.

10 Bund in Poland

Largest and most influential Jewish workers' party in pre-war Poland. Founded 1897 in Vilnius. From 1915, the Polish branch operated independently. Ran in parliamentary and local elections. Bund identified itself as a socialist Jewish party, criticized the Soviet Union and communism, rejected Zionism as a utopia, and Orthodoxy as a barrier on the road towards progress, demanded the abolition of all discrimination against Jews, fully equal rights for them, and the right for the free development of Yiddish-language secular Jewish culture. Bund enjoyed particularly strong support in central and south-eastern Poland, especially in large cities. Controlled numerous organizations: women's, youth, sport, educational (TsISHO), as well as trade unions. Affiliated with the party were a youth organization, Tsukunft, and a children's organization, Skif. During the war, the Bund operated underground, and participated in armed resistance, including in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising as part of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) led by Marek Edelman. After the war, the Bund leaders joined the Central Committee of Polish Jews, where they postulated, in opposition to the Zionists, a reconstruction of the Jewish community in Poland. In January 1949, the Bund leaders dissolved the organization, urging its members to join the communist Polish United Workers' Party.

11 The Zycie Independent Socialist Youth Union

A university communist youth organization founded in 1923, active mainly in Warsaw, Cracow, Lwow and Vilnius. It was strongly influenced by the Communist Party of Poland (KPP) and the Communist Union of Polish Youth. It acted in defense of students' economic rights and equal opportunities for ethnic minorities, and to combat anti-Semitism in higher education. It was dissolved in May 1938 along with the KPP.

12 Communist Union of Polish Youth (KZMP)

Until 1930 the Union of Communist Youth in Poland. Founded in March 1922 as a branch of the Communist Youth International. From the end of 1923 its structure included also the Communist

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

13 Communist Party of Poland (KPP)

Created in December 1918 in Warsaw, its aim was to create a global or pan-European federal socialist state, and it fought against the rebirth of the Polish state. Between 1921 and 1923 it propagated slogans advocating a two-stage revolution (the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the socialist revolution), the reinforcement of Poland's sovereignty, the right to self-determination of the ethnic minorities living within the II Republic of Poland, and worker and peasant government of the country. After 1924, as in the rest of the international communist movement, ultra-revolutionary tendencies developed. From 1929 the KPP held the stance that the conditions were right for the creation by revolution of a Polish Republic of Soviets with a system based on the Soviet model, and advocated 'social fascism' and 'peasant fascism.' In 1935 on the initiative of Stalin, the KPP wrought further changes in its program (recognizing the existence of the II Polish Republic and its political system). In 1919 the KPP numbered some 7,000-8,000 members, and in 1934 around 10,000 (37 percent peasants), with a majority of Jews, Belarusians and Ukrainians. In 1937 Stalin took the decision to liquidate the KPP; the majority of its leaders were arrested and executed in the USSR, and in 1939 the party was finally liquidated on the charge that it had been taken over by provocateurs and spies.

14 Pawiak

Prison in Warsaw, which opened in 1829, between Dzielna and Pawia Streets (hence the name Pawiak). During the German occupation it was one of the main custodial prisons used by the German security forces in the General Governorship. Of the approximately 100,000 prisoners (80 percent men, 20 percent women), some 37,000 were murdered, and over 60,000 were sent to concentration camps and for forced labor to the Reich. Pawiak was demolished by the Germans in August 1944. At present there is the Pawiak Prison Museum on the site.

15 Anti-Semitism in Poland in the 1930s

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

16 YIVO

Yidisher Visenshaftlikher Institut, an Institute for Jewish Research, initially the Yiddish Scientific Institute. The first secular Yiddish academic institute, founded in 1925 at a conference of Jewish scholars in Berlin. The institute's headquarters were in Vilnius. Its primary aim were the studies of the Jewish population, with particular emphasis on the Jews of Central Europe. It had 4 sections: history, philology, economics and statistics, and psychology and education. The institute's greatest achievements include the formalization of a literary form in the Yiddish language, the inventory of archival materials and historical relics of Jewish culture, and sociological studies of the Jewish youth. In the 1930s a training program was developed enabling students with an interest in Jewish matters to gain a specialist education not offered by Polish universities. Leading figures involved in the institute's work included Simon Dubnov, Jacob Shatzky and Noah Prylucki. After the outbreak of World War II the New York branch of YIVO assumed the central direction, and still operates to this day.

17 CiShO - Centrale Yidishe Shul Organizatsye (Central Jewish School Organization)

An organization founded in 1921 at a congress of secular Jewish teachers with the aim of creating and maintaining a network of schools. It was influenced by the Folkists and the Bundists and was a recipient of financial aid from Joint. The language of instruction in CiShO schools was Yiddish, and the curriculum included general subjects and Jewish history and culture (but Hebrew and religious subjects were not taught). CiShO schools aimed to use modern teaching methods, and emphasis was placed on physical education. The schools were co-educational, although some two-thirds of the pupils were girls. In the 1926/27 school year CiShO had 132 schools in Poland teaching 14,400 pupils. The organization also held evening classes and ran children's homes and a teacher training college in Vilnius. During World War II it educated children in secret in the Warsaw Ghetto. It did not resume its activities after the war.

18 Spanish Civil War (1936-39)

A civil war in Spain, which lasted from July 1936 to April 1939, between rebels known as Nacionales and the Spanish Republican government and its supporters. The leftist government of the Spanish Republic was besieged by nationalist forces headed by General Franco, who was backed by Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. Though it had Spanish nationalist ideals as the central cause, the war was closely watched around the world mainly as the first major military contest between left-wing forces and the increasingly powerful and heavily armed fascists. The number of people killed in the war has been long disputed ranging between 500,000 and a million.

19 TOZ (Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia Ludnosci Zydowskiej w Polsce, Health Protection Society for Jews in Poland)

Jewish organization founded in Poland in 1921, with its roots in the Russian organization OZE (Obshchestvo Zdravookhranyeniya Yevryeyev). The TOZ organized health care, especially for children, by setting up a network of ambulatories, sanatoriums, and clinics. It sponsored summer camps for children from low-income families, promoted hygiene and sport, by, among other things, publishing brochures and periodicals on the subject. It contributed significantly to the combating of

typhus and tuberculosis epidemics. The TOZ was financed by the OZE, the American Joint Distribution Committee, a US-based welfare organization, and by many private donors. The TOZ president was Gershon Levin. As of 1939, the TOZ operated 300 medical units in 50 locations across Poland. It continued its activity after September 1939, trying to help starving and sick people in the ghettos. It was dissolved by the German authorities in 1942. It was reactivated in October 1946 as part of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland. It was disbanded again by the Polish communist authorities in 1950, and its outlets were taken over by the Ministry of Health.

20 Nowosci Theater

one of the five permanent Jewish theaters in pre-war Warsaw, staging shows in Yiddish and Hebrew. Founded in October 1921, located at 5 Bielanska Street, it had 1,500 seats. One of the co-owners was Samuel Kroszczor. The longest-acting manager was Dawid Celemejer. The performing troupes often changed, among them were groups such as Habima (Hebrew), Warszawer Najer Jidyszer Teater (WNIT), Di Jidysze Bande, or Ararat. Basically, the Nowosci was an operetta and revue theater, but it also staged plays by Sholem Aleichem and Isaac Babel. From 1938, the Nowosci was run by Ida Kaminska.

21 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. From 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 immigrated 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).

22 Wlodzimierz Medem Sanatorium

Sanatorium for juvenile tuberculosis patients in Miedzeszyn near Warsaw. Established in 1926 with the funds of the dissolved Jewish-American Aid Committee. Organizationally, it was part of the CISHO, so it was under strong Bund influence. The sanatorium had 160 beds. The chief doctor was Natalia Lichtenbaum-Szpilfogel. Basically, the sanatorium admitted only children at early stages of the disease: it was an educational facility rather than a medical one. Activities included schooling (in Yiddish), interest groups, arts courses. The patients helped in the daily chores, had their own self-government. In the summer, camps were organized for children from poor families. Over 7,700 patients passed through the sanatorium during its existence. In 1935, director Aleksander Ford made a movie about the Medem Sanatorium, *Mir Kumen On (We're Coming)*, screenplay by Wanda Wasilewska and Jakub Pat. The government censors didn't permit the movie to be screened; the Polish premiere took place in 1945. During the war, the sanatorium was incorporated organizationally into the Falenica ghetto. It was managed during that time by Mrs. Zygielbojm and Mrs. Muszkat. On 19th August 1942, as the Falenica ghetto was being dissolved, the patients and

personnel of the Medem sanatorium were too sent to Treblinka.

23 German Invasion of Poland

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

24 Kielce Ghetto

Created 5th April 1941. It fell into two parts, the small ghetto and the large ghetto. The boundaries of the large ghetto were formed by the streets: Orla, Piotrkowska, Starozagnanska, Pociuszka, and Radomska, and those of the small ghetto by Sw. Wojciecha Square and Bodzentynska and Radomska Streets. 27,000 were enclosed in the ghetto - in addition to Jews from Kielce and nearby towns and villages also people resettled from Lodz, Kalisz, Cracow and some 1,000 Jews from Vienna. The head of the Judenrat from December 1940 was the merchant and industrialist Herman Lewi. Organizations functioning in the ghetto were the Jewish Law and Order Service (120 members), the Jewish Social Self-Help Welfare Committee, a social insurance organization, a hospital, an old people's home, an orphanage, and a post office. Groups of Jewish laborers worked outside the ghetto in quarries, metal foundries and wood processing plants, and on the railways. The ghetto liquidation campaign began on 20th August 1942. Within four days almost the entire ghetto population was deported to the death camp in Treblinka. 1,600 people remained. They were employed in a camp on Jasna and Stolarska Streets, sorting the property of those who had been murdered. At various points in time there were 3 labor camps within the Kielce ghetto: one belonging to the munitions firm Hasag-Granat, on Karczowkowska Street (from September 1942), one in the Henrykow factory on Mlynarska Street (from June 1943), and one in the Ludwikow foundry (from June 1943). All these camps were liquidated on 1st August 1944, and the prisoners sent to the Buchenwald and Auschwitz death camps.

25 Flight eastwards, 1939

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

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

26 Warsaw Ghetto

A separate residential district for Jews in Warsaw created over several months in 1940. On 16th November 1940 138,000 people were enclosed behind its walls. Over the following months the population of the ghetto increased as more people were relocated from the small towns surrounding the city. By March 1941 445,000 people were living in the ghetto. Subsequently, the number of the ghetto's inhabitants began to fall sharply as a result of disease, hunger, deportation, persecution and liquidation. The ghetto was also systematically reduced in size. The internal administrative body was the Jewish Council (Judenrat). The Warsaw ghetto ceased to exist on 15th May 1943, when the Germans pronounced the failure of the uprising, staged by the Jewish soldiers, and razed the area to the ground.

27 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.

28 Szmalcownik

Polish slang word from the period of the German occupation (derived from the German word 'Schmalz', meaning lard), referring to a person blackmailing and denouncing Jews in hiding. Szmalcowniks operated in all larger cities, in particular following the liquidation of the ghettos, when Jews who had evaded deportation attempted to survive in hiding. In Warsaw they often formed organized groups that prowled around the ghetto exists. They picked out their victims by subtle signs (e.g. lowered, frightened eyes, timid behavior), eccentric clothing (e.g. the lack of the fur collar so widespread at the time, or wearing winter clothes in summer), way of speaking, etc. Victims so selected were threatened with denunciation to the Germans; blackmail could be an isolated event or be repeated until the victim's financial resources ran out. The Polish underground attempted to combat the szmalcowniks but in vain. To this day the crimes of the szmalcowniks are not entirely investigated and accounted for.

29 Deportations of Poles from the Eastern Territories during WWII

From the beginning of Soviet occupation of eastern Poland on 17th September 1939, until the Soviet-German war, which broke out on 21st June 1941, the Soviet authorities were deporting people associated with the former Polish authorities, culture, church and army. Around 400,000 people were exiled from the Lwow, Tarnopol and Stanislawow districts, mostly to northern Russia, Siberia and Kazakhstan. Between 12th and 15th April as many as 25,000 were deported from Lwow only.

30 Molotov, V

P. (1890-1986): Statesman and member of the Communist Party leadership. From 1939, Minister of Foreign Affairs. On June 22, 1941 he announced the German attack on the USSR on the radio. He and Eden also worked out the percentages agreement after the war, about Soviet and western spheres of influence in the new Europe.

31 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.

32 Union of Polish Patriots (ZPP)

Political organization founded in March 1943 by Polish communists in the USSR. It served Stalin's policy with regard to the Polish question. The ZPP drew up the terms on which the communists took power in post-war Poland. It developed its range of activities more fully after the Soviet authorities broke off diplomatic contact with the government of the Republic of Poland in exile (Apr. 1943). The upper ranks of the ZPP were dominated by communists (from Jan. 1944 concentrated in the Central Bureau of Polish Communists), who did not reveal the organization's long-term aims. The ZPP propagated slogans such as armed combat against the Germans, alliance with the USSR, parliamentary democracy and moderate social and economic reforms in post-war Poland, and redefinition of Poland's eastern border. It considered the ruling bodies of the Republic of Poland in exile to be illegal. It conducted propaganda campaigns (its press organ was called 'Wolna Polska' - Free Poland), and organized community care and education and cultural activities. From May 1943 it co-operated in the organization of the First Kosciuszko Infantry Division, and later the Polish Army in the USSR (1944). In July 1944, the ZPP was formally subordinated to the National Council and participated in the formation of the Polish Committee for National Liberation. From 1944-46, the ZPP resettled Poles and Jews from the USSR to Poland. It was dissolved in August 1946.

33 NKVD

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

34 Anders Army

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

35 The 1st Kosciuszko Infantry Division

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

36 Postwar pogroms

There are various explanations for the hostile attitude of the Poles towards the Jews who survived WWII. Factors include propaganda before the war and during the occupation, wartime moral decay and crime, fear of punishment for crimes committed against Jews during the war, conviction that the imposed communist authorities were dominated by Jews, and the issue of ownership of property left by murdered Jews (appropriated by Poles, and returning owners or their heirs wanted to reclaim it). These were often the reasons behind expulsions of Jews returning to their hometowns, attacks, and even localized pogroms. In scores of places there were anti-Jewish demonstrations. The biggest were the pogrom in Cracow in August 1945 and the pogrom in Kielce in July 1946. Some instances of violence against Jews were part of the strategies of armed underground anti-communist groups. The 'train campaign,' which involved pulling Jews returning from the USSR off trains and shooting them, claimed 200 victims. Detachments of the National Armed Forces, an extreme right-wing underground organization, are believed to have been behind this. Antipathy towards repatriates was rooted in the conviction that Jews returning from Russia were being brought back to reinforce the party apparatus. Over 1,000 Jews are estimated to have been killed in postwar Poland.

37 Central Committee of Polish Jews

Founded in 1944, with the aim of representing Jews in dealings with the state authorities and organizing and co-coordinating aid and community care for Holocaust survivors. Initially it operated from Lublin as part of the Polish Committee of National Liberation. The CCPJ's activities were subsidized by the Joint, and in time began to cover all areas of the reviving Jewish life. In 1950 the CCPJ merged with the Jewish Cultural Society to form the Social and Cultural Society of Polish Jews.

38 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.

39 UNRRA, United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

An international organization created on 9th March 1943 in Washington, which organized aid for allied countries, which were the most devastated by the war, in the period 1944-1947.

40 Martial law in Poland in 1981

Extraordinary legal measures introduced by a State Council decree on 13th December 1981 in an attempt to defend the communist system and destroy the democratic opposition. The martial law decree suspended the activity of associations and trades unions, including Solidarity, introduced a curfew, imposed travel restrictions, gave the authorities the right to arrest opposition activists, search private premises, and conduct body searches, ban public gatherings. A special, non-constitutional state authority body was established, the Military Board of National Salvation (WRON), which oversaw the implementation of the martial law regulations, headed by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the armed forces supreme commander. Over 5,900 persons were arrested during the martial law, chiefly Solidarity activists. Local Solidarity branches organized protest strikes. The Wujek coal mine, occupied by striking miners, was stormed by police assault squads, leading to the death of nine miners. The martial law regulations were gradually being eased, by December 1982, for instance, all interned opposition activists were released. On 31st December 1982, the martial law was suspended, and on 21st July 1983, it was revoked.

41 Kielce Pogrom

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

42 Doctors' Plot

The Doctors' Plot was an alleged conspiracy of a group of Moscow doctors to murder leading government and party officials. In January 1953, the Soviet press reported that nine doctors, six of whom were Jewish, had been arrested and confessed their guilt. As Stalin died in March 1953, the trial never took place. The official paper of the Party, the Pravda, later announced that the charges against the doctors were false and their confessions obtained by torture. This case was one of the worst anti-Semitic incidents during Stalin's reign. In his secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 Khrushchev stated that Stalin wanted to use the Plot to purge the top Soviet leadership.

43 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.

44 Social and Cultural Society of Polish Jews (TSKZ)

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

45 Children of the Holocaust Association

A social organization whose members were persecuted during the Nazi occupation due to their Jewish identity, and who were no more than 13 years old in 1939, or were born during the war. The Association was founded in 1991. Its purpose is to provide mutual support (psychological assistance; help in searching for family members), and to educate the public. The group organizes seminars, publishes a bulletin as well as books (several volumes of memoirs: "Children of the Holocaust Speak..."). The Association has now almost 800 members; there are sections in Warsaw, Wrocław, Cracow and Gdansk.

46 The Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, ŻIH)

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