

# Jozef Hen

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Warsaw

Poland

Interviewer: Kinga Galuszka

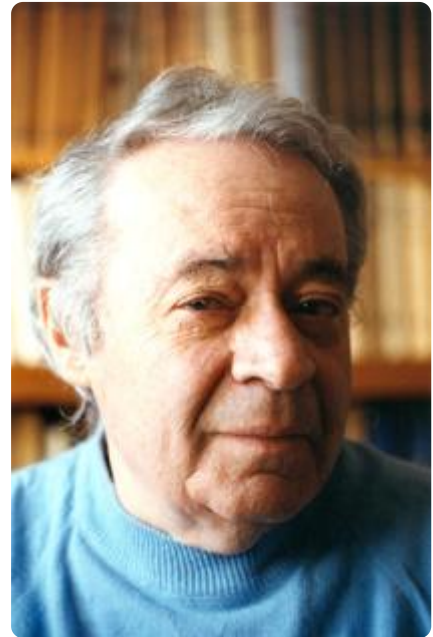
Date of interview: May 2004

*Mr. Jozef Hen is a well-known Polish writer and in private conversation a brilliant, courteous and inquisitive man.*

*This interview was conducted in the Ambassador Café in Warsaw, where he is a frequent costumer*

*and in the library of 'Zwiazek Literatow Polskich' (Association of Polish Writers),*

*where he is a 'Guest of Honor' and receives special treatment as a popular and respected personage.*



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## Family background

My grandfather on my father's side was called Fajwel Cukier. He was born about 1860. He came from Radzyn Podlaski, where he lived all his life. He received a traditional religious education, at cheder level. He spoke Yiddish. He was a peasant.

Probably, I don't remember exactly, the house of my grandparents from Radzyn was a typical Jewish house. There was space for us there when we visited in the summer, so there must have been several rooms. What did everyday life look like in that family? I don't know, probably typical for a peasant family. If I remember correctly there were four cows in the barn. The grandparents used to make and sell butter; they also used to sell milk and cheese. I suspect they weren't particularly wealthy.

The grandparents' house was a religious house, with a kosher kitchen. During Easter holidays [Pesach] there had to be a strict division between chametz and whatever was for Easter. [Editor's

note: Chametz, breadcrumbs, was not supposed to be kept in the house during the holiday.]

My grandparents spoke Yiddish to each other. Apart from Yiddish, they spoke the local language. It wasn't Polish, but something closer to Belarusian. I remember Grandmother used to say 'vun' instead of 'von' [in Russian 'pashol von' means 'go away'].

Grandfather was an extremely dignified man, calm and very proud. He was, I think, a very handsome man. Some photos still remain, where he looks like a typical Hasid [1](#). He's wearing a silk scarf, with black and white tassels, you can't see his sidelocks, and this proud gaze of his...

Luckily, he didn't live to see the Holocaust. He died in Warsaw. This was quite some time before the war. I was four or five years old then, so it could have been 1928. Grandfather must have been undergoing medical treatment in Warsaw, and that's why he was living with us then. Grandmother stayed in Radzyn to mind the farm.

One day I saw him lying down on the floor of the nursery, he was already dead. He had cancer. It's the strangest thing, but his death wasn't horrifying at all, he was lying down peacefully. I described all this in 'Nowolipie' [Mr. Hen's autobiographical novel, Warsaw, 1991].

Grandfather Fajwel had several brothers. One of them had three sons, who went to France in the 1920s. Clearly, they must have been unable to make a living in Radzyn. After the war I met them in Paris. They were all very handsome. They must have had inborn intelligence, because they learned French very quickly. They spoke French grammatically and corrected me, for which I took no offense.

Grandmother from Father's side was named Malka. She came from Radzyn. She kept house. She used to wear a wig. That's all I can say about her. She used to come to Warsaw for Pesach, that is Easter, and she used to make sure everything was kosher at our house.

She would cook different dishes, which my mother never liked, but Father, as it usually happens, loved his mother's cooking. And we liked it when she visited, because she would always give us money - 'visiting money.' We got 50 groszy each. [The average day salary was 5 zlotys per day, 1 zloty equals 100 groszy]. Grandmother didn't live to see the war. She died between 1934 and 1936.

I think Jews were the majority in Radzyn. Anyway, my grandparents were no different than the others. From what I know, the relationships between Poles and Jews were not bad. My father would often recount some peasants' anecdotes and he used to tell them using the local, country language. In Radzyn Jews lived in symbiosis with the other villagers. A Jew who had cows was a peasant like everybody else.

My father, one of the six children of my grandparents, never mentioned having any problems in his childhood. Well, he had some fight with some country kid, like boys do, and he ran away to Warsaw, because he thought he had killed him. But it later turned out that the other one survived and there were no consequences. Anyway, Radzyn's misfortune, after Poland became independent [2](#), was lack of work, lack of a future. That's why people used to leave the town.

I remember Radzyn a little bit, but it's very foggy memories. I don't remember the town itself. I was there twice as a child. From one of my visits I remember the theater in the fire station. I remember

they staged 'Bube Yachne', the hag. ['Di Bobe Yachne' (The Witch): an operetta by the Yiddish playwright Abraham Goldfaden (1840-1908)] She's a legendary figure in Jewish folklore, a witch that everyone was afraid of, but, if I remember correctly, this Bube Yachne performed positive miracles. It was amateur theater, but for me it was wonderful.

My grandparents' children were named: Chawa, Mendel, Mojzesz, Szulim and Rubin - my father. I don't remember the name of one more brother who had the Paris connections. All my father's brothers and sisters were born in Radzyn.

The oldest one Chawa, that is Ewa, was born in 1885. [Chawa is the Yiddish and Ewa is the Polish version of the same name, that is in English Eve.] She was six years older than Father. She left for Argentina. She probably met her husband there, his name was Laufer.

They lived in Santa Fe and had quite a few children. They visited us in 1961 or 1962. Thanks to Chawa, some family photographs were saved, because they were sent abroad. She was the only one of those siblings to survive [WWII].

Mendel was my grandparents' second child. He was some three or four years older than Father. He must have been born around 1888. He was the most religious one. He had a second wife, because the first one died and a pious Jew couldn't live without a wife.

He had two daughters with this first wife, classy, nice girls, my father helped them out. One of them was a secretary in my father's water-sewage company in Warsaw. She wrote out invoices until she got married. They all died in the Warsaw ghetto [3](#).

Mojzesz was younger than my father by some six years. He was born around 1894. I think he was the fourth child in the family. He had a daughter, overweight Bronka [Bronislawa], who also died in the ghetto.

The youngest, Szulim, was three years younger than my father. He was born around 1897. He had a wife, Dora and a son, Fredek [Fryderyk]. They were both murdered in Treblinka [4](#). Szulim died in Majdanek [5](#). Mother told me that he was shot, because he wasn't standing still during roll call. He had ulcers on his knee, due to avitaminosis, so he moved around a bit and the SS-man didn't like that. I wrote about this in 'Nowolipie.'.

There was one more son, who, as it turned out, left for Paris. I don't know his name. Father never mentioned him. My sister somehow discovered the existence of him, a long time after the war. Nobody knows what happened between the two of them.

My father was the third child. His name was Rubin Cukier. I read in the 'Dictionary of Polish Writers,' published by the Institute for Literary Studies, that my father's name was Roman Hen and I had to correct that. I can call myself Hen, because I write under the name Hen and it has become my true name, an important part of my personality, but the only trace of my father's existence is through his son. There is no grave, so I prefer this dictionary to use the name Rubin Cukier. I started using my current name in 1944, when I was a soldier in Lublin. That's how I signed my texts then.

Father was born around 1891 in Radzyn. In 1914 he was conscripted into the tsarist army, but he was bought out. In 1906, as a 15-year-old, after the revolution [see 1905 Russian Revolution] [6](#), he ran away to Warsaw, where he began working in some water-sewage corporation.

As a young, rebellious worker he was close to the socialist movement. He used to belong to some organization, but he never said anything about Bund [7](#). He could have been in the PPS [8](#), but he quickly became bourgeois. In 1939 Father was mobilized, he had a military assignment.

But he was sent back. [Editor's note: In September 1939 the older mobilized soldiers were sent back. The Polish army could not accept all of them, because the army did not have enough weapons].

He was a hardworking, intelligent and honest man. I remember that I once bragged to him about riding a tram without a ticket. And he scolded me, 'I give you 20 groszy, so that you buy a ticket and not ride without it.' He considered it theft. Well, when your father has this attitude, it stays with you for life.

Father used to read magazines in Yiddish, which was his native language. He never taught himself to write Polish, he often complained about it, but he didn't speak with an accent. He told us that he hadn't been a good student, that he was a rascal, like my brother Hipek. Studying was last for him, because he mostly ran around with the village boys. He used to sing country songs in Polish, for example 'W poniedzialek rano kosil ojciec siano' ['On Monday morning Father was cutting grass for hay']. He also knew lots of Polish proverbs.

Father used to go to the prayer house, not to the synagogue. Mostly reformed Jews went to the synagogue on Tlomackie [Street] [9](#). The prayer house was usually just a classroom, which was rented for holiday and Saturday prayers.

Before the beginning of the religious year, a shammash from the prayer house would come and collect money, donations for the upkeep of the prayer house, about 20 zloty for the entire year [a teacher's monthly salary was 150 zloty].

There is a famous joke: they won't let Mr. Rozenblat in, because he didn't pay, but he says, 'But I won't pray, this Rozencwaig is in there and I just want to tell him that I'll return his money.' And the shammash says, 'But I know you, you're a scoundrel, you'll pray.'

The grandparents on Mother's side were called Hampel. They had lived in Warsaw for generations. Grandmother's name was Ides, that is, Judyta. Grandfather's name was Dawid. I don't know where they came from. Part of this family was named Hampel, part Gampel, because that's how the Russians wrote it down.

[Editor's note: In the Russian Cyrillic script, due to phonetic reasons, initial 'h' is normally transcribed as 'g'. That is why their family name became 'Gampel' when re-transcribed to the Latin script from Cyrillic.]. I think my grandparents went by Gampel, but Uncle Henryk was Hampel.

Grandfather was a bit older than Grandmother. Like that entire family, he was very happy, always humming something, full of temperament. I didn't have a close relationship with him. We used to go to their house for chulent. Grandfather died in Treblinka together with his grandchildren.

Grandmother was born around 1865. She was beautiful. She told us how Grandfather used to be wildly jealous of her. She used to tell us how many flowers she got from him and how he had courted her. This was very uncommon, because in the Hasidic tradition a man cannot court a woman, everything is very formal and the first meeting is arranged. But their customs were more

liberal. After all, Warsaw was a large, modern city.

Grandmother Hempel liked the operetta and the cinema. She used to go to the cinema without Grandfather. She was the one who took me to the cinema for the first time, it was a secret from Mother, because we were supposed to go to Saski Garden. The cinema was nearby, on Długa Street.

Grandma wore a wig and kept a kosher kitchen. The grandparents' house was a typical religious house. Of course, my grandparents had a religious wedding. I should mention now that a religious wedding didn't have to take place in a prayer house or a synagogue, it could take place at home. It was enough to set up the chuppah. When it comes to holidays at my grandparents' house, I only remember Saturdays and chulent.

Grandma died at the age of 75, in early 1940, when there were already restrictions, but there was no ghetto yet. She was lucky. I heard she had a beautiful funeral; all residents of Wielopole [one of the largest markets in pre-war Warsaw] came to the cemetery on Okopowa Street. Her grave isn't there any more, it was destroyed, because it wasn't a rich, reserved grave, the fee for the grave wasn't paid, so after some years the grave was destroyed.

My grandparents could speak Polish. Their family had lived in Warsaw for generations, at least since the 18th century. They were truer natives of Warsaw than many national Varsovians [that is, Poles from Warsaw]. Ever since I can remember my grandparents lived on Solna Street 9. Their apartment was really two big rooms and one large kitchen. There was everything in that room: paravans, beds, cupboards, a table etc.

The grandparents bought and sold porcelain and glass on so-called Wielopole, a street that used to have an ugly name - Gnojna Street [Manure Street], but that was later changed to Rynkowa [Market Street, a large Jewish outdoor market was located on Wielopole before WWII]. But I remember this street as Gnojna Street.

Even today, when I see a plate with a stamp saying Cmielow [a well known Polish porcelain factory], I recall how Grandmother used to take to plates, tap them, listen and pronounce - 'Cmielow.' She could recognize that on the basis of the sound, or she pretended she could. But she could have really been able to do that, because she was very musical.

My grandparents were working people, they used to get up early and rush off to Gnojna. Right before the war business was starting to get worse and they moved from their store to a stall. And Grandmother, bundled up in lots of shawls, used to stand in this stall like a peasant woman and rub her hands. She had to wear gloves without fingers, because she needed to touch the merchandise. And this porcelain store was taken over by their son Hersz, a wholesaler.

My grandparents had several children, some of them died in infancy. All children were curious of the world, read a lot in Yiddish and in Polish. Uncle Meir was the oldest child. He was some six years older than Mother. He was born around 1888. He used to wear glasses on a chain. He used to read 'Moment' [10](#), which was a respectable paper and 'Hajntige Najes' [a popular Yiddish daily], the Friday-Saturday issue, which was published with a literary supplement.

Meir had what you'd call a head for business, but for treyf business. He traded saccharin, which you were not allowed to do. My Father didn't approve of that, because he was a legalist. He had to help

Meir get out of trouble. What it was about, was that the government had some monopolies - alcohol, matches, tobacco and sugar - and profited from that. Sugar refineries were private, but there was excise tax and you couldn't buy and sell saccharin, unless you had a doctor's prescription.

Meir, running away from the law, moved to Gdansk, where he lived for some time and even made some money [cf. Free city of Danzig] [11](#). He had a wife and a son named Adam, but I could be wrong. In the fall of 1938, when Gdansk was still a free city but more and more hitlerized, he recognized what was happening and came back to Poland.

He was able to do it, because, I think, expiration took place [the statute of limitations on the crime expired]. Before he brought his family from Gdansk, he lived with us for some time. He really liked it when I made scrambled eggs for him, because I wasn't stingy with the butter. He came back from Gdansk with huge respect for German order. Meir and his family died in Treblinka.

Sabina was some five years younger than my mother. She was born around 1899. I liked Aunt Sabina. She was stout, she had glossy cheeks and large breasts. For some time she used to live with her husband at her parents' apartment on Solna, but she finally moved out to a different apartment.

Her married name was Bleifeder. His name was Kuba [Jakub]. He was a talented jazz player; he played the percussion. He didn't have a musical education. Music was his passion, though he sometimes made some money, but not much. Working for my father, he became a plumber and was employed in Father's company as a manager.

Sabina and Kuba had two children, Marek and Halina. Sabina gave birth at our home, not in hospital. Mrs. Basiuk, who lived above us, was a midwife and delivered babies. Her son, whom I met after the war, was very proud that all the children in our family were delivered by his mother. Sabina, her children and my grandfather died in Treblinka.

Mother had one more sister, some four years older. Her name was Hadasa. She was born around 1890. Her married name was Robak. She was in the porcelain trade. She had three daughters: Gienia, Salomea and Mania [Maria]. Mania was such a beautiful girl.

She started messing around with some rich men quite early, but she was extremely attractive. We had a kind of summer friendship. She was 13 years old then, I was 12. She had delicate hands, I liked touching them, she didn't have anything against it. It was all so innocent... Salomea and Mania died in Warsaw. Only Gienia survived.

Gienia was intelligent and she wrote Polish well. Her husband, Chajblum, was an outstanding actor and a star of the 'Jung Theater' [12](#), a Jewish experimental theater. On weekdays he worked in some box factory, because they practically played for free in the theater.

They staged some communist minded plays, for example Tretyakov's 'Roar China!' [Sergey Tretyakov (1892- 1939), Russian writer and literary theorist], which were sometimes reviewed by Boy [Tadeusz 'Boy' Zelenski (1874-1941), translator, literary and theater critic, satire writer]. They were extremely modern and avant-garde.



The theater was founded by Michal Weichert [1890-1967, director, teatrologist and critic. Interested in innovative ideas of avant-garde theater. Artistic director of several Jewish theaters. In 1929 he set up an actor's college, which became the base for 'Jung Theater'.] and the plays were directed by, for example, Jakub Rotbaum [1901-1994, theater director, connected with Polish and Jewish theaters. Highly successful abroad. In the 1950s he was the director of Teatr Polski in Wroclaw.]

Gienia, Chajblum and their daughter were saved thanks to... Stalin, who transported them from a place near Lwow [today Ukraine], where they were living, beyond the Arctic Circle. My sister Mirka used to send them parcels from Volhynia. And they never forgot this.

Gienia and her little daughter went with Anders [Army] [13](#) to Iran and then to Palestine, while Chajblum was roaming around Tashkent [today Uzbekistan]. He didn't manage to play in Tashkent, because too many actors went there. So he moved decorations in the theater.

He later left Tashkent and met his family in Palestine, but his wife didn't want to live with him anymore. She considered him to be a man who can't fend for himself. She was outgoing, she had a head for business. And she started a new life with some man in Israel. She later went to California with him.

I met Chajblum in Tashkent during the war. Gienia contacted me some ten, maybe twelve years ago. She used to call me and ask, 'How can someone as talented as you come from our family?' She said she remembered me and that they noticed in the family that I was so talented. She really liked me. She died in California, at the age of 90.

Gienia and Chajblum's daughter stayed in a kibbutz in Givat Oz. Her name is Chana Dajan. She's a sculptor. She called me and wrote me. She has had exhibitions all over the world. For three days a week she teaches children at the kibbutz and for the next three days she works on her own things. She doesn't want to leave the kibbutz and everything she earns is given back to the kibbutz. She thinks it's a wonderful life. Her husband, Jimmy, is a Jew of Hungarian origin.

Hersz, that is Henryk, was some three years younger than Mother. He was born around 1897. They all Polonized [14](#) their names, especially for contacts outside the family. Hersz saved himself by running away from a train to Treblinka. He ran away with a woman who, I think, at that time wasn't his wife yet.

Her name was Rachela. She was taken in by some peasants who didn't know she was Jewish, because although she had black hair, she had a perky nose and she looked like a healthy shikse. He hid in the forest and visited her at night. The peasants were sure he was a partisan, from the AK [Home Army] [15](#) and they were afraid of him.

Hersz was a clever man. His wife had a musical education and she taught music, singing in Katowice. She was stout. I was quite friendly with her. They had two children, Judyta and Ariel. In 1950, so very early, they emigrated to Israel. In Tel Aviv, Hersz ended up operating a buffet in a cinema, so his cleverness had its limits. He died in Tel Aviv.

My mother's name was Chawa, or Ewa, maiden name Hampel [Gampel]. She was born in 1894 in Warsaw. She was the second child in that family. She graduated from the 6th grade of public school. Her native language was Yiddish, but she wrote and spoke Polish well, without mistakes. My

mother didn't wear a wig; she dressed European style, used lipstick and face powder. She had French powder boxes. I remember I used to like looking at them, because they had this pattern, typical of 19th century powder boxes.

My parents met through a matchmaker. The matchmaker took Father to Solna Street 9, to some shy girl named Ewa. It was love at first sight. They were a very loving couple. Mother kept house and Father asked for her advice about everything. He used her as a kind of excuse. He would say, 'I can't decide alone, I need to ask Ewa for advice.'

### • My parents

My parents usually spoke Yiddish among themselves, especially when they were having a fight, but they spoke Polish to us. Mother used to read 'Nasz Przegląd' [16](#). It was a Jewish newspaper, bourgeois, maintained a good standard. The paper was respected in political and journalist circles.

The political commentator of this newspaper, Bernard Singer, pseudonym Regnis, was the chairman of the Polish parliamentary journalists' club. There was also a press review, called 'W mlynie opinii.' This paper was made by an exceptional journalist, Appenszlak. [Jakub Appenszlak (1894-1950), prose writer, columnist, translator, literary and theater critic. Right before the war he emigrated to the USA.] There were also all kinds of express papers, which printed novels in episodes. My mother especially loved reading those.

I don't know where my parents lived before they moved to Nowolipie. I only know that in 1915 they had an orchard in Wilanow near Warsaw, with a pond, so they must have been quite well off. Our house on Nowolipie Street was number 53, apartment number 33.

Telephone number 11-58-73. It was a five- story tenement house with a beautiful facade. We had the largest apartment in the family. That's why all the family weddings took place at our house. And Father would also give some money for those weddings.

We had a telephone installed in the early 1920s. At first you had to call through an operator, but in the 1930s it was already automatic. At our tenement house there were two or three telephones and 52 apartments. So people would come to our apartment when they wanted to make a phone call.

Father wouldn't have felt comfortable with taking money, but there was a blue-white can next to the telephone 'Keren Kayemet' [17](#), for the purchase of land in Palestine. Once every month, or every two months, a boy with a key would come and take this money out. It was usually about 2 zloty a month. And that's how we contributed to buying land.

Father used to take me to a bathhouse with him. We bathed in one tub, until Father installed a bathtub in our apartment. It was easy to see how the 19th century changed into the 20th century on Nowolipie, which was a wealthy street. Earlier, tenement houses had no bathrooms, people had to get by somehow.

Children would be bathed in washtubs or some large dishes that you could sit in. Everyone took turns bathing. Finally, Father installed a bathtub under the table in the kitchen. You lifted the table top and there was a bathtub underneath it. There was also a boiler, where water was heated from



the cooking going on in the kitchen. There was a coal stove, this boiler was real progress.

In 1928-1929 Father built a villa in Michalin [well-known summer resort near Warsaw in the interwar period]. In 1929 he was earning a lot of money, his company was prospering very well. I know that this villa cost him a lot - 40,000 zloty. [Editor's note: a monthly teacher's salary was 150 zloty.] It had all the necessary amenities, that is, sewage and a bathroom.

There was a water-tower there, where you'd pump water, which we liked very much. The tower was called Mira, like my sister. Mother loved all this very much; she liked flowers and flowerbeds, which she arranged together with the caretaker, Jozef. But the idea for this villa was that there would be summer residents that we could rent it out to them. And we went there too, very often we'd take the most modest room.

Father used to go to Michalin on Friday evenings. I don't remember what he did on Sundays. [Editor's note: in interwar Poland work on Sundays was not allowed, a law imposed by the Catholic majority]. It's highly unlikely that the company didn't operate for two days a week.

They probably must have worked on Sundays first and then also on Saturdays. But on Saturdays in Michalin, the Jews would meet on different porches and hold a minyan. The one who was the most learned led the prayer. They didn't need a chazzan. They all knew these things from home. The one at whose house the prayers were taking place, offered something to eat, usually herring with onions and vodka. So it was also a kind of social gathering.

In 1934 Father sold the villa, losing a lot of money. It was a time when, because of the great depression, he wanted to emigrate. He needed 1,000 pounds for a so-called certificate, that is, permission from the English to enter Palestine [these certificates were called affidavits].

Capitalists could enter, others had to wait for these certificates for decades. Father wanted to go as a capitalist, because you could do something with capital there, if I remember correctly, Palestine was also suffering from unemployment.

But Father changed his mind. An accountant of some entrepreneur came to our house, I think his name was Warman. He gave Father an advance payment of 500 zloty for installing a sewage system in a new tenement house. Something was finally happening on the building market.

This was when Starzynski became the mayor of Warsaw [Stefan Starzynski (1893-1944), politician and social activist, mayor of Warsaw 1934-1939]. This building activity generated positive changes in the economy. There was poverty in Poland until 1939, but COP [Central Industrial Region, heavy industry was to be concentrated there. Created by Polish authorities in 1936.

The construction of most outlets was interrupted by the outbreak of WWII] and, primarily, Warsaw started developing dynamically and Father started making some money. He didn't want to risk emigration. He had four children, who knew what would have awaited us there. But he definitely had Zionist sympathies.

Father never went anywhere. He never took any vacation leave from work, he didn't have a need to see the world. He only went to Berlin twice, on business. That was also a time when he was doing locksmithery and balcony railings. He used to bring large format pictures of beautiful art nouveau style houses. When I was a child Berlin seemed to me to be the richest city.

My parents were not very wealthy, so money was not spent foolishly. My dream, which was never realized, was a tennis racket. Father did recognize the needs of my sisters. Stella had nice clothes, even flashy. She was very elegant, taking after Mother. Mirka used to go skiing in Zakopane [Polish Carpathian resort].

My sisters would also go to Krynica, Jaremcza, Worochty [resorts in the Beskids and in Western Ukraine], because it was fashionable, but they never went abroad. Still, for a Jewish house, not yet Polonized, it was something.

My parents used to go to the theater, although it was Mother who dragged Father there. It's possible that it was the Scala theater [Jewish theater created in 1912 in Lodz]. I think it was a theater without a regular cast, with guest performances of great Jewish actors from Berlin.

### • Our religious life

In the early 1930s our backyard was crowded with booths for Sukkot. There was about one meter of space between them. We, kids, loved it. With time there were less of these booths. Holidays were one of the few forms of entertainment for us. But another kind of life reached us soon - entertainment entered every house thanks to the radio.

There were lots of radios in our building. Boys used to walk on the roofs and attach the antennas there, I really admired them. Religious tradition was no longer entertainment, although tradition was still respected. My favorite holiday was Chanukkah.

Children would light candles, they couldn't wait for this. I knew a lot about the history of holidays. Of course, I liked seder. I was the youngest, so I was the one who asked the four traditional questions. I still remember this. Yes, like a poem.

I remember Sabbath at my parents' house. On Friday evening Mother used to light the candles in two silver candlesticks and bless them. Father used to go to the prayer house on Nowolipie on Saturday mornings, he never went there on Friday evenings. Father was a believer, but he wasn't emotional about it, he kept a kind of distance, he was what you would call sensible.

He was one of those who say that God doesn't need prayers, that it was people who came up with that, because they need prayers themselves. Father wanted us to be decent people. It was his point of view - you could feel it between the lines. Of course, Saturday was Saturday. Slowly, slowly, he'd move away from tradition. And it wasn't just him. Through confrontation with life and his Christian acquaintances, whom he worked with, he became skeptical.

Mother followed tradition, although she had her own style - she wasn't extremely religious. She didn't use to go to the prayer house, but she made sure that milk and meat were separated. She kept all those rigors. Right before the war she fell ill and the house stopped being a home.

After she had gallstones removed, she started having pus in her lungs and was in hospital. There were no antibiotics, other methods of treatment were used. That's when I saw Father's great love for her. He was a very thrifty, you can say miserly, man, like most artisans who managed to become successful, but in this situation he didn't begrudge anything.

The best pulmonologist, Professor Anastazy Landau, treated Mother, a special machine was brought over from London. And she pulled through. She survived, it was almost a miracle. But the house fell apart with regards to tradition. Why? The house was kept by a servant, Celina, who was not Jewish. She did what had to be done, but no one prayed any longer, no one blessed the candles. Because those are the duties of the lady of the house.

### • My siblings

My older sister, Sara, who called herself Stella, was born in 1915. She's eight years older than I. She got her secondary school certificate from Dicksteinowa's gymnasium. The school was located on Leszno Street. Emanuel Ringelblum [see Ringelblum Archive] [18](#) taught history there, he was well liked by the students.

I used to copy Stella's cheat sheets for her, but because I didn't like these essays, I used to correct them. Stella was a beautiful girl, she was popular with boys. She always chose tall athletic boys. One of them was a hockey player in the Maccabi [19](#) team in Warsaw, an extremely handsome man.

Stella used to live on Zlota Street in Warsaw until the war broke out. Her married name was Boren. His original last name was Borenstein. He changed it to Boren in Israel. In post-war Poland he went by the name of Biernacki. He had a rather important position first in the City Council of Wroclaw; he was later moved to Warsaw, because he was well acquainted with issues of small merchants, artisans etc. it was a difficult job, because of the threat of bribes. It wasn't easy, but he was completely honest.

They emigrated to Israel in 1957 and lived in Tel Aviv. My mother left with them, because what was she supposed to do here? Stay with her daughter-in-law, whom she didn't like very much, as it happens with mothers-in-law? She held it against her that she didn't have a dowry, although she got such a good husband. Mother died in 1975 in Tel Aviv, in a seniors' home, where she was always active and very happy. She is buried in Holon.

Stella used to work in a university library in Tel Aviv. Before that she operated a library and I used to send her books from Poland. I was later angry with her, because when she was shutting the library down, she sold all the books, even the most valuable ones. She moved to Tel Aviv with her husband after he certified his attorney's diploma. He died two years ago in Jerusalem and she was left alone.

Stella's daughter, Bronislawa, who changed her name to Nili, married an Eastern Orthodox Greek with leftist views, so religion is of no importance to him. Nili's husband is the rector of a technical university in Hania in Crete, where they are living. In 2002 Stella, who was alone by then, moved there. She is now 89 years old.

My second sister was called Miriam, or Mirka. She was born in 1917. She completed seven grades of public school. She was black-eyed, white-teethed, beautiful, clever, tactful and well-read. Before the war she worked as a secretary for Father. She kept tabs on the money, she wrote out the invoices. Father trusted her immensely, because she was meticulous, very honest and kind. She would sometimes give me some money for going to the cinema. She wrote out the pay list and the workers called her 'boss.'

In 1939 Mirka went east, to her fiancé. When the war broke out, they told each other that they would get married. They were very much in love. Especially he with her, but she loved him very much too, because he was a great guy, although he didn't look like a Casanova. He came from Lodz and his name was Marian Toronczyk.

In 1939, right after the war broke out, still in September, he went to Busk near Lwow on his motorcycle. He signed up for work as an engineer there, building roads between Lwow and Kiev. He sent messages to Mirka that he was dying without her, that she had to come. So soon she went east to him.

She crossed the border illegally in Brest, she arrived in Busk and they got married. They didn't want to have children at that time. They had to leave Busk, because as foreigners they didn't have the right to be closer to the border than 200 kilometers.

So they went further east and settled in Dubrovitsa in Volhynia. He got a job there, he built granaries. He was a very talented man. They both died in 1942, maybe, somewhere in Dubrovitsa, we don't know where exactly.

My brother Hipek, that is Mojzesz, also called Moniek for short, was born in 1920. He was three years older than me. He was involved with communist youth. He was a drawing-room communist, he had some brochures at home. He couldn't exist among these rebellious young people as Moniek, so he called himself Hipek. Everyone agreed to that, Father and Mother too.

Hipek disappeared without a trace. There was a new wave of deportations at the turn of June and July 1940 and he was sent to a 'lager' [Soviet forced labor camp]. He was accused of crossing the border illegally. In 1941 when Germany invaded the USSR illegally [see Great Patriotic War] [20](#), he was released from a camp in Rybinsk.

I found some people who were there with him. I have a letter from him, which he wrote a month before the war in pencil to Stella, who had been deported to Yakutia [North Eastern Siberia] then. He wrote, 'I am happy you're not in the same situation as I am.'

Mirka and I were living in Dubrovitsa and from there we started trying to get him pardoned by an attorney from Rivne. There was a chance, after all he didn't cross this border at all. The border was moved through military activities, the Russians got there on their own. Meanwhile, the German-Soviet war broke out.

He was released from the camp, but our family knows nothing of his later fate. It is known that he was in the so-called 'slabkomando' [in labor camps, a ward for sick prisoners], because he had heart disease. Anyway, he didn't survive until the 1st Division [21](#) because if he had he would have been in this 1st Division and would have met some friends from our neighborhood who were there. Someone said he went to Astrakhan. There was hunger and typhus. Lots of possibilities for disappearing.

### • Growing up

I was born on the night of 7th November 1923. I was the youngest in my family. The people who visited us, especially Poles, called me 'beniaminek' [small Benjamin, the youngest, favorite son]. I

attended schools for Jewish youth. I started going to the 1st grade of public school when I was six years old.

It was Krelman's school, the classes were taught in Polish. My love for the Bible was born there; I owe it to my teacher, Akerman. He couldn't even speak Polish well, but he had great acting talent, he spoke colorfully with great style. I started learning the Bible in Hebrew when I was seven years old. I memorized by heart the original of the First Book.

The first two books of the Pentateuch [Genesis and Exodus] were especially important for me. Each teacher had problems with the Pentateuch, because the 3rd book [Leviticus] talks about unspeakable things, like menstruation, abortion etc. Akerman skipped these pages, because it bored us. We mostly saw the Bible as a great adventure.

In addition to the Bible, my love was the history of Poland. When I was six years old and sick with the scarlet fever, I read a lot. Mother bought me a brochure about Queen Jadwiga [Queen Jadwiga (1374-1399): crowned Queen of Poland in 1384, wife of Wladyslaw Jagiello, enthroned in 1386.

After her death she began to be worshipped, canonized in 1997]. I didn't go to school for a month. The children progressed significantly in their fractions and I progressed significantly in reading. I loved reading my sisters' world history handbooks. I remember Zakrzewski's handbook. History is still an impulse for my work until this day.

I was a Zionist ever since I turned seven years old. It was humiliating for me that my nation didn't have its own state. There was no talk of anti-Semitism, but I thought a Jewish state should be set up. I made Zionist speeches when I was seven years old. I would stand on a table in our villa in Michalin and shout: 'Precz z Anglia' ['Down with England'], because England was an opponent then and a lot depended on England.

I later attended the Teachers' Union school on Zamenhof Street for a year. It was a lot more progressive than Krelman's school. Religion was taught in Hebrew and so was History of Jews, using Dubnow's [22](#) book. We used Balaban [23](#) in the higher grades.

I had problems at school: I had too many interests. I read a lot, started writing, played ball, I memorized all the results of athletics competitions. The Teachers' Union school gave me a lot, also as a life experience, because it taught me what it was like when someone was different.

I later went to the Magnus Krynski gymnasium. The principal was the founder's son, a mathematician, Michal Krynski. It was a very avant-garde school. It was the only school where the lessons lasted 40 minutes. The system was based on Dalton Plan ideas [a teaching system introduced in 1920 in Dalton, USA, by teacher H. Parkhurst, assumed independence of the student].

Our school implemented a semi-Dalton system, that is partial independence was required from the student. There was a system of assignments, tasks which a student had to tackle without a teacher's help. On the basis of assignments, students prepared themselves for tests. This system of checking knowledge was also exceptional.

My parents paid 90 zloty per month for this school. It was quite a lot, taking into account the fact that Mrs. Ruffowa, our teacher, had a salary of 150 zloty per month. She made some money on the side, proofreading for publishing houses, for pennies. Poorer boys also attended this gymnasium,

but if they did well at school, they received discounts from Krynski.

I had to take private coaching lessons, because I wasn't doing well at school. In the 1st grade of gymnasium, so in my 7th year of studying, my Polish teacher, Professor Ludwik Rath, recognized my talent for writing, he sent me a tutor, a student from the final grade called Zysman.

The first thing he assigned me was... the multiplication table, so I learned it and I swear that to this day I know it very well. I needed a tutor at the end of each school year. Mrs. Ruffowa taught me later, I became friends with her and she prepared me for tests.

During the time I attended the Teachers' Union school I was already writing some articles for 'Maly Przegląd' [a very popular weekly supplement for children to the Polish language Zionist weekly 'Nasz Przegląd,' published between 1926-1939], although this writing wasn't very good.

The journal was founded by Janusz Korczak [24](#) and the idea was that children would put it together by themselves. Editor Jerzy Abramow, that is, Igor Newerly [Igor Newerly - 1903-1987, writer, secretary and co-worker of Janusz Korczak] would sometimes add some periods, cross something out or correct something else.

The paper had its stars, whom I admired very much, a few years older than me. I remember Lusia from Czestochowa, who was said to be a very beautiful girl, Emkott and Aneri, also known as Irena, whom I later managed to contact. She was several years older than I and very cheeky.

She kept arguing with Emkott, they wrote passionate polemics. One of the awards in 'Maly Przegląd's' novel contest went to 11-year-old Dycia from Zamosc. The novel was 41 pages long and described her family.

Some of them grew up and didn't write for 'Maly Przegląd' anymore, for example Leon Glattenberg whom I met some twenty years ago. He used to write longer pieces, for example 'Rece do sprzedania' ['Hands for sale'], about himself, a 17-year-old, unemployed boy.

His second novel was called 'Wykolejency' ['Derailed']. In 1938 he went to Israel as Leon Harrari and set up the kibbutz Har Hamisha [probably kibbutz Har Amasa] near Jerusalem. We met in 1975 in Israel. It was a very close friendship. Of course, he remembered me from 'Maly Przegląd.'

I wasn't suited to write there anyway. They expected us to write about life and I wrote mysteries, westerns, so from imagination, not life. But I won a school contest organized for the school's 30th anniversary and the prize was having the piece printed in 'Maly Przegląd.' It was called 'My School.'

They must have been impressed, because I and more than a dozen aspiring authors were invited to a photography studio and my picture is somewhere in 'Nasz Przegląd Ilustrowany' [supplement to the Polish language Zionist journal 'Nasz Przegląd'].

'Maly Przegląd' sponsored a film screening for its correspondents in the 'Europa' cinema on Nowy Swiat Street. It was a true journey for me. Mother and I walked along Nowolipie to Swietokrzyska via Czackiego Street, which looked pretty much as it does now.

During the screening Hipek kept kicking some bearded gentleman. I told him, 'Listen, this is Korczak.' I knew his face well, because he was often shown in 'Nasz Przegląd Ilustrowany.' I also loved Korczak as an author. He was a great writer, he had exquisite style. I also listened to him on



the radio, I think it was on Thursdays. He performed as 'Old Doctor.' He had a warm, creaky voice. I think he was just pretending to be old.

When I was having lunch, after I came back from school, I would listen to the radio or have a newspaper in front of me. I usually ate alone, because everybody had already eaten. The radio really brought me up. Since 1934 I didn't go to the theater with my parents - I was independent and became a movie lover. I can still list the names of all these directors. Well, how was I supposed to study with all these attractions?

I always read a lot. I was nine years old when I started reading serious books, thanks to my sisters. I later became a member of the 'Parnas' library. There were four of us and each one borrowed books from a different library. Publishing houses were dependent on the existence of these libraries.

There were libraries which had to purchase absolutely every book of fiction published. The publisher knew he had a guarantee for 600 copies of a novel and that he'd sell maybe 200 copies more, so that's how many copies were published.

My childhood poet was Juliusz Slowacki [25](#), Mickiewicz [26](#) came later. Until I turned eleven years old, I also used to read Maurice Leblanc, author of 'Arsen Lupin' with great zeal. But I also read Hamsun, 'Buddenbrooks' [by Thomas Mann] and Sienkiewicz [27](#), Boleslaw Prus's [28](#) 'The Doll'. I managed to go through life without reading Karl May [29](#). A lot of middle-of-the-road European literature, dealing with current issues, was translated before the war.

I also prepared 'Fantazyjny Przegląd Sportowy' ['Fantastic Sports Review'], a yearbook. I put it together, wrote columns, criticized the team, recommended how they should play and how they played in some non-existing matches. I was writing a novel about an exceptional, fantastic runner. I was always interested in that, especially since Kusocinski [Janusz Kusocinski (1907-1942), Olympic champion and 1932 world record holder in running] won a gold medal. This happened when I was nine years old.

I didn't go to the theater, because it was too expensive. But I was well versed, because I used to read Boy-Zelenski's reviews, published in subsequent volumes. I was maybe 14 years old when I started reading Boy-Zelenski and I really liked him for his cleverness, irony and beautiful use of the Polish language. I found something in his reviews, which was dear to me. Usually all these illuminations are about finding yourself, because you often don't know yourself.

My brother kept proving to me that God didn't exist. And I would ask him about who created the stars etc. and we would argue about it. When I was eleven years old I had a kind of moral dare with God to save my sick cousin Witek. I dared God that if he didn't save the boy, then he didn't exist or existed, but was cruel. God didn't answer me. I was deeply disappointed. After all, I was supposed to be a prophet - I once had a dream that I have a mission from God, that God asks me to do certain things and I do them in my dreams.

I didn't have a bar mitzvah at all. Children usually got watches for the bar mitzvah. I was disobedient and Mother said I wouldn't have a bar mitzvah. So I said that I didn't need it. If I didn't need it, then I didn't get the watch. Nobody checked, as it usually is with communion, if you had your bar mitzvah or not. Especially in our tenement house where there was a lot of intelligentsia,

including communists, who didn't pay any attention to religion.

I didn't have too many contacts with Polish kids. The only Poles in our building were the Krzyzewski family and the caretaker. Our relations with the Krzyzewskis were excellent, very close, maybe because there were two pretty girls at our house and boys at theirs. The relations between my mother and Mrs. Krzyzewska were very cordial. During the siege of Warsaw in 1939 Mrs. Krzyzewska sometimes gave us some bread, because her son-in-law was a colonel.

My contacts with non-Jewish youth took place mostly in Michalin. But there were no contacts between our gymnasium and the catholic girls' school, which was located next door. We never saw the girls from the girls' gymnasium, because they left the building through some other exit.

I once met a woman who attended that school. And she said to me with regret, 'And we were always waiting for you eagerly.' Such were the times. They were raised like that, to wait for the boys to take on initiative.

Father had excellent relations with Christians - technicians and engineers whom he worked with. These technicians sat with Father over some plans which had to be approved by some committee in Warsaw, because there was administrative order before the war. Mother would put some herrings, stuffed fish, vodka on the table. Father liked to drink some three glasses of vodka.

A lot was written about Hitler before the war. I remember the atmosphere before he came to power [30](#) and the fears after he was successful. Then there was the June coup, when Hitler murdered Roem and his other comrades from SA. We were living on the third floor and someone in the backyard was shouting, 'Hitler has been assassinated!', because everything was at first interpreted the other way round.

With regards to anti-Semitism, of course we knew what was happening, because we read the papers. But on Nowolipie you could live outside of it. Sometimes there were some stories that some ONR [31](#) militants wanted to get to Nowolipie.

There were some Jewish merchants with carts on the corner of Zelazna Street. These were boys who liked to fight, so they beat the crap out of those ONR guys. They never showed their faces on Nowolipie again. This was next to Saint Sophie's obstetrics hospital, which is still there.

I had just one unpleasant incident. I was standing in the doorway of Krelman's public school and some 8-year-old girl ran by me and shouted, 'You dirty Jew' and kept running. It was a shock for me. After 'Nowolipie,' where I described this incident, was published I got a letter from an engineer from Wroclaw, Mr. Bojczewski, who apologized to me for that little girl.

In the 1930s nationalism was definitely on the rise in Poland. There had been some anti-Semitic incidents at the Warsaw University before [see Anti- semitism in Poland in the 1930s] [32](#) and even writers like Maria Dabrowska [1889-1965, her novel 'Noce i dnie' ('Nights and Days') is one of the great achievements of Polish realism], who actually had some anti-Semitic tendencies, although that was probably due to her upbringing, knew that such incidents were disgraceful.

She wrote an article called 'Doroczny wstyd' ['Annual Shame'] about these incidents at the university. Wanda Wasilewska [33](#) also wrote an article about this, entitled 'Ciemna fala' ['Dark Wave']. There was some commotion at our school due to these incidents. Our Polish language

teacher, Professor Ludwik Roth, tried to convince us that this was only temporary, that there were voices of discontent as well.

Later, after Pilsudski's [34](#) death, young people were becoming more and more nationalistic. The ruling establishment created the National Unification Camp, this OZON [35](#). There were pogroms in some places and some of them were about struggling for market stalls.

You can't deny there was a national conflict, but not a racial conflict. The reasons were economic - three and a half million Jews lived in Poland. This was all turning in the wrong direction. So-called Aryan paragraphs [see Anti-Jewish legislation in Poland] [36](#) were created.

It wasn't the government's, the state's initiative, but the initiatives of various attorneys' or physicians' corporations, or even corporations of songwriters and composers - Jews had outstanding representatives in this business and this division into Jews and non-Jews was idiotic.

- **During the war**

On 1st September [1939] [37](#) the first alarm was cancelled. No plane managed to get through, so people hoped it was just a drill. Later there was the bombing of Wola district of Warsaw. I spent all of September in Warsaw. I was an avid patriot. We had a house committee [during the occupation each tenement house had its own committee, which organized the life of the residents].

When there was a disposition that all men able to carry arms have to leave Warsaw and the Germans were getting closer, this house committee dissolved out of fear and handed over the power to the youth. I was deputy commander. The commander was Maniek Krzyzewski, but I did everything for him. I remember when the Germans entered Warsaw on 30th September. They were going along Zelazna Street, along part of Nowolipie and then turned into Smocza.

I helped to put out the fire of the Krynski gymnasium, on the corner of Senatorska and Miodowa Streets and of the Holy Ghost Hospital on Elektoralna Street [see The September Campaign 1939] [38](#). A scaleboard factory was burning on Nowolipie.

It was a horrible job, because we had to keep lifting scaleboards and new flames would keep bursting from underneath them. Father also participated in this. That was when Father and I became really close, I had a feeling that I was caring for him, not he for me.

My first brother left Warsaw to fight, in response to Umiastowski's order [39](#). No doubt he was the one Father loved more, because he was working in his company and I was studying. But then he moved his affection to me.

I didn't see any cutting off of Jewish beards [one of the methods of public humiliation of Jews before the war], but I heard about it. It came as a great shock to us when pious Mendel shaved off his own beard. He must have witnessed this event, which really made an impression on him. He came to us, not wearing a kapote, but a gray suit and hat. He was a Hasid and he decided to help God to save him.

Hipek came back from Bialystok, which was on the Soviet side [see Annexation of Eastern Poland] [40](#), and said that he was going back there, because that was where his friends were. Stella, who was also there, came back to get her things and provisions and she took me with her when she was

returning there. It was already decided that Mirka would also go, but to Lwow, to her fiancé Marian, who was waiting for her in Busk near Lwow.

The parents told us to go and said they would stay and watch over the apartment. After all, the war was supposed to end in the spring. Nobody treated the invasion of the Russians seriously. I left Warsaw on 8th November 1939. I left, because I couldn't stand the fact that the Germans could humiliate me and I couldn't respond. But no one, at least not at that time, was thinking about the Holocaust.

In Bialystok I first stayed with Stella in an apartment. It was, I think, on Sienkiewicz Street. Once every several months I received a letter from my parents with a stamp - 'geprüft' [German for 'checked']. I even received parcels two times. One of them wasn't even from the ghetto yet. It was a parcel with clothing, which was supposed to be sold by me. And this was very useful.

My parents separated only at the last moment. They were in the Warsaw ghetto until the end, Father worked at Szulc's [Szopy Szulca - German corporations in the ghetto] and Mother was with him. They had a certificate which stated that they couldn't be deported, because Father worked as a machine conservator [life number - a selection of the residents of the ghetto took place in September 1942. Those who had employment certificates remained in the ghetto, others were deported.] They weren't doing too bad financially. They didn't have to sell out in the ghetto.

One day, during some action [see Great Action] [41](#), Mother was on Umschlagplatz [42](#). She was standing in a line to Treblinka. Two steps to the side there was another line, a line to life. She risked it and she moved from one line to the other.

During the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising [43](#) my parents were deported to Majdanek. They went through selection in Majdanek. They were both able to work, so they were both sent to Hassag [a German weapon factory]. Father worked in the men's ward, Mother in the women's ward. She told me she packed bombs with TNT and would sometimes wonder whether she wasn't making a bomb for her son, that is for me. She knew from Mirka that my brother was in a Soviet labor camp.

When the Russian offensive was beginning, my parents were evacuated. The women were sent to Lipsk and that's where Mother was liberated. She crossed to the Russian side, because she wanted to get to Warsaw. No one knew where the men were taken.

We only found out what happened to Father several years ago. We thought that he had been shot to death near Czestochowa, because there were some mass graves there. I searched for some kind of sign for eight years. The Internationaler Suchdienst organization from Arsen in Germany helped, they even gave us Father's number from the camp: 113 804. It turned out Father was murdered in Buchenwald [44](#). Probably shortly before liberation. It is known that he was still alive in January 1945. I suspect he could have been killed in March.

Soon after I reached Stella in Bialystok, in October 1939, I went south, to Lwow. I spent several weeks in Lwow. I sold cosmetics in the Mikolash Passage, without much success. One day a Russian officer stood in front of me and said, 'kak tebya ne stidno' [Russian: 'how can you not be ashamed']. For him work was work with a shovel in your hand, not selling something, that was profiteering.

I later reached Mirka and Marian in Busk near Lwow. I spent the entire winter with them. The winter of 1939 was very harsh. I was reading Borowy's anthology of Polish poetry 'Od Kochanowskiego do Staffa' ['From Kochanowski to Staff'], I knew it by heart. In the spring Marian found me a job building the Lwow-Kiev road.

Officially I was responsible for the materials, I was store-keeper. I even specialized in boiling tar. When we completed the construction of the road, I got my money and had to decide what to do next. It was November 1940. I was 17 years old.

I went to Mirka and Marian in Dubrovitsa and there, a bit reluctantly, I passed the exam to the pedagogical school. I wouldn't have been able to register as a resident without it. The school prepared country teachers. I learned Ukrainian there and I had excellent relationships with the teachers.

There were no Ukrainian-Jewish conflicts there. The locals who were attending that school used the word 'pan' ['sir'] when they addressed me, because I was from Warsaw. I couldn't convince them that I was their buddy, not some 'pan.'

Two of them, Momot and Frusowicz, really helped me in the evacuation in June 1941, after the Germans attacked the Soviets. They led me at night through sleeping Ukrainian villages, until we reached the train station in Sarny. Mirka and her husband stayed.

If Marian had been afraid of Ukrainians, he would have survived. He didn't run away, because he had many friends among them. I knocked on his door, I said, 'You have to run away.' Mirka later wrote letters to Mother, so Mother knew I had run away and they stayed. Mother was hoping that I survived.

I managed to run away to the east together with that school. The children from the school were being carefully evacuated. On the old Polish-Russian [Soviet] borders the NKVD [45](#) soldiers would have pulled me and my two Jewish friends out of the train, but some Soviet girls covered us with their coats and saved our lives. In Kiev we went to an evacuation point and, from there, sailed on a boat to Dnipropetrovsk.

In search for work I reached a kolkhoz [46](#). There were some representatives of the kolkhoz with their trucks at one of the train stations. They were shouting for us to go with them. It looked like an American western movie. We went with them 20 kilometers from the main train station to the Tschkalov kolkhoz.

The atmosphere there was very cordial. We lived with three women, a mother and her two daughters, who were very good to us. The old one got up in the morning to make a fire and she made a pierog [Russian baked pie] with potatoes. There was no NKVD there. Someone had to be chosen as the director of the kolkhoz. A representative of the party assigned a candidate from among the refugees, but there was no voting. But he proved himself, because he had experience.

I was in the kolkhoz from July until November 1941, when I was assigned to the Red Army. I could have run away with a friend, but it would have been dishonorable. We were convinced that there was one enemy and that it didn't matter where we were fighting.

We set off from the Morozovskaya station, we walked through heavy snow for five days, for 104 kilometers, until we reached the Marinskaya base, where the 12th Army was stationing. The Russians celebrated their first victory then, they took over Rostov-na-Donu.

We were on the front in January. What saved me was that all foreigners were sent off to the labor battalions. It was a horrible degradation with regards to conditions of life, because a soldier had everything - underpants, a shirt, bathhouse, food, shoes. And in the labor battalion we didn't get anything.

I kept thinking about reaching Anders's army, beyond Stalingrad. In April 1942, in Saratov, I came upon some commanders, who were packing up to go south. Lieutenant Borkowski, a very intelligent man, was there. He gave me and my friend assignments to the army under false names which we assumed.

It was an escape from the labor battalion. If they had caught us, that would have been the end for us. They didn't want to take us with the official transport, but told us to get there on our own. So my friend and I found ourselves in Yangiyul [Uzbekistan], some 100 km from Tashkent, where Szyszko Bogusza's headquarters were located.

When it turned out that I didn't have documents, the Poles told me, 'Go to the Russians' and the Russians told me, 'Go to the Poles.' We were starving. I was seeing red circles before my eyes because of hunger. We volunteered for a labor battalion. In that battalion I finally got better. We did different things, for example built buildings of train stations.

I escaped again, because I still wanted to reach Anders. This time with a friend who had a Polish passport. We had a plan that once he was accepted he would say, 'And my friend? After all, he's from Warsaw' and they'd answer, 'Bring him here.' And that's what happened. I told one corporal about the gymnasium and girls from Warsaw.

I convinced him using Wiech's language [dialect from the Warsaw suburbs, popularized by Stefan Wiechecki, pseudonym Wiech]. He added me to the list of people who were supposed to get on the train in the morning. The corporal walked and walked and finally pointed at me - you. The funniest thing is that this list was prepared, as it turned out, by my friend from school Siolek Szlanowicz.

I didn't become a soldier then. But I had a paper stating that I went through a Polish army's draft committee, which was the last one organized before the army left the USSR. This was on 19th August 1942 - they didn't accept me, because of my ethnicity [Anders's army was reluctant to admit Jews].

A physician named Hoffman examined me first and everything was fine. Then the major looked between my legs and decided that I'd get category D [unable to serve in the army]. It was clear what this was about. The physician told me not to worry, that I'd be back in the country sooner than they'd be. And that's what happened.

Later I was in Samarkand for two years as a civilian. That's where I met my future wife. It was in October 1942. We were very close. In Samarkand I worked in a factory which produced only for the army. Only what we stole was available on the market.



It was a wine and vodka factory which merged with a chemical factory from Odessa. They made me carry some chemicals which burned holes in my clothing, so I stopped going to the factory. I would have been tried by the court, only the army could have saved me. So I tried again.

I started almost shouting that they could reject others, but that I was an old 'frontovnik' [from Russian, an old, experienced soldier, who has been on the front]. There was a Soviet lieutenant-colonel there, he wasn't with them, he was there as some guest and he asked me which army I was in. And I said - 12th Army. 'I was in the 12th as well' he said and added, 'Do well for my fellow comrade.' He helped me, because he liked that we had been in the same army.

In May 1944 I enlisted in the Polish Army in Sumy, where the 1st Reserve Regiment of the 2nd Army was stationing. I fell ill with malaria and I didn't go to Ryazan to the line officers school. I gave someone some poem of mine and I became popular, because the poem had entertaining potential.

The poem was kitschy, but they said that a 'new Tuwim' [47](#) was born. Within two weeks my entire situation changed. From a humiliated pauper I turned into a famous man of letters. I was assigned to the regiment's theater, where I immediately began writing texts.

I didn't know what had happened to my parents, I knew a bit about what had happened in the [Warsaw] ghetto, because the Soviet press, although vaguely, mentioned something. In the second half of May, a boy about my age, a handsome one approached me in Sumy and said that he'd like to speak to me.

This was Zdzisiek Dziewczepolski from Warsaw. He had been in the German army as a mole, designated by the AK, as Herr Mizierski. His parents had been in the ghetto. They showed him what a wonderful bunker they had and what great provisions. They didn't predict one thing, that they'd burn to death. He witnessed it. He told me what it looked like and that there was nothing left.

On 1st August 1944 I was performing with my theater troupe in Zhytomyr. There was a lieutenant there, Michal Friedman [Centropa has also conducted an interview with Mr. Friedman] who told me about the Warsaw Uprising [48](#). We were performing at 7pm.

Nobody knew anything and there was fun, dancing and Wieniawski's waltz [Ladies ask Gentlemen]... Sometime in the second half of August we crossed the River Bug. The train stopped, we got out, faced the Soviet Union - farewell, then about turn - welcome homeland. The locals were crying when they saw white and red flags.

I later found myself in Lublin. I created a troupe of six to eight people who performed in hospitals. The name of the troupe was 'Emergency Rescue.' We often played for Russians, who were crazy about our vocalist, Barbara Grabowska. From Lublin I was sent to the 10th Division in Rzeszow, where I became the literary director of the division's theater. I was also the annalist of the division and I edited the front bulletin. I took part in crossing the River Nysa with this division.

The capitulation of Germany had already been signed and the fighting was still going on around us until 10th May. The night of 9th/10th May it turned out that there was no front. This was on the border of Saxony and the Czech lands in the Sudets in the small town of Bischofswerda. I felt relief.

I was in the unfortunate situation that as the editor of the front bulletin I was supposed to encourage others to fight and the war was ending. The commanders ordered me to 'inspire' the

soldiers to fight. The wisest thing a soldier could have done in this situation was to hide behind a tree. I wrote that they should remember about a spade, because if you have a spade you can always dig a ditch around yourself.

### • **My wife Irena**

My wife's name is Irena. She was born in Navariya near Lwow on 4th December 1922. Her maiden name is Lebewal. She's Jewish, her native language is Polish. She received her secondary school certificate from a pedagogical school in Samarkand, she studied pedagogy in Tashkent and then she studied Russian philology for two years in Leningrad. Between 1964 and 1967 she periodically taught Russian in an elementary school in Warsaw.

Irena repatriated from Central Asia. At first she went, with her sister, from Tashkent to Lwow. She traveled as the nurse of a wounded officer with whom she reached Kharkov. She and her sister went on to Lwow. It was March 1946 and repatriation was practically finished.

And there were still lots of people left. Some rich people collected money, paid the NKVD, which allowed two more trains to pass to Cracow. They allowed her to board those trains, although she didn't have any money. We met in Cracow, at the Plaszow train station, where those trains finished their journey.

### • **Post-war**

After the war I lived in Poznan, that is, I first spent six weeks in Jelenia Gora, until 15th June. Then the headquarters of the 2nd Army summoned me to Poznan to work for the newsletter of the 2nd Army, called 'Orzel Bialy' ['White Eagle'], where I was a columnist.

When was the first time I saw Warsaw after the war? It was on 15th July 1945 when I was sent from Poznan to Grunwald, because it was a round anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald [1415, one of the great events in Polish history]. We were changing trains in Warsaw. I got off at the Main Train Station, walked a little bit and ran away. All I saw were ruins, no people.

A month later I met Mother on the street, she had already learned from a friend of mine that I was alive. I came to Warsaw to arrange something in Praga [district of Warsaw]. I was walking along Targowa Street when I saw my mother's shadow crossing the street. She was completely gray. She didn't recognize me, because I was in uniform. People who witnessed our encounter, cried. I witnessed such events myself, but never with Jews.

The division between the 1st and 2nd Army was abolished and the 'Orzel Bialy' newsletter was liquidated. I was offered a different job. I was already known as a writer, so I was asked whether I preferred to work with a daily or weekly paper. I chose the 'Zolnierz Polski' ['Polish Soldier'] illustrated weekly, where I continued writing until 1952. I lived in Cracow for two years, until October 1947. Later I moved to Warsaw where I still live.

Prewar Poland, 'sanacja' [49](#) was not ideal for people. During the war people hated 'sanacja,' everyone believed that the defeat in September [1939] was sanacja's fault. People connected with the arts, those who, after the war, supported the national government [still multi-party then] or who were neutral, didn't do that out of fear or in order to have a successful career. They simply

thought it would open Poland up for something new.

I didn't want to emigrate, because I knew I could only write in Polish. Many of my friends left. I knew that from their point of view they were right. There was a time after the pogrom in Kielce [50](#) when we were getting ready to leave. What stopped me was the authentic outrage of the Polish intelligentsia.

Many letters of protest were published, including one by Galczynski [Konstanty Ildefons Galczynski (1905-1953): popular poet, wrote personal lyrics, satires, patriotic verse and social realist style propaganda poetry], who wrote that he condemns it as a former anti-Semite. But we didn't know about Jedwabne [51](#). If I had found out about Jedwabne then, I would probably be a different man. I would be writing something different and in a different language.

I was soon noticed as a writer. Until 1948 there was still hope for a social-democratic Poland. Yalta [Conference] [52](#) did not have such a demonic influence as it is presented now. Roosevelt had a vision of the new division of the world, where Poland was supposed to remain under Russian influence. But Yalta assumed free elections. Freedom of press was incomparable with what was happening in the Soviet Union, of course until 1949.

I never joined the party [see Polish United Worker's Party] [53](#), among other reasons, because I thought there were enough Jews in it. There was a period when I started sensing anti-Semitic tones in the Soviet Union and then the regime became more brutal in Poland too. There were periods when it was difficult for me; there were periods when it was easier.

The events of March 1968 [see Anti-Zionist campaign in Poland] [54](#) really began in 1967, with the Six-Day-War [55](#). A special meeting of 'Zwiazek Literatow' [Literary Association] took place in 1968 concerning the closing of 'Dziady' [communist authorities considered this staging of the famous romantic drama, directed by K. Dejmek, to be anti-Polish].

When Putrament [Jerzy Putrament (1910-1986): Polish writer and communist activist, eagerly propagated the idea of social realism] said that the party was fighting anti-Semitism, I protested. I said that the party wasn't fighting at all.

He said: 'you're wrong, comrade Hen.' And I was there, in the middle of the room and I said 'perhaps it's fighting, but it's losing the fight without a struggle.' I was quick-witted enough not to say that the party was inspiring anti-Semitism, which was actually true. I was not allowed to publish after this incident. It was never said directly, but it was known that my name could not appear in the press.

After I returned from Paris in 1970 I began to be treated less harshly, there were some reviews and texts in the social-cultural papers, especially 'Tygodnik Powszechny' and 'Polityka' [significant social-cultural weeklies].

Later, after they discovered I had published in 'Kultura' in Paris [émigré political-cultural magazine, published in Paris 1947-1977] hard times began again. Even the possibility of going to 'demoludy' [colloquial name for countries of the communist block] was taken away from me. None of my screenplays were approved between 1968 and 1977.

My daughter Magdalena was born in 1950; she has a Master's Degree in physics. She married Eryk Infeld, a son of the famous physician Leopold Infeld, who was Einstein's co-worker, but they split up and my daughter uses her maiden name. They have a daughter, Ewa. Magdalena works in the Ministry of Culture.

Our son Marian Maciej was born in 1955. Marian is a name we gave him after my brother-in-law and he added the name Maciej himself, because that's what everybody called him. He graduated from Film School - Cameraman Department. He has written a novel titled 'Wedlug niej' ['According to Her'], which was published under the pseudonym Maciej Nawariak. Marian has three children.

A son, Tomasz, from his first marriage, born almost at the same time as Magdalena's daughter. From his second marriage he has a daughter named Julia and a son - Julian. My children are conscious of their Jewish heritage, they know what it's about. But our relations with God are quite friendly, God looks at us and forgives us our minor sins.

When I was 45 years old, already a published writer, I went to Paris. It was 1969. I managed to get a passport for two reasons, or so I think. Firstly, the UB [see Office of Public Security] [56](#) thought that I would stay there for good.

Secondly, during a confrontation with some colonel I said that I had to leave, because I could spend my entire life in Warsaw. They were helpless, because they couldn't threaten me that I wouldn't get a passport [in the countries of the Soviet block trips to the west, requiring passports, were strictly limited].

In April 1969 I began cooperating with 'Kultura,' where I printed a story under the pseudonym 'Korab.' In October I informed Giedroyc [Jerzy Giedroyc (1906-2000): publisher and writer, co-founder of the émigré Literary Institute, editor-in-chief of 'Kultura'] that I had arrived.

He came to my hotel, he brought with him a small fee for the story and gave me books by Milosz [Czeslaw Milosz (1911-2004): one of the greatest Polish poets, a Nobel Prize laureate], Gombrowicz [Witold Gombrowicz (1904-1969): a great Polish writer, lived abroad since 1939] and Hlasko [Marek Hlasko (1934- 1969): an outstanding Polish writer, became highly popular in the 1950s].

For half a year I tried to find out if I could stay there as a Polish writer. My wife opposed this. She said that in France I would always be a mediocre writer. Konstanty Jelenski [(1922-1987), exceptional essayist and art critic, promoter of Polish culture in France], tried to convince me not to go back, because the mountain-climbers trial was beginning [one of the political trials in the Polish People's Republic, took place in 1970] and the authorities really wanted to find out who this 'Korab' was.

I went back. They finally did find out and the entire 1970s were bad for me. I wrote, but there were almost no reviews. When I published 'Ja, Michal z Montaigne' ['I, Michel from Montaigne', Warsaw, 1978], the intelligentsia went down on their knees and I had two editions. But I had to wait three, four years for each book.

I welcomed 1989 [57](#) very warmly. But I was already warning about euphoria and everything turned out to be true. I predicted that no great work of art would be created. 'La Marseillaise' can only be created when there is some set goal and capitalism is no goal, it's just a system of administration. Maybe I see it all more clearly, because of my wartime experiences.

I am still in a difficult situation, because I also wasn't involved in 'Solidarnosc' [58](#). I was once asked about the most foolish thing I did in my life. I said that it was foolish that I have always been an independent writer. I should have signed up for some clique and then lied my way out of it, like everyone else did. If I did that I would now have a 90 m2 apartment and not 53 m2.

There were times when it was better not to advertise my heritage, but I was never ashamed of it. There is a kind of duality in me, although now I feel primarily a Jew, not a Pole of Jewish origin. I certainly don't feel Polish when I look at Lepper [Andrzej Lepper, leader of the populist 'Samoodbrona' political party] or at Liga Polskich Rodzin ['League of Polish Families', populist right-wing party].

I was always a supporter of Zionism and I was full of admiration for Israel, which I have visited four times. The first time I went there was in 1963, before the war. I'm a supporter of the existence of the state of Palestine, but I don't want it to be a country which destroys another one.

I have become convinced that I have a group of faithful readers, who find consolation in reading my books. I have also written three biographical books: 'Ja, Michal z Montaigne' [I, Michel from Montaigne], 'Blazen - wielki maz. Opowiesc o Tadeuszu Boyu-Zelenskim' ['Jester - Great Statesman. Story of Tadeusz Boy-Zelenski', Warsaw, 1990], 'Moj przyjaciel krol' ['My Friend the King', Warsaw, 2004], which significantly influence the Polish intelligentsia. That's my greatest success in life.

#### • Jozef Hen's bibliography

War time experience:

'Kijow, Taszkient, Berlin' (Kiev, Tashkent, Berlin)

'Kwiecien' (April)

'Nikt nie wola' (Nobody's Calling, written in 1957 and published in 1990)

'Krzyz Walecznych' (Cross of the Valorous)

Historic novels:

'Krolewskie sny' (Royal Dreams)

'Oko Dajana' (Dayan's Eye)

'Moj przyjaciel krol. Opowiesc o Stanislawie Auguscie' (My Friend the King. The Story of Stanislaw August)

Essays:

'Ja Michal z Montaigne' (I, Michel from Montaigne)

'Nie boje sie bezsennych nocy' (I Am Not Afraid of Sleepless Nights)

Polish-Jewish coexistence:

'Nowolipie'

'Najpiękniejsze lata' (The Most Beautiful Years)

## • Glossary

**1** Hasid: Follower of the Hasidic movement, a Jewish mystic movement founded in the 18th century that reacted against Talmudic learning and maintained that God's presence was in all of one's surroundings and that one should serve God in one's every deed and word.

The movement provided spiritual hope and uplifted the common people. There were large branches of Hasidic movements and schools throughout Eastern Europe before World War II, each following the teachings of famous scholars and thinkers. Most had their own customs, rituals and life styles. Today there are substantial Hasidic communities in New York, London, Israel and Antwerp.

**2** 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.

**3** 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.

**4** Treblinka: Village in Poland's Mazovia region, site of two camps. The first was a penal labor camp, established in 1941 and operating until 1944. The second, known as Treblinka II, functioned in the period 1942-43 and was a death camp. Prisoners in the former worked in Treblinka II.

In the second camp a ramp and a mock-up of a railway station were built, which prevented the victims from realizing what awaited them until just in front of the entrance to the gas chamber. The camp covered an area of 13.5 hectares. It was bounded by a 3-m high barbed wire fence interwoven densely with pine branches to screen what was going on inside. The whole process of exterminating a transport from arrival in the camp to removal of the corpses from the gas chamber took around 2 hours. Several transports arrived daily.

In the 13 months of the extermination camp's existence the Germans gassed some 750,000-800,000 Jews. Those taken to Treblinka included Warsaw Jews during the so-called 'Grossaktion' [great liquidation campaign] in the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942.

In addition to Polish Jews, Jews from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Yugoslavia and the USSR were also killed in Treblinka. In the spring of 1943 the Germans gradually began to liquidate the camp. On 2nd August 1943 an uprising broke out there with the aim of enabling some 200 people to escape. The majority died.

**5** Majdanek concentration camp: Situated five kilometers from the city center of Lublin, Poland, originally established as a labor camp in October 1941. It was officially called Prisoner of War Camp of the Waffen-SS Lublin until 16th February 1943, when the name was changed to Concentration Camp of the Waffen-SS Lublin.

Unlike most other Nazi death camps, Majdanek, located in a completely open field, was not hidden from view. About 130,000 Jews were deported there during 1942-43 as part of the 'Final Solution.'. Initially there were two gas chambers housed in a wooden building, which were later replaced by

gas chambers in a brick building.

The estimated number of deaths is 360,000, including Jews, Soviets POWs and Poles. The camp was liquidated in July 1944, but by the time the Red Army arrived the camp was only partially destroyed. Although approximately 1,000 inmates were executed on a death march, the Red Army found thousand of prisoners still in the camp, an evidence of the mass murder that had occurred in Majdanek.

**6** 1905 Russian Revolution: Erupted during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904- 05, and was sparked off by a massacre of St. Petersburg workers taking their petitions to the Tsar (Bloody Sunday). The massacre provoked disgust and protest strikes throughout the country: between January and March 1905 over 800,000 people participated in them.

Following Russia's defeat in its war with Japan, armed insurrections broke out in the army and the navy (the most publicized in June 1905 aboard the battleship Potemkin). In 1906 a wave of pogroms swept through Russia, directed against Jews and Armenians.

The main unrest in 1906 (involving over a million people in the cities, some 2,600 villages and virtually the entire Baltic fleet and some of the land army) was incited by the dissolution of the First State Duma in July. The dissolution of the Second State Duma in June 1907 is considered the definitive end to the revolution.

**7** Bund: The short name of the General Jewish Union of Working People in Lithuania, Poland and Russia, Bund means Union in Yiddish. The Bund was a social democratic organization representing Jewish craftsmen from the Western areas of the Russian Empire. It was founded in Vilnius in 1897.

In 1906 it joined the autonomous fraction of the Russian Social Democratic Working Party and took up a Menshevist position. After the Revolution of 1917 the organization split: one part was anti-Soviet power, while the other remained in the Bolsheviks' Russian Communist Party. In 1921 the Bund dissolved itself in the USSR, but continued to exist in other countries.

**8** Polish Socialist Party (PPS): Founded in 1892, its reach extended throughout the Kingdom of Poland and abroad, and it proclaimed slogans advocating the reclamation by Poland of its sovereignty. It was a party that comprised many currents and had room for activists of varied views and from a range of social backgrounds.

During the revolutionary period in 1905-07 it was one of the key political forces; it directed strikes, organized labor unions, and conducted armed campaigns. It was also during this period that it developed into a party of mass reach (towards the end of 1906 it had some 55,000 members).

After 1918 the PPS came out in support of the parliamentary system, and advocated the need to ensure that Poland guaranteed freedom and civil rights, division of the churches (religious communities) and the state, and territorial and cultural autonomy for ethnic minorities; and it defended the rights of hired laborers.

The PPS supported the policy of the head of state, Jozef Pilsudski. It had seats in the first government of the Republic, but from 1921 was in opposition. In 1918-30 the main opponents of the PPS were the National Democrats [ND] and the communist movement.

In the 1930s the state authorities' repression of PPS activists and the reduced activity of working-class and intellectual political circles eroded the power of the PPS (in 1933 it numbered barely 15,000 members) and caused the radicalization of some of its leaders and party members.

During World War II the PPS was formally dissolved, and some of its leaders created the Polish Socialist Party - Liberty, Equality, Independence (PPS-WRN), which was a member of the coalition supporting the Polish government in exile and the institutions of the Polish Underground State. In 1946-48 many members of PPS-WRN left the country or were arrested and sentenced in political trials.

In December 1948 PPS activists collaborating with the PPR consented to the two parties merging on the PPR's terms. In 1987 the PPS resumed its activities. The party currently numbers a few thousand members.

**9** **Tlomackie Street:** Between the wars, 13 Tlomackie Street was home to the Union of Jewish Writers and Translators, which brought together those writing in both Yiddish and Polish. It also housed the Library of Judaistica and the Tempel progressive synagogue.

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

**11** **Free City of Danzig:** According to the Versailles Treaties the previously German Danzig was declared to be a free city under the mandate of the League of Nations in 1920; it did not belong to either Germany or Poland; however both countries had access to its port. Danzig (and the surrounding area) had a population of approximately 367,000 people, mostly Germans; Poles made up about 10 percent of the inhabitants. The Polish government was represented in the FCD by the General Commissioner of the Republic of Poland. Hitler's demand (1939) for the city's return to Germany was the principal immediate excuse for the German invasion of Poland and thus of World War II. Danzig was annexed to Germany from 1st September 1939 until its fall to the Soviet army in early 1945. The Allies returned the city to Poland, and it was renamed Gdansk.

**12** **Jung Teater:** Yiddish theater troupe in Warsaw, active between 1932 and 1937, created by Michal Weichert. It was an avant-garde theater, which used elements borrowed from the German expressionist avant-garde theater in the production, acting and stage design. The theater's best known performances included: B. Blum's 'Boston' (1933), 'Krasin' (1934) based on E. Wolf's radio-play, and L. Walach's 'Mississippi.'

**13** **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.

**14** Polonization of Jewish first and last names: The Polonization of first and last names in the 19th century was mostly an effect and a symptom of assimilation. Representatives of the so-called assimilatory trend changed their names or added a Polish element to the name.

Later, this tendency was not restricted to the assimilatory circle. In the interwar period Jews often had two names: the Jewish name (in the Hebrew or Yiddish version), the official name, written down on the birth certificate and the Polish name, used in everyday contacts with Poles, but also among family.

The story of the Polish-Jewish historian Schiper is an interesting case of the variety of names used by Polish Jews. Schiper published his works under three different names: Izaak, Icchak and Ignacy. After WWII many Jews who survived the Holocaust in hiding under false names never returned to their pre-war names.

Legal regulations after the war enabled this procedure. Such a situation was caused by the lack of a feeling of security and post-war trauma, which showed itself in breaking off ties with one's group. Another reason for the Polonization of names after WWII was the pressure exerted by the communist authorities on Jews - members of the communist party and employed in the party apparatus.

**15** Home Army (Armia Krajowa - AK): Conspiratorial military organization, part of the Polish armed forces operating within Polish territory (within pre-1st September 1939 borders) during World War II. Created on 14th February 1942, subordinate to the Supreme Commander and the Polish Government in Exile.

Its mission was to regain Poland's sovereignty through armed combat and inciting to a national uprising. In 1943 the AK had over 300,000 members. AK units organized diversion, sabotage, revenge and partisan campaigns. Its military intelligence was highly successful.

On 19th January 1945 the AK was disbanded on the order of its commander, but some of its members continued their independence activities throughout 1945- 47. In 1944-45 tens of thousands of AK soldiers were exiled and interned in the USSR, in places such as Ryazan, Borovichi and Ostashkov.

Soldiers of the AK continued to suffer repression in Poland until 1956; many were sentenced to death or long-term imprisonment on trumped-up charges. Right after the war, official propaganda accused the Home Army of murdering Jews who were hiding in the forests.

There is no doubt that certain AK units as well as some individuals tied to AK were in fact guilty of such acts. The scale of this phenomenon is very difficult to determine, and has been the object of debates among historians.

**16** *Nasz Przegląd*: Jewish daily published in Polish in Warsaw during the period 1923-39, with a print run of 45,000 copies. Addressed to the intelligentsia, it had an important opinion-forming role.

**17** Keren Kayemet LeIsrael (K.K.L.) in Poland: Jewish National Fund (JNF) founded in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel. From its inception, the JNF was charged with the task of fundraising in Jewish communities for the purpose of purchasing land in the Land of Israel to create a homeland for the Jewish people.

After 1948 the fund was used to improve and afforest the territories gained. Every Jewish family that wished to help the cause had a JNF money box, called the 'blue box.' Now these boxes are known worldwide as a symbol of Zionism. In Poland the JNF was active in two periods, 1919-1939 and 1945-1950. In preparing its colonization campaign, Keren Kayemet LeIsrael collaborated with the Jewish Agency and Keren Hayesod.

**18** Ringelblum Archive: Archives documenting the life, struggle and death of the Jews in WWII, created by Emanuel Ringelblum (1900-44), a historian, pedagogue and social activist. The archives were compiled by underground activists in the Warsaw ghetto.

In his work preparing reports for the clandestine Polish authorities on the situation of the Jewish population, Ringelblum and his many assistants gathered all types of documents (both private and official: notices, letters, reports, etc.) illustrating the reality in the ghettos and the camps.

These documents were hidden in metal milk churns, unearthed after the war and deposited with the Jewish Historical Institute. The Ringelblum Archive is now the broadest source of information on the fate of the Jews in the ghettos and the camps.

**19** Maccabi World Union: International Jewish sports organization whose origins go back to the end of the 19th century. A growing number of young Eastern European Jews involved in Zionism felt that one essential prerequisite of the establishment of a national home in Palestine was the improvement of the physical condition and training of ghetto youth. In order to achieve this, gymnastics clubs were founded in many Eastern and Central European countries, which later came to be called Maccabi. The movement soon spread to more countries in Europe and to Palestine. The World Maccabi Union was formed in 1921. In less than two decades its membership was estimated at 200,000 with branches located in most countries of Europe and in Palestine, Australia, South America, South Africa, etc.

**20** 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.

## **21 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.

**22** Dubnow, Simon (1860-1941): One of the great modern Jewish historians and thinkers. Born in Belarus, he was close to the circle of the Jewish enlightenment in Russia. His greatest achievement was his study of the history of the Jews in Eastern Europe and their spiritual and religious movements.

His major work was the ten volume World History of the Jewish People. Dubnow settled in Berlin in 1922. When Hitler came to power he moved to Riga, where he was put into the ghetto in 1941 and shot by a Gestapo officer on 8 December the same year.

**23** Balaban, Majer (1877-1942): Historian of Polish Jewry. He was born in Lvov and studied philosophy and history there. After WWI he moved to Warsaw. He wrote scores of works on the history and culture of the Jews in Cracow, Lublin and Lvov. He also wrote school textbooks. From 1936 he was a professor at Warsaw University, and also lectured at the Institute of Judaistica in Warsaw. He perished in the Warsaw ghetto.

**24** Korczak, Janusz (1878/79-1942): Polish Jewish doctor, pedagogue, writer of children's literature. He was the co-founder and director (from 1911) of the Jewish orphanage in Warsaw. He also ran a similar orphanage for Polish children.

Korczak was in charge of the Jewish orphanage when it was moved to the Warsaw Ghetto in 1940. He was one of the best-known figures behind the ghetto wall, refusing to leave the ghetto and his charges. He was deported to the Treblinka extermination camp with his charges in August 1942. The whole transport was murdered by the Nazis shortly after its arrival in the camp.

**25** Slowacki, Juliusz (1809-1849): One of the most outstanding Polish Romantic poets and revolutionaries, alongside Mickiewicz and Krasinski, called 'the national bard.' Born in Krzemieniec (Kremenets, Ukraine), he graduated from the University of Vilna (Wilno, Vilnius, Lithuania), later



went to Paris as the Courier of the National Government and settled there.

He spent several years in Switzerland, traveled all over Europe, to Egypt, Palestine and Syria. His poems deal with the struggle for independence, the past of the nation and the causes of the partitions. After the Wielkopolskie Uprising (1848) broke out, Slowacki went to Poznan (Posen, Prussian partition) in spite of advanced pneumonia, later he joined the Polish expatriates in Paris, where he died.

His best known works include the plays *Kordian*, *Balladyna*, and *Sen Srebrny Salomei* (The Silver Dream of Salome), and the epic poems *Beniowski*, *Anhelli*, *Krol-Duch* (King-Spirit). (Source: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/s/slowacki.asp>)

**26** Mickiewicz, Adam (1798-1855): Often regarded as the greatest Polish poet.

As a student he was arrested for nationalist activities by the tsarist police in 1823. In 1829 he managed to emigrate to France and worked as professor of literature at different universities.

During the 1848 revolution in France and the Crimean War he attempted to organize legions for the Polish cause. Mickiewicz's poetry gave international stature to Polish literature. His powerful verse expressed a romantic view of the soul and the mysteries of life, often employing Polish folk themes.

**27** Sienkiewicz, Henryk (1846-1952): Polish writer and nobel-prize winner (1905). His best known novels are *Quo Vadis* (1896) on early Christianity and the time of Nero, the trilogy *With Fire and Sword* (1883) on the history of medieval Poland, *The Dulge* (1886) and *Pan Michael* (1888). (Source: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/s/sienkiew.asp>)

**28** Prus, Boleslaw (1845?-1912): Born as Alexander Glowacki, Prus is one of the founders of the modern Polish fiction. His novels include *The Outpost* (1886) about the struggles of a peasant to hold his land, *The Emancipated Women* (1894), *The Pharaoh* (1897) and *The Doll* (1890). (Source: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/p/prus-b1ol.asp>)

**29** May, Karl Friedrich (1842-1912): Popular German writer of the Wild West and other stories mostly located in the Middle East and North Africa. Although little known in the Anglo-Saxon world he was extremely famous in continental Europe and especially in Eastern Europe; his books were translated into over 30 languages. Generations of teenagers grew up on his novels and later also on films on his novels.

The lack of his direct experience of the Western milieu he successfully compensated by an ingenious combination of creativity, imagination, and factual sources including maps, travel accounts and guide books, as well as anthropological and linguistic studies.

His heroes are often described as being of German descent (i.e. Old Shatterhand); in addition, following the romantic ideal of the "noble savage," his Red Indians (i.e. Winnetou) are generally portrayed as innocent victims of white aggression, and many of them are presented as heroic characters of almost superhuman abilities. Some of his most famous admirers were Albert Einstein, Herman Hesse as well as Adolf Hitler. Several of his novels were made into films in Eastern Europe in the 1960s, with the Yugoslav actor Gojko Mitic starring as Winnetou, and were extremely popular throughout the region. (Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl\\_May](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_May))

**30** Hitler's rise to power: In the German parliamentary elections in January 1933, the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) won one- third of the votes. On 30th January 1933 the German president swore in Adolf Hitler, the party's leader, as chancellor. On 27th February 1933 the building of the Reichstag (the parliament) in Berlin was burned down. The government laid the blame with the Bulgarian communists, and a show trial was staged.

This served as the pretext for ushering in a state of emergency and holding a re-election. It was won by the NSDAP, which gained 44% of the votes, and following the cancellation of the communists' votes it commanded over half of the mandates. The new Reichstag passed an extraordinary resolution granting the government special legislative powers and waiving the constitution for 4 years.

This enabled the implementation of a series of moves that laid the foundations of the totalitarian state: all parties other than the NSDAP were dissolved, key state offices were filled by party luminaries, and the political police and the apparatus of terror swiftly developed.

**31** ONR - Oboz Narodowo-Radykalny (Radical Nationalist Camp): A Polish nationalist organization with extreme anti-Semitic views. Founded in April 1934, its members were drawn from the Nationalist Democratic Party. It supported fascism, its program advocated the full assimilation of Slavic minorities in Poland, and forced Jews to leave the country by curbing their civic rights and implementing an economic boycott that would prevent them from making a living.

The ONR exploited calls for an economic boycott during the severe economic crisis of the 1930s to drum up support among the masses and develop opposition to Pilsudski's government. The ONR drew most of its support from young urban people and students. Following a series of anti-Semitic attacks, the ONR was dissolved by the government (July 1940), but the group continued its activities illegally with the support of extremist nationalist groups.

**32** 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.

**33** Wasilewska, Wanda (1905-64): From 1934-37 she was a member of the Supreme Council of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). In 1940 she became a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. From 1941-43 she was a political commissary in the Red Army and editor of 'Nowe Widnokregi.'

In 1943 she helped to organize the Union of Polish Patriots and the Polish armed forces in the USSR. In 1944 she became a member of the Central Bureau of Polish Communists in the USSR and vice-chairperson of the Polish Committee for National Liberation. After the war she remained in the USSR. Author of the social propaganda novels 'Oblicze Dnia' (The Face of the Day, 1934),

'Ojczyzna' (Fatherland, 1935) and 'Ziemia w Jarzmie' (Earth under the Yoke, 1938), and the war novel 'Teczka' (Rainbow, 1944).

**34** 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.

**35** OZON: Acronym for Oboz Zjednoczenia Narodowego (National Unification Camp), a political organization active in Poland between 1937 and 1939, which promoted unification around the figure of Commander-in-chief Jozef Pilsudski.

**36** Anti-Jewish Legislation in Poland: After World War I nationalist groupings in Poland lobbied for the introduction of the *numerus clausus* (Lat. closed number - a limit on the number of people admitted to the practice of a given profession or to an institution - a university, government office or association) in relation to Jews and other ethnic minorities.

The most radical groupings demanded the introduction of the *numerus nullus* principle, i.e. a total ban on admittance to universities and certain professions. The *numerus nullus* principle was violated by the Polish constitution. The battle for its introduction continued throughout the interwar period. In practice the *numerus clausus* was applied informally. In 1938 it was indirectly introduced at the Bar.

**37** 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.

**38** September Campaign 1939: Armed struggle in defense of Poland's independence from 1st September to 6th October 1939 against German and, from 17th September, also Soviet aggression; the start of World War II. The German plan of aggression ('Fall Weiss') assumed all-out, lightning warfare (Blitzkrieg).

The Polish plan of defense planned engagement of battle in the border region (a length of some 1,600 km), and then organization of resistance further inside the country along subsequent lines of defense (chiefly along the Narew, Vistula and San) until an allied (French and British) offensive on the western front. Poland's armed forces, commanded by the Supreme Commander, Marshal Edward Rydz-Smigly, numbered some 1 m soldiers.

Poland defended itself in isolation; on 3rd September Britain and France declared war on Germany, yet did not undertake offensive action on a larger scale. Following a battle on the border the main Polish line of defense was broken, and the Polish forces retreated in battles on the Vistula and the San.

On 8th September, the German army reached Warsaw, and on 12th September Lvov. From 14th-16th September the Germans closed their ring on the Bug. On 9th September Polish divisions commanded by General Tadeusz Kutrzeba went into battle with the Germans on the Bzura, but after initial successes were surrounded and largely smashed (by 22nd September), although some of the troops managed to get to Warsaw.

Defense was continued by isolated centers of resistance, where the civilian population cooperated with the army in defense. On 17th September Soviet forces numbering more than 800,000 men crossed Poland's eastern border, broke through the defense of the Polish forces and advanced nearly as far as the Narew-Bug-Vistula- San line.

In the night of 17th-18th September the president of Poland, the government and the Supreme Commander crossed the Polish-Romanian border and were interned. Lvov capitulated on 22nd September (surrendered to Soviet units), Warsaw on 28th September, Modlin on 29th September, and Hel on 2nd October.

**39** Umiastowski Order: Col. Roman Umiastowski was head of propaganda in the Corps of the Supreme Commander of the Polish Republic. Following the German aggression on Poland, and faced with the siege of Warsaw, on 6th September 1939 he appealed to all men able to wield a weapon to leave the capital and head east.

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

**41** Great Action (Grossaktion): July-September 1942, mass deportations from the Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka extermination camp. This was the first liquidation campaign, during which around 265,000 of 355,000 Jews living in the ghetto were deported, and a further 10,000 were murdered on the spot. About 70,000 people remained inside the ghetto walls (the majority of them, as unemployed, were there illegally).

**42** Umschlagplatz: Literally Reloading Point (German), it designates the area of the Warsaw ghetto on Stawki and Dzika Streets, where trade with the world outside the ghetto took place and where people were gathered before deportation to the Treblinka death camp. About 300.000 people were taken by train from the Umschlagplatz to Treblinka.

**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** Buchenwald: One of the largest concentration camps in Germany, located five miles north of the city of Weimar. It was founded on 16th July, 1937 and liberated on 11th April, 1945. During its existence 238,980 prisoners from 30 countries passed through Buchenwald. Of those, 43,045 were killed.

**45** 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.

**46** Kolkhoz: In the Soviet Union the policy of gradual and voluntary collectivization of agriculture was adopted in 1927 to encourage food production while freeing labor and capital for industrial development. In 1929, with only 4% of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools, and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm.

**47** Tuwim, Julian (1894-1953): Poet and translator; wrote in Polish. He was born in Lodz into an assimilated family from Lithuania. He studied law and philosophy at Warsaw University. He was a leading representative of the Skamander group of poets. His early work combined elements of Futurism and Expressionism (e.g. *Czychanie na Boga* [Lying in wait for God], 1918).

In the 1920s his poetry took a turn towards lyricism (e.g. *Slowa we krwi* [Words in blood], 1926). In the 1930s under the influence of the rise in nationalistic tendencies in Poland his work took on the form of satire and political grotesque (*Bal w operze* [A ball at the opera], 1936). He also published works for children.

A separate area of his writings are cabarets, libretti, sketches and monologues. He spent WWII in emigration and made public appearances in which he relayed information on the fate of the Polish population of Poland and the rest of Europe.

In 1944 he published an extended poem, 'My Żydzi polscy' [We Polish Jews], which was a manifesto of his complicated Polish-Jewish identity. After the war he returned to Poland but wrote little. He was the chairman of the Society of Friends of the Hebrew University and the Committee for Polish-Israeli Friendship.

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

The Allies rebuffed requests for support for the campaign. The Polish underground state failed to achieve its aim. Losses were vast: around 20,000 insurrectionists and 200,000 civilians were killed and 70% of the city destroyed.

**49** Sanacja: Sanacja was a coalition political movement in Poland in the interwar years. It was created in 1926 by Józef Piłsudski. It was a wide movement created to support 'moral sanitation' of the society and the politics in Poland prior to and after the May coup d'état of 1926.

Named after the Latin word for sanitation (*sanatio*), the movement was formed primarily by former military officers disgusted with the corrupt nature of Polish politics. It represented a coalition of members from the right, the left, and centrists. Its main focus was to eliminate corruption within Poland and to minimize inflation.

**50** 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.

**51** Jedwabne: Town in north-eastern Poland. On 10th July 1941 900 Jews were burned alive there. Until recently the official historiography maintained that the Germans were the perpetrators of this act. In 2000, however, Tomasz Gross published a book called 'Neighbors,' in which he indicted Poles as the perpetrators of the Jedwabne massacre.



This book sparked off a discussion that embroiled academics, politicians and the media alike. The case was also investigated by the Institute for National Remembrance. This was the second such serious debate on Polish involvement in the extermination of the Jews.

The Jedwabne debate attempted to establish the number of Jews murdered, to define the nature of the incident (pogrom or Holocaust), and to point out the direct perpetrators and initiators of the crime.

**52** Yalta Conference: The conference of the three allied countries took place in the well known Soviet resort town of the Crimea still during World War II, from 4-11th February 1945, with the participation of Stalin, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill.

Strategies for ending the War and the future of Europe were discussed, Soviet involvement with the war with Japan was agreed and the foundation of the UN was decided. After the unconditional surrender of Germany its territory was to be divided into four zones (Soviet, American, British and French), large parts of the country were to be annexed by Poland, the Soviet Union and France and Berlin was to be made a divided city too.

The issues of war crime trials and reparations were agreed too. Although democratic elections were agreed to take place in the liberated countries of Europe, Yalta is much claimed to have decided upon the future of Eastern Europe falling into Soviet hands. (Source: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/y/yaltac1on.asp>)

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

**54** 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.

## **55 (Hebrew**

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

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

Popularly known as the UB, officially established to protect the interests of national security, but in fact served as a body whose function was to stamp out all forms of resistance during the establishment and entrenchment of communist power in Poland.

The UB was founded in 1944. Branches of the UBP were set up immediately after the occupation by the Red Army of the Polish lands west of the Bug. The first UBP functionaries were communist activists trained by the NKVD, and former soldiers of the People's Army and members of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR). In many cases they were also collaborationists from the period of German occupation and criminals.

The senior officials were NKVD officers. The primary tasks of the UBP were to crush all underground organizations with a western orientation. In 1956 the Security Service was formed and many former officers of the UBP were transferred.

**57** Poland 1989: In 1989 the communist regime in Poland finally collapsed and the process of forming a multiparty, pluralistic, democratic political system and introducing a capitalist economy began. Communist policy and the deepening economic crisis since the early 1980s had caused increasing social discontent and weariness and the radicalization of moods among Solidarity activists (Solidarity: a trade union that developed into a political party and played a key role in overthrowing communism).

On 13th December 1981 the PZPR (Polish United Worker's Party) had introduced martial law (lifted on 22nd June 1983). Growing economic difficulties, social moods and the strength of the opposition persuaded the national authorities to begin gradually liberalizing the political system.

Changes in the USSR also influenced the policy of the PZPR. A series of strikes in April-May and August 1988, and demonstrations in many towns and cities forced the authorities to seek a compromise with the opposition. After a few months of meetings and consultations Round Table negotiations took place (6th February-5th April 1989) with the participation of Solidarity activists (Lech Walesa) and the democratic opposition (Bronislaw Geremek, Jacek Kuron, Tadeusz Mazowiecki).

The resolutions it passed signaled the end of the PZPR's monopoly on power and cleared the way for the overthrow of the system. In parliamentary elections (4th June 1989) the PZPR and its subordinate political groups suffered defeat. In fall 1989 a program of fundamental economic, social and ownership transformations was drawn up and in January 1990 the PZPR dissolved.

## **58 'Solidarnosc' Production Co-operatives**

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