

Matylda Wyszynska With Her Friend Irka Herz In Brussels



This photo was taken in Brussels, during my visit there.

You can see my friend Irka, Irena Herz and her mother Klara Wajcberg, on this photo.

I had four friends since elementary school; we were the five of us, as close as sisters. We were all Jewish.

We also had Polish friends but not that close. One of us was called Mela Miezes. She had those thick braids, and one night one of her brothers cut off one of those.

During the war she changed her name to Melania Mirska and retained the name afterwards.

Her husband never learned who she was, and her children aren't aware who she was either.

She argued that if she didn't tell him about her ethnic origin before the war or when she was marrying him, i.e. under the occupation in Cracow, then she was afraid to tell him afterwards.

One could think she married for protection and security. They are both dead now.

Another one was Alina Kupfer, she died. She was my closest friend. She lived next door.

I lived on Leona Sapiehy Street, corner of Gleboka, and she lived on Gleboka Street.

Her parents were Jewish pharmacists, ran their own pharmacy, and had two children, Alina, whom we called Lina, and a son, I don't remember his name, who was a great musical talent.

When my mother died and my father married again, I spent the summer vacations with them and their mother in the Eastern Beskidy mountains south-west of Lwow. Lina's parents died before the war, first her father, of a heart attack, and then her mother, of cancer.

The children were left alone, they were 15 or 16 years old. Their mother died, they were left alone, in a large apartment, and we all met there, some boys came, a bit older than us.

As soon as the Germans entered, they took Lina's brother right from the street, to the prison on Lackiego Street.

They were alone, loved each other very much, she went to look for him and never returned. They killed her too. Their aunt later moved in the apartment.

There were also Tamara and Irka, Irena Weizberg, married name Herz. They lived next door and I was virtually raised in their home.

I called their mother 'mama' when my mother died.

They were three sisters and a mother. The mother was called Klara Weizberg, Tamara was called Zwerling, after her mother's first husband.

The mother attended the parents' evenings in school on their account but also on mine because Tamara was in the same class with me. Irka was younger.

After the war, when the Germans were already gone, Tamara turned up, and persuaded Staszek and me to go to Walbrzych.

She herself crossed the border illegally and married a man, a Polish Jew named Branicki who served in US Army and whom she met in Germany when her camp was liberated.

They lived in Berlin for some time, then moved to Canada. As for Wiera, it was a nasty story.

Her mother didn't know about it. Tamara's, Wiera's and Irka's mother was very pretty as a young woman, and she had a friend, a Polish officer, called Mr Janek.

A handsome man, always in uniform, a Pole. When the Germans came, Tamara, Irka and their mother were taken to a camp, the grandmother died, and Mr Janek, who lived alone, took Wiera to his home to hide her.

The Germans were looking for Mr Janek because he was a Polish officer, and knocked on the door when Wiera was there with her friend. They raped and murdered the two girls.

When Mr Janek got back home and saw that, he committed suicide. Staszek told us about that.

Irka lives in Brussels today and I visit her regularly.