

Irena Wojdyslawska



This is me in 1929. I was 8 years old at the time of the photo. The photo was taken in Lodz in some studio but I don't remember where exactly.

I was born on May 9th 1921, in a house on 1 Maja Street 9, where I lived until we moved out to the ghetto. That was my aunt's house. We had three rooms and a kitchen, arranged one behind the other.

And when Father was starting out with his business, the tailoring workshop was located in the third room. Later it was my sister's and my room.

There were mostly middle class Jews living in that tenement house. They were assimilated people. The tenement house was located opposite Izrael Poznanski's Palace, on Gdanska Street.

I began my education in Maria Hochsteinowa's gymnasium. There were ten years of school - 6 grades of elementary school and 4 grades of gymnasium, and then the final exams.

All the grades were located in one building - that's why the entire school was called Maria Hochsteinowa's gymnasium. It was a Jewish gymnasium, financed from private funds. Maria Hochsteinowa lived in Paris and the school was managed by a headmaster.

Parents sent me to this gymnasium, because it was close to our house - on the corner of Wolczanska and Zielona Streets. Additionally, the school had a good opinion. Hebrew and Jewish History were taught in the first grades of elementary school.

All the subjects were taught in Polish. I was an average student. I was good at Math, good at Polish. There were some subjects where I wasn't as good.

I was weaker in history and the History of Jews didn't interest me very much. I passed my final exams in 1937.

I wanted to continue studying. I thought about a two-year lyceum first, to get the secondary school certificate. Later, I wanted to study pedagogy.

But due to the bankruptcy of Father's company and lack of money, I had no choice. I went to work at Aunt Bela's, Father's younger sister, in the ladies' dresses workshop. I sewed, I ironed: well, I did these basic things. I worked there for 2 years. I was later able to make myself a dress or a muff. Some of these skills stayed with me. I was later able to use them in the ghetto.

When the war broke out, there was huge fear, terror of what would happen. At first I, because I was leftist minded, thought of running away to the east.

Meanwhile, my sister came home and said she was leaving, running away. In that case I decided to stay with my family.

Then was ghetto, Auschwitz, other camps... After the war an adult life: own family, job, new friends. I didn't have influence over many things, so I couldn't have changed them. But, all in all, I think I had great luck that I was able to go to university, because I wouldn't have been able to do that before the war.

I had an interesting, satisfying job, I had an interesting circle of friends, acquaintances. And now... The end of life is near. I only wish for this end not to be painful.

I wish I never become an invalid who needs to be taken care of by her daughter. I want it to come suddenly and, until it comes, I want to do whatever needs to be done and to be independent.