

Gustawa Birencwajg With Friends



This is me, Gustawa Birencwajg, in Pieszyce. I am second from the right, in the lower row. The other people are my co-workers from our orphanage, but now I don't remember their names. This photo was taken in the 1940s. After the war my brother-in-law, Chaim Poltorak, organized me an apartment. It was on Bieruta Street. A lot of apartments there were taken up by people from Lodz. One had a luxurious house, one had two rooms with a kitchen and this brother-in-law showed me a room with a kitchen, but there was water there, there was a toilet. Everything there had been lost due to looting by the local residents of the possessions left behind by the previous residents, in the case of Lower Silesia - the Germans. The mattresses were torn, everything. I took a broom and started cleaning up a bit, sweeping. Then my husband came and asked, 'What are you doing here?' I said, 'Chaim gave us this apartment, so I'm cleaning up a bit.' 'Leave everything right this minute and get out.' 'Why?' 'Because it's not yours. Don't touch anything and leave.' I said, 'You know what, I won't leave. I won't leave this place.' Because I had two beds, there was a cot as well, there were no owners, there wasn't much more, but you could live there. And finally he knew he couldn't fight me any longer, so he gave up. And that's where I settled with my husband and children. There were children in the city and they started organizing a nursery. Because I had worked at a nursery in Russia, they took me as the director, to organize that nursery, because nobody knew how to go about it. You see, nurseries did not exist before the war. I organized it, there was a doctor there who was a Jew, and I took in young children, under three years of age, I organized the staff and it was all very good. This was in Piotrolesie. Near Dzierzoniow. I worked there for some two or three years, I don't remember exactly. This orphanage for Jewish children was next to the nursery, they picked these children up in the forests. They were alone. The director asked me to transfer to that orphanage, as the hostess. His name was Kozlowski. He later died in Israel. Anyway, I transferred there and worked as hostess. And my husband was working in a boiler-room in a factory. One day my husband went to Warsaw, he found many friends there who told him they'd get him a job. I was very happy, he had already left, I stayed behind. He finally wrote me that we could come. Well, I started packing, we had some pots and pans, perhaps something else, so I took what I could.