

Krystyna Budnicka



This photo of me was taken in Warsaw in 1950 just before my summer holidays. I think I had the picture taken because of my school uniform which I thought was a very beautiful one. During the war in 1944 I was hiding with the Budnickis. They were a middle-aged childless couple. They helped Jews. We walked out of Warsaw on 6th September together with the Budnickis. Mr. Budnicki noticed Grey Nuns from Warsaw. He went up to the Mother Superior and told her that he had an orphan. The nuns wanted to baptize me right away, in October 1944, but a priest said that he couldn't approve, that baptism could take place only in the event of a life-threatening emergency. 'We shall wait, the war will end.' I was baptized in Szczaki Zlotoklos. That was something I really wanted. I stayed with the Grey Nuns for a very long time, up to my grammar school graduation, that is, until 1952. I finished elementary school in 1948 and had to choose a secondary school. I

very much wanted to go to the grammar school run by the Nazarene Sisters, but the nuns said that I shouldn't, because I would be ruining my chances of a career. It was at the height of the Stalinist period and a church education was frowned upon. But I insisted. And the nuns were right - later on I had trouble getting a job. At school I was different, and didn't fit in. Not because I was Jewish, but because I was an orphan. The girls who went to that school were from well-off families. They brought white bread rolls with ham, while I had black bread and jam or dripping. I really never felt different because of my Jewishness. That was never an issue, it was something we never talked about - not because I concealed the fact, but because it just wasn't a topic that we discussed. In those days we didn't talk about the war at all. I know from conversations with Jewish friends of my age [today] that it was the same for them - nobody talked about the war. Nobody talked about themselves. If ever anyone asked me about my family I said that they had all died during the war. Perhaps not revealing anything afforded us some security?