

Krystyna Budnicka



That picture was taken just before the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. I think they needed my picture for some false document. I don't remember the occasion when my picture was taken. Anyways, it is strange how happy I look on it. I, my brother Rafal and his wife Anka, we had to leave our hiding place in 1 Mokotowska. One night we walked from Mokotowska Street to Podwale Street. Ms. Stefania Socha lived at 15, or 17, Podwale Street, in a studio flat on the first floor, and she took us in. She was a kind of patriotic drunk who kissed every metal badge with the Polish eagle [the national emblem]. Naturally, she knew that we were Jewish, that couldn't be disguised - we looked ghastly. At her place, we slept on the floor. We only spent a few days there, maybe a week. We were visited by the same man who used to come to the ghetto, he was a liaison man. He always bragged that nothing could happen to him because he had cyanide. Finally, the boys decided that the Germans were no longer watching the house at 1, Mokotowska Street, and that we should go back there since it would be a pity to waste the effort they had put into the building of the tunnel. It

was agreed that Rafal should go back alone, without Anka and myself. A 17-year-old boy, Zygmunt, was to go with Rafal to help him. So they moved to Dolna Street to a woman called Ms. Zakrzewska or Zarzycka, I'm not sure, who was a midwife. It was January 1944. And they took Rafal to the place on Mokotowska Street. Ms. Zakrzewska was being given some money and she fed us. She lived with her husband and a small daughter. Whenever anyone came in, we hid behind a curtain. January passed and we had no news about Rafal. In February no money came. The lady kept feeding us, but it was getting more and more difficult. We learned in the end that Rafal was dead. He got into a quarrel with Kazik, the caretaker's son, because Kazik was careless in his work, and Kazik brought in the Germans. The boy who had been assisting him, Zygmunt, was also killed. The money for our upkeep began to flow in again. It was brought by someone else, for Jozek, the liaison, had also been killed. I don't know exactly where the money came from but I guess it was from the Jewish National Committee. We lived there undisturbed through February, March and April [1944]. One day it turned out that the midwife had been doing illegal abortions and injured some Volksdeutsche woman who ended up in hospital and the Germans began an investigation: where, what and how. We had to run. Anka and I were led out separately, but on Dolna Street some kids began to yell after me, 'Jewess'. I spent the entire night on coal in a cellar. I was not suitable to be shown to other people. I couldn't show my face in public because I looked very Semitic. [Jews identified as such by Poles were often blackmailed or handed over to the Germans.] The next day a female liaison came in the morning, put a bandage around my head and took me by tram to Dobra Street. And that's how I found myself at the Budnickis'. Anka was already there. The Budnickis helped Jews; they were a middle-aged childless couple. I know that when the summer holidays started, Mrs Budnicka together with some Jewish children went to a summer vacation spot, somewhere in the Otwock area. When the Uprising broke out, she wasn't at Dobra Street. We were with them the first month of the Uprising and then left the city on 6th September. A few days later I was taken by the Grey Nuns and I never saw Mr Budnicki again.