

Estera Migdalska In Her Room In The Dormitory



The beginning of the 1950s. Me in my room in the dormitory. There are some pictures from my childhood on the table behind me. I'm not religious, but when I have a need I pray to those pictures. After the war, when I came back to Poland I immediately registered with the Jewish Committee, they were conducting kind of interviews there with young people, and they persuaded me to move to a dormitory, it was officially called the Józef Lewartowski Youth Home, on Jagiellonska Street, that I'd be with my peers, that I'd learn to speak Polish better. And here Uncle had a single room in a three-room flat. There was him, there was his wife, a child was to be born in a few months' time. So I was actually happy to go there, and I stayed for three years at that dorm. Above all, it wasn't a children's home. Soon we became friends, everyone had their war experiences, we were all equal, everyone helped each other. It was chiefly Jewish young people who lived there, but there were some Poles too. There was a guy named Staszek Kuczera. In principle, however, it was an institution supervised by the Jewish Committee and financed by the Joint. We had full board there. Good Jewish cuisine, though I don't think it was kosher, no one bothered about that anymore. From time to time some packages from the UNRRA. A year later a whole group of young people starting education at various schools took up residence at the dorm. We called them the 'sprats' or the 'sardines,' for the girls were 14-15 years old, and we were 18, 19 years old. One sprat has stayed, she's involved in various organizations here. Some of the others have left Poland. And the people from the dorm have scattered away. I lived there for three years. The dorm inhabitants come here almost every year, some haven't left, some keep together in Israel, all come to visit. During that time, I completed two grades of high school because on arrival I was good for first grade. I went to the best school in Warsaw, a great school, with wonderful professors, like Mr and Mrs Libera, she was a Latin teacher, he was a professor of Polish. He helped me a lot in starting to speak and write Polish correctly. He practiced with me during the breaks, forcing me to write all kinds of essays, and, thanks to that, two years later I passed the high school finals, and passed them easily.