

Danuta Mniewska In 1945



This is me in Czestochowa in 1945. I am with my dog Strega. I am next to my husband's house on Druga Aleja, part of Czestochowa's most elegant street, Aleja Najswietszej Marii Panny. My husband had a house in Czestochowa that he inherited after his parents, on Druga Aleja. There we lived in three rooms with my sister. My sister and I got very close when we realized that our whole family was dead. We started working right away at a gynecological hospital on Swietej Barbary Street near Jasna Gora. However, I wanted to study. I enrolled for a high-school course for adults, I was already twenty-something, and passed the high school finals. 'Passed' is perhaps saying too much, it was all phony - I cribbed all math from the guy sitting next to me. I wanted to study medicine, that was the easiest thing to do - I worked in a hospital, had some foundations for that. But then I quickly changed my mind and in 1949 decided to take an admittance exam to the Theatre School

in Lodz. We had distant cousins in Lodz, Regina and Karola Milichtajch. Regina was our private tutor before the war. Both survived in the Lodz ghetto and at the last moment were sent to forced labor in Germany. Until the end of the war they worked at some German farm. Then they returned to Poland to see if anyone had survived. And it was then we got in touch. I arrived in Lodz virtually naked and barefoot, utterly penniless, because Rozenowicz said he was opposed to the whole idea of me studying. I didn't even have money for the streetcar fare. For a short time I stayed with those cousins. Karola, the younger one, studied at a nursing college, and the older one, Regina, had the pre-war high school diploma, so she was a white-collar worker, because the pre-war diploma was a big thing. She worked at an official labor union organization. I borrowed a little bit of money from them to get me through the initial period and became self-dependent very quickly. I didn't know that if I had gone to the Jewish Committee, they would have helped me - I'd have been assigned a place in the dorm, received an allowance. But even if I had known about it, I would have refused - I wanted to be like everybody else. Only everyone knew I was a Jew - the word spreads, so I saw no point in hiding my ethnic descent.