

Teofila Silberring



This is me in our houseyard on Miodowa Street in Cracow. The date written on it is 1939, but I think it was taken earlier, in 1937 or 38. I remember these sandals. They were bought in a 'Delka' shop. I loved them. They were the first sandals with straps, very fashionable ones.

We lived very comfortably and at our school there weren't any poor children. The Hebrew gymnasium was more for the well-off. It was like an automobile show outside our school. There was this one boy, Rath, apparently they're in Vienna now, they survived the war. They had a company, 'Iskra', pencils and crayons. A very rich company. He used to come in a beautiful Chevrolet, I think it was, with a servant in glaze, white gloves, who used to carry his briefcase. He would carry it into his young master's classroom, put it under his desk, take his coat off, and after lessons come for him. The Libans, two sisters, used to come in a carriage with a maidservant in a veil. There were

nannies like that, in navy blue veils; you addressed nannies like that using the term 'Schwester'. The Libans had quarries in Plaszow; it used to be known as 'Liban's Hill' - that was where the camp was later.

I was a good student; I wrote poetry too. At school, in Polish class, everybody had to write a little book. I wrote 'Sister Maria.' About this nurse, I don't know where I got it from, because I'd never seen a nurse and didn't know anything about hospitals. I wrote about how she devoted herself to sick children. Everybody liked the book a lot and Father had it bound. It was at home until the war, but unfortunately it didn't survive.

On vacation we used to go to Zakopane, and later to Rabka. Pogon Villa, the place was called. Mr Kaden, my father's friend and owner of a spa in Rabka, used to let us have a whole floor, and we went with the cook, the maid, the children's maid and all our belongings. And there, every year, we had a beautiful place. I think there were five rooms up there. This verandah; there was space to run around. ? I had a scooter, I had a bicycle, and lots of friends. Father used to come for Saturdays and Sundays and play tennis with Kaden, because Kaden had his own beautiful villa in the park, a swimming pool and a tennis court. And he always used to invite us for ice-cream.

I had a carefree, wonderful childhood. It lasted 14 years. I remember everything most marvelously. Most marvelously! I had everything that a child could possibly dream of.