

Apolonia Starzec With Friends



On this photo you can see me, my sister Irena Kirszenbaum (nee Ruta Bugajska), and Eugenia Wasowska-Leszczyńska with her husband Ignacy Leszczyński (his Jewish name was Samsonowicz). It was taken after the war, in the 1940s, in Warsaw. I survived the Holocaust in Warsaw. One important person from the war period was Aunt Nusia. What can I say about her? Aunt Nusia saved my cousin. His name was Ignacy Samsonowicz, he was a Bund member and was in the ghetto at the same time as us. Had a teacher wife and a son, fled from the Piotrków ghetto to Warsaw. And I met him there for the first time. I had heard about him because we had many paternal cousins in Piotrków and Częstochowa. His wife, a beautiful woman, and a wonderful 12-year-old boy, were killed in a roundup in Piotrków. And he was in a terrible depression. He had to be pulled out of the ghetto. And as he was a high-ranking Bund member, his fellow Bundists pulled him out of the Warsaw ghetto by force and placed him at 24 Zurawia Street. Where it wasn't allowed to hide anyone because it was a safe place for the Żegota. Aunt Nusia had the apartment from before the war. She wasn't Jewish. Her name was Eugenia Wasowska-Leszczyńska. Wasowska was her maiden name. She was an editor by profession, ran an advertising business. She was a member of the Stronnictwo Demokratyczne and was very active on the Red Cross before the war. She wasn't married, even though she was many years my elder. A social activist. There were two entrances to the apartment - from the corridor in the front and from the back stairs. She made the apartment available for the Żegota. And the Bundists met there. For security reasons, it wasn't allowed to hide individual people there. But they brought Samsonowicz there and there he stayed. She cared for him. She hid him there until the end of the war and eventually married him. He changed his name from Samsonowicz to Leszczyński, and hence her married name was Leszczyńska. She died on 28th May 1987. We were very close, and to this day I take care of her grave. She was an everyday guest in our home, a wonderful person. The house on Zurawia wasn't destroyed in the Warsaw uprising. Bartoszewski uncovered a commemorative plaque there and people looked out their windows and said they never knew there had been a safe place there. We tried, my sister and I, to get her awarded with the Righteous Among the Nations medal, and we finally succeeded.