Salomea Gemrot

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Wieliczka
Poland
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Salomea Gemrot is 95 years old. She was born near Rzeszow. She survived the war in hiding, using fake documents, moving from one place to another. She describes how, at that time, she managed to save herself in incredible situations. In her speech she often uses words typical for the dialect of the region of Galicia 1, especially when she's describing something of great importance. She does not remember some dates, but there are others she knows by heart, for example the dates of birth of all of her five brothers. She lives in a cozy house in Wieliczka near Cracow with her daughter Ala and four cats - foundlings. Ms. Sabina - that is how she is called by everyone- raised one of them by hand using a syringe with milk.

My family background

My name is Salomea Gemrot and I was born on 15th November 1909, in the village of Przybyszowka, three kilometers from Rzeszow. Some Jew from Hungary arrived there a long time before I was born, I don't know exactly when. [Galicia, where Przybyszowka is located, was an Austro-Hungarian province prior to 1918.] His name was Strahl. He was the first Jew in that village. He was a very resourceful man. He got married, bought some land which was suitable for a brick factory. This was along a road to Cracow, Tarnow and Rzeszow and further on. [Editor's note: The road led westward to Cracow via Tarnow and eastward to Rzeszow and the Russian border.] On one side of this road he built a house for himself and his wife and a kind of building, where there was an

alcohol factory. A distillery. On the other side of the road, he operated a restaurant for travelers and further from the road, on fields, he built a brick factory. And he also had a farm.

But this didn't last long, because there was a fire in this distillery and his wife burned to death there. Burned alive, yes. He didn't have any children, well, perhaps he did, but if he did, they stayed in Hungary. I don't know. Strahl got married again in Przybyszowka and I am his granddaughter. I know he married some woman from Ropczyce [approx. 20km from Rzeszow]. I don't even know her last name, but her first name was Amalia. He was close to 60 by that time and she was just 18, she was an orphan. There used to be a tradition among Jews that the entire remaining family was obliged to take care of an orphan. So they married her quickly to that Hungarian, because he was rich and so on. Well, this marriage is said to have been quite good: they had a nice house, the brick factory was doing well and so was the farm. So this woman, my grandmother, must have been quite content. She managed to have several children, including my mother. Unfortunately, when my mother was some ten years old - I don't remember which child she was, but definitely not the first-born - she also became an orphan, because my grandfather died [Editor's note: She actually became a half-orphan]. A natural death. He must have been old. I don't remember this Grandmother Amalia at all. She must have died when I was a very small child.

I don't know much about my grandfather from my father's side. I know he was born in Kolbuszowa [approx. 30km north of Rzeszow], his last name was Krygier and, I think, he was a religious Jew. But I don't know what his profession was and I don't remember when he died.

After this grandfather died, my grandmother from my father's side lived with us in Przybyszowka and this grandmother practically raised me. I don't remember what her name was. She had lots of patience for me, she taught me these religious issues and she taught me about life. She could read the Bible [Old Testament] without glasses. And she told me different stories from the Bible, because this was an illustrated Bible. A really large book, thick. I remember how she showed me pictures from the times of the pharaohs and introduced me to all these stories. First she would tell me how it was written in the Bible and then she would explain in a way which would make me understand. I remember that the wife of some pharaoh was called Potiphara and was fat, so each time I saw a fat woman I would say that she was Potiphara. [Editor's note: It was the wife of Potiphar (head of the Pharaoh's guard) that tried to seduce Joseph according to the Book of Exodus. In Polish the final 'a' ending marks the feminin version of a male proper name, hence Potiphara.] But this was all before I started going to school. When there were prayers, Grandmother would take me there and hold my hand. And she forced me to listen well and explained what it was all about, what the significance of each prayer was. Grandmother really minded me well: 'Did you say your morning prayer?' she used to ask me. 'Oh, Grandma, I don't have time for this, you know I have to do something else'. She would say, 'Well, you better have time tomorrow!' And after Grandmother died, Mother would do the same.

Father had three brothers. One of them was in Cracow, one in Gorlice [a city approx. 100km southwest of Rzeszow] and one in Glogow [Glogow Malopolski, a small town approx. 10km from Rzeszow]. The brother in Cracow was called Majer Krygier. He had a wife and two daughters, Renia and Edzia. He was the manager of a home for elderly Jews, on 57 Krakowska Street. This facility was located in a large, freestanding tenement house. There was a beautiful garden there, very well kept, everything was first class. America, Austria maintained this, they sent money from all parts of the world, yes. I recall that I used to go there quite often. I remember this was next to the Vistula

River, the last house. This house was one of the first ones destroyed by the Germans. And this uncle buried my Grandmother, the one who raised me, there, because when she fell ill, she wanted to go there. She wanted to die at his house.

The brother in Gorlice was the oldest one, his name was Samuel [Krygier] and he had a very nice family - intelligent, educated people. Samuel's son was an attorney, his name was Dawid Krygier, he studied in Cracow when there was this numerus clausus [see Anti-Jewish Legislation in Poland] 2 , but he managed to get accepted. He was handsome, these professors liked him. The daughters, Helena and Maria, were teachers. Both of them graduated from the teachers' training college, because it wasn't as hard for Jews in Gorlice. They accepted everyone at that college and at the gymnasium [secondary school] as well. They even had this tolerant priest, for whom it didn't matter. Not like in Rzeszow. In Rzeszow it was different, not as good.

Father's brother from Glogow was called Zelman, or maybe Zalmen, I don't remember exactly. He was the only one who wore a beard and sidelocks; he was also the poorest one. He had a wife and a child, a son. He used to visit us, because Glogow was nearby and Father used to give him money. Well, I guess he simply wasn't very resourceful.

My mother had a brother and two sisters. Jozef Strahl was the oldest of Mother's siblings and he lived in Tarnow. He was married to some woman from Jaroslaw, from a family that dealt only with music. I don't know exactly, but I think they used to teach music and play instruments for money. And this brother had two sons and two daughters and all these children were gifted in music. Jozef died before the war, there was some kind of accident at work, in the brick factory. His son, Zygmunt, was a virtuoso - a violinist. The second son became a dentist in America. The older daughter, whose name is like mine - Sabina [the interviewee uses the first name Sabina, not Salomea] - saved herself because she had a thoughtful mother. Her mother married her off quickly to a widower from Holland, before all this confusion came about, and they left for America. I haven't had any news from her for several years now. She's probably dead, because, after all, how could she still be alive? She was a year older than me...

Mother's sister Maria was the most beautiful girl in the area. And she was talented artistically, she could draw. But she died very young, because she was sick, psychologically exhausted by her unhappy marriage. I don't remember anything more, because this wasn't discussed at our house. Father took her to Vienna to a clinic, for treatment, she died there at that clinic and she is buried somewhere there. I think this was shortly after my parents got married. I don't know what this Maria was like, but I know that she used to collect things which are of high value today: different appliances, objects, hunting trophies.

Mother's second sister, Berta, got married in Rzeszow, which was in Austria at that time, wasn't it? [Editor's note: Rzeszow was part of Galicia at the time.] So there was this Sternszus family in Rzeszow, a very respectable family, elegant, assimilated - of course Germanized. And one of those Sternuszuses married Berta out of great love. They later changed their name to Star. They settled in Germany, in Cologne on the River Rhein, and they opened a business there, just like the one they had in Rzeszow, that is they purchased dairy products from farmers in the area. They were quite successful. Berta had three sons. I remember one of them was named Erich. She also had a daughter called Roza. And this daughter, Roza Star, who was a pianist and a soprano, was employed at the theater in Cologne and she was a soloist there. She was very popular, but she

didn't get married. There was a concentration camp near Lodz [Chelmno on the River Ner, an extermination camp, operated from November 1941 until April 1943. Since 1942 Jews from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia were also murdered there]. They deported them all there and Roza died there with her theater troupe.

My mother's name was Hanna. Hanna Strahl. I don't know what year she was born in, but I know she got married in 1900, so she must have been about 20, maybe 22 years old, because that's when girls used to get married then. Mother was a very cheerful person. She was also considered very pretty. She didn't have a Jewish appearance. She didn't use to wear a wig. She was tall, had dark eyes. She had very beautiful hair. Beautiful, how should I call it, it wasn't black and it wasn't blonde, but well - oh, you can say it was brown.

And Mother settled here, in her father's estate, in Przybyszowka. After her father died, she helped her mother keep house and she kept in touch with the family. I don't remember this grandmother; she died when I was little. They had several hectares of land. Quite a lot. This used to be measured in morgens, there were more than a dozen of these morgens [a unit of land used in agriculture, 1 morgen=0.55 hectares]. The brick factory was also part of that estate and Mother helped her mother to sell these bricks. Half of Rzeszow is made of these bricks. Mother used to show me houses and say, 'This is made of our bricks and this as well...' This brick factory was called Strahl, after Grandfather's last name.

My father's name was Eisig Krygier. He was born near Kolbuszowa, in the village of Werynia. It was a village very close to the town. I don't know exactly when he was born. He was some 26 years old when he got married to my mother in 1900. He was, of course, handsome and well, a cosmopolitan man. When he was 13 years old a childless woman friend of his parents took him to England and he spent more than ten years there. This friend educated him; he graduated from some kind of secondary school, I don't know what kind exactly, but he was later an accountant. He also learned to speak English perfectly.

The Boer-English war broke out. [Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902] I don't know exactly when this was, but I know this was a historical event. It took place in [South] Africa. And Father had two choices then: he could either join the military as a soldier, or, because he was an accountant, have some administrative position in the army. And he got in as an accountant. And somewhere there, it was Kaapstad [Cape Town], Johannesburg - I don't remember, I just somehow recall these names. So he survived that war in some gold mine. He caught the yellow fever there. It was a very dangerous illness and they had no possibilities of treating it there, so they suggested to him that he should come here. It was Austria here at that time. And they told him he could get cured here.

So he came and they cured him. He still had parents here, siblings. Those people in England wanted him to go back there, but, unfortunately, he saw my mother, fell in love and stayed. Nothing could stop him. They told Mother that she would have to go to England with him, but she didn't want to go, which she later regretted all her life. She would have gone there and settled if she hadn't been so fond of her family. My parents met at some distant relatives' house in Rzeszow. By accident. Father visited this family after he arrived from England and Mother would sometimes visit them as well. As it later turned out, Father and Mother were very distantly related. And he fell in love at once. It was a marriage without matchmakers, absolutely.

Growing up

My parents had seven of us. Me and my five brothers, and then my sister Amalia - she was named after Grandmother - was born when I was already 14 years old. We were all born in Przybyszowka and that's where I went to school, but my parents later moved to another village, near Przybyszowka, called Staroniwa. It was some three kilometers from Rzeszow.

My Father was very secular, assimilated; it couldn't have been otherwise, because he had spent so many years abroad. He was always well-dressed; he used to have a very short beard, but no sidelocks or anything of the kind. He was very tolerant and so was Mother. He made sure we were tolerant as well. I remember how Polish neighbors used to celebrate Christmas - they had their ways. There was this tradition that they gathered in orchards after Christmas Eve and put some straw around these trees [this was supposed to assure a good harvest] and they performed some rituals there. We went there and laughed. Father scolded us, 'You can't do such things! I don't ever want you to do it again! It's their tradition, it's their business! Would you be pleased if your traditions were laughed at?' - That's what he told us. So no jokes about someone's religion were allowed at our house. You just couldn't do it!

Mother was also tolerant. I remember how she told me about how she used to go to Germany, to her sister in Cologne, to recover after some illness. She was thrilled with how the Germans got along with Jews. She said these parties which Aunt Berta threw for New Year's and other German national holidays were simply delightful. So much that for New Year's my mother received a twig of blooming lilacs from her German friends. And Mother used to tell me this at the beginning of this century, that is this century which has now ended. It could have been.... Well, before World War I. Yes. So Mother used to tell me how Jews were respected there, how they were considered to be civilized people. She was delighted with this and when they were walking her to the station, when she was going back home, they were trying to convince her to sell everything here and to emigrate. It's unbelievable how that happened later, where did it come from? [The interviewee is referring to the Holocaust.]

Father was a certified translator - of English, I think. In addition, there was also this jury in the court, the members of the jury had some influence on the verdicts. And he was there. As someone who knew languages perfectly, he was a very respected and well known man in Rzeszow. In addition to English, he also knew literary German perfectly. I remember how certain people visited us sometimes and he spoke German with them. Father was also very well-read. He brought an entire library with him from England. He had the Pentateuch, with a leather cover, and he studied it whenever he had time. It was a thick volume, with Father's signature in golden letters, very beautiful. He also had all of Shakespeare's works, but as a child I wasn't interested in this. I had heard something about Shakespeare at school, but there was only 'Macbeth' in the school library and Father had his complete works - also with beautiful covers, not leather but blue cloth. He also had books by the German classics in his library, in German.

Father used to read a lot of Polish political papers, mostly about current events. He was interested in what was happening at that time. He wasn't a member of any political party, but he was interested in politics, these international wars... I remember discussions about the Russo-Japanese War [war over control of the Far East waged between Russia and Japan in 1904- 1905, ended with the victory of Japan, which became one of the great world powers]. I remember that. And I also remember how Father and some of his acquaintances discussed the two leaders of that war. One of them was called Kamin Mura [Kamimura, Hikonojo (1849-1916): Japanese naval officer, in the

Russo-Japanese War commander-in-chief of the Second Fleet, defeated the Vladivostok Fleet. In 1907, he received the title of 'danshaku' (baron) for his distinguished military achievements. In 1910, he was promoted to admiral.], and the second was Hiro Kataoha [Kataoka, Shichiro (1853-1920): Commander-in-chief of the Third Fleet. During the Russo-Japanese War at the Battle of Tsushima his fleet made a pincer attack on the Russian Baltic Fleet along with the main fleet led by Heihachiro Togo. After the war, he was made a 'danshaku' (baron) and promoted to commander-in-chief of the First Fleet. In 1910 he became an admiral.]. I remember this, because I heard how they, those adults, were discussing it and I really liked this story.

My parents had a large farm: land, three cows, two horses. There was a servant, but she mostly helped out on the farm, she took care of cows and chickens. I don't remember what her name was, she was middle-aged. Mother cooked by herself. Her cooking was kosher, completely kosher, because Mother was very religious. We followed all Jewish traditions. At home parents spoke Yiddish among themselves. And the children understood, of course. My brothers spoke this language perfectly and, of course, they also spoke Polish, because Mother made sure that we wouldn't be alienated from the place where we lived.

My parents weren't considering going to Palestine. Father thought he was too old to reorganize the life of the family. He wasn't young when this exodus started [see Hahalutz] 3. I remember all kinds of anti-Semitic outbursts happened and I remember they touched me deeply. I don't remember them very well, but I do recall them as something very evil, sad. I always thought we should have left, in order not to be so alienated.

I didn't have any sisters, that is I had one, but she was not born until I was 14 years old. Her name was Amalia, but we called her Malinka. And I had five brothers. One girl and five brothers. I was the smallest [shortest] of all the siblings. I was like Grandmother, Father's mother. My brothers took after Mother's family, they were all tall. And I was the smallest one. They used to pick on me because of that at home. But parents would say, 'Leave her alone, she will have a mind larger than yours, she will be wiser.' But they still pestered me and if there was nothing more they could do, they would sit at the table, one would bend his leg at the knee and put his cap on the knee, to show me how small I was. Of course, I knew what they were up to.

Just like Mother, I also didn't have Jewish looks. I remember how Father used to send me to the kahal [Jewish community] and I saw that there was some gathering there, some Jews talking, so I came and waited patiently for my turn until some Jew spoke up, 'What does this young shikse want here?' At home and at school I was always called Sabina, not Salomea. My brothers also used Polonized names, I don't know why, whether it was because someone advised them to do it, or because it was such a time that they wanted to assimilate at all cost and didn't want to be second-rate citizens anymore.

My school years

My parents sent me to school early - when I was six years old - because they didn't know what to do with me. I started school still in Austria. I went to Polish schools [Autonomy of Galicia] 4. When I was in the second grade there was still no World War I. [Editor's note: In 1916, when she was in the second grade World War I had already commenced.] So in the second grade we were already learning German. All children had to learn it; there were two hours of German until the fourth grade, sometimes even more. And although there were no repressions, nothing, they still learned

it. [Children in the Polish school learned German willingly.] We used to say the prayer in the morning, everyone would say: 'God, protect our emperor and our country'. [Editor's note: A reference to the National Anthem of Austria-Hungary (Die Kaiserhymne), sung in all schools of the Empire. The interviewee is quoting the first line: 'Gott erhalte, Gott beschütze Unsern Kaiser, unser Land!', which translates into English as 'God, support, God, save our emperor and our country'.]

There in Rzeszow, under Austria, Polish scouting 5 was very well developed. The Austrians didn't oppose this very much, not at all. And I remember that when I was a little girl, on May 3rd [Constitution] 6 and other [Polish] national holidays schools organized manifestations on the market square and many people marched through the city. It's difficult to understand, but this was still under the emperor. There was a monument of Kosciuszko 7, it still is there, and everyone gathered in front of that monument to sing patriotic songs: 'Patrz Kosciuszko na nas z nieba, jak my wrogow bedziem gromic, I twojego miecza nam potrzeba by ojczyzne oswobodzic.' [Kosciuszko, look at us from the sky when we slay our enemies. We need your sword to free our homeland - an innacurate quotation of a patriotic song from the period of the November Uprising of 1830, lyrics by Romuald Suchodolski].

Mother was very concerned about us not being persecuted for our ethnicity. Because there was a time, at school and everywhere else, where children were discriminated whenever someone heard a Jewish accent. So I went to a school in Rzeszow, where Jewish children were separated in a class. We had our own desks. We also had separate religion classes. Father was, of course, a very educated person and he couldn't stand it. And Father wanted to transfer me from that school, the school where [Jewish] children were treated differently, worse. He wanted to transfer me, to enroll me in a school were there was no segregation.

So when I was in the fifth or sixth grade, Father took me from that school and transferred me to a different one, Saint Jadwiga's school, where there were no Jewish children. They took care of me there, it was good there, the priest took care of me. When I went there for the first time I was completely alienated. I didn't know anyone. Once, I was standing in the hallway, because they - in these Catholic schools - excused people of different faiths from religious classes. So I was standing in the hallway, because from this previous school I knew that I had to leave and wait. A priest, a very young one, I remember his name was Jozef Cieslik, approached me and asked why I was standing there. I told him why and he replied, 'You won't learn much standing here, come with me.' He took my hand and led me inside the classroom. He said, 'There'll come a time when you might find this useful.' He said these prophetic words to me... And since that time I attended religious classes; I wasn't very interested in that and I didn't get a grade.

This priest had a large library and used to lend books for the holidays to students who wanted to read something. And he also invited me to that library, of course. I looked around at all these shelves and saw 'Quo Vadis' [Written by Polish novelist and Nobel Prize winner Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846-1916), published in 1895; an account of the prosecution of the early Christians in the times of Nero] and he said, 'I can't lend you this, your father must give you permission first.' He was so careful. And Father said, 'Go, don't bother me with this, you can read whatever you want to, because you're not stupid.' I remember how this teacher would always tell me, 'It's important for you to survive, to educate yourself, so you won't be a koltun.' [In Polish 'koltun' literally means 'tangled hair,' but the word is used to describe someone who is backwards, not educated.]

Because I was the only one [only Jew] in this new school, I was supposed to take religious classes in a different girls' gymnasium, but it was impossible to fit that into my schedule. So my parents enrolled me in a private Hebrew school, where I studied Hebrew for two hours a week. I remember that this school was in Rzeszow, but I don't remember the name. I also don't remember if Father had to pay for these lessons. There was a teacher at that school, a charming man, he later immigrated to America. His name was Davidson. [Meshulam Davidson, Communist and Zionist activist. He escaped from Russia to Galicia and worked as a Hebrew teacher in Rzeszow. In 1924 he immigrated to Palestine.] And this teacher really liked me. My name was Salomea and this bothered him. He would say: 'What kind of a Salomea are you? You'll be a Shoshana [Hebrew name, meaning rose], because you're a rose for me.' That's what he used to say to me. He was more cordial to me than to other students. I think this Davidson was a friend of my father's and he talked Father into sending me for Hebrew classes there. I studied there and did quite well. This Davidson was later a famous man in America, an activist, scientist; I read about him.

My parents didn't worry about me too much. There were horses, but when the horses were busy somewhere, I had to walk to this school, some three kilometers, it was quite hilly there, you had to climb three hills. I used to walk to this first, Polish school with my friends from the village. And I walked back with them, too. And later, when I started taking these Hebrew classes, I had to come back alone. Snowstorms, cold, wind, I walked from one telegraph post to another: I would grab the post and rest. And that's how I got home. Nobody was interested, although I was an only child [Editor's note: only daughter]. No, that's how Mother raised me. She used to say, 'I have seven of you, I can't make any exceptions.'

My brothers

Zygmunt was the oldest brother, he was a jeweler by trade, but he studied bookkeeping for some time. He was born in 1902. He served in the Polish army. There, in the army, he made a lot of fuss and quarreled, because he was that kind of guy. He was strong and he thought that, as a Jew, he was no worse than others and if someone offended him, he'd react. There was no way to stop him. That's what his character was like.

Rzeszow was a predominantly Jewish town. I remember how once, when Zygmunt was on leave from the army, just before the Christmas holidays, he went to the market, where the Jews were laying out fish for sale. And there were some hooligans there who were throwing all those things on the ground. And my brother beat them up. Yes, then the same thing happened again. In Jaroslaw [approx. 70km from Rzeszow] where his unit was stationed, he was attacked by some hooligans, who wanted to beat him up. Jew and Jew. They called him a Jew and he says, 'Kiss his ass before another one comes.' They chased him to some alley near the church. And they made a horrible thing happen, because he was strong and he really hurt those hooligans. There were three of them and he was put on trial for inflicting serious injury. This Zygmunt! He had a court case and he was in the army fortress. I don't remember how long. It cost Father a lot of money, but he finally got him out of it. He hired an attorney, one of the most famous ones, and he got him out of this mess.

After Zygmunt, my parents had Abraham, whom they called Romek [affectionate for Roman]. In 1904. He was very handsome, with artistic talents. He had a very good voice and everything. He organized theater performances, wrote scripts for himself and those kinds of things. I remember that when I was a little girl he would organize plays in our barn. As a young man he left for

Argentina, because he had had enough of life like here, outside of society. And as soon as they were recruiting, he was the first one to apply, because he said he didn't want to live here, in these conditions. Yes. That was the recruitment of some international Jewish organization [probably HIAS] 8. There was no recruitment to Palestine then, because those hakhsharas, only started then these preparations for emigration. So he left [in the late 1920s]. And this Romek somehow disappeared in Argentina. Disappeared in unexplained circumstances. They looked for him, but they couldn't find him.

The third brother was born in 1907 and this was Maks. His name was Majlech, but they called him Maks, and he dealt with farming. He managed our entire farm perfectly. There was an agricultural school near our farm and he had some friends there. It wasn't a Jewish school, but a Polish one, famous in all of Malopolska [historical region of Poland, consisting of the southern part of the country with Cracow as its capital], in Milocin near Rzeszow. It was located in a forest, the school was very beautiful. And Maks had contacts there and that was where he got information from. His left eye was sick - you can even see it a bit in the photograph I have and a famous surgeon from Vienna operated on the eye. I think the surgeon's name was Michorowski, or something like that. And it was a huge family tragedy, because this surgeon cut his pupil. Nobody knew why. And Maks couldn't see in that eye. He was the only one who managed to get married before the war. He had two small children [sons], but I don't remember their names. I don't remember his wife's name either.

Mojzesz was the brother I was closest to. Everyone called him Monek. At school he was known as Maurycy. There was only a small gap [age difference] between him and me. He was born in 1911, so I was only two years older. We both liked each other very much, yes we did. I remember that when we were children they would say that we held on to each other as if we were blind. Because we used to hold hands constantly. Yes, Moniuszek was very good. We used to plan everything together, do it together. He went to school, he helped me, I helped him, we were... exceptional siblings. And he also had these artistic talents, he was this intellectual; he later worked in a printing shop.

The fifth brother, Salomon, was seven years younger than I. I remember that when Salek was still very small, he used to walk around the village and there was this Jew there who raised goats, that's what he did for a living. Everyone in the village called him Kozubol [nickname derived from the Polish word for goat - 'koza']. So Salek used to go there, to that Jew, to see how the goats were doing and so on. And he used to address this Jew, 'You Kozubol' and the Jew would reply, 'You, listen, that's not my name.' Before the war Salek studied type-setting, but he later became allergic to this grease and he started working in trade, in a Jewish store. He was the manager of some warehouse, like those Jews used to have in those days, warehouses with textile materials.

Our religious life

At first we used to go for prayers to a synagogue in Rzeszow. There were two synagogues there. The one we attended was beautiful, very tall and old with these colored windows - it was said that it was some 800 years old then. [The New Town Synagogue, on 1 Maja Street, called the Great Synagogue was built in the late 17th century. During WWII the Germans turned it into a stable and, in 1944, burned it down completely. It was rebuilt in the period 1954-1963. It currently houses the Culture House - Artistic Exhibitions Office.] I remember how they set fire to this beautiful

synagogue. Monek had this girlfriend, Giza, who later visited us with her father and he complained that his neighbors, Poles, came to him then and said, 'Look, Jew, they're burning down your temple.' And Giza's father, he was a witty man, told them, 'Why should I bother, it's God's house, so he should care for it, not me.' This was already during the war, those times had begun.

With time, ten Jewish families settled in Przybyszowka and all of them, instead of going to the synagogue in Rzeszow, started gathering at our house for holidays. These prayers were organized at our place. There was, of course a Torah and at first they paid someone [to lead the prayers], but later Father took over, because he had a very good voice and he knew the order of everything. The house was big - there were perhaps four rooms? One after the other, so people could easily gather there. Of course, the servant would clean up later, because many people used to come for the prayers. These people were very well-behaved, extremely polite, of course. They always thanked my parents for organizing the possibility.

I remember that Mother made sure we took part in the services. Well, the boys took part in the celebrations, because they were in the kohanim religious group - the family of the priests, this privileged group dating back to the oldest biblical times. So when there were prayer meetings, they would separate from the crowd during a special blessing. [Kohanite blessing, hands with the thumbs and index finger joined and on both hands middle and ring fingers are spread.] And it was said that they were blessing the people [The Torah contains a commandment stating that kohanim shall bless the people]. They weren't allowed to marry a widow or a divorcee. They couldn't take part in funerals, they couldn't go to the cemetery, they were not allowed to touch cemetery soil. The boys had a tutor, who used to come to our house. He taught them the biblical books, the prayers, the liturgy, everything. He taught them verses from the original of the Torah and later translated the verses with them. And they had to learn to read, translate and they had to know these things well.

Everything was very strict on Sabbath. Mother used to light candles. Everything was cooked a day earlier. The servant [shabesgoy] would heat the chulent. I remember Yom Kippur prayers. I remember that very well. Everyone fasted. I remember when I was 20 years old I came down with appendicitis, just before the holidays and I had to have surgery. They brought me home just before Yom Kippur and Father went to the rabbi. He asked about what they should do with me, whether I had to fast. Father, this progressive man. And the answer was that they should buy me some grapes and I was to eat one grape every five minutes. The boys went off laughing that I had to do this. But Father bought me these grapes and put them next to my bed, so I could eat them. Well, this means he must have been a religious man, because he couldn't have a guilty conscience. I don't know what rabbi that was who prescribed that diet for me. I remember that different rabbis visited Father and I think they must have been quite progressive people.

The other Jewish families from our village were not assimilated, only if it was necessary. They all had many children. Well, they were fully Jewish, but they weren't as tolerant. They mostly spoke Yiddish and didn't know Polish very well. Their children went to school to learn to read and write. But I don't remember if they were persecuted. One Jew there raised goats and that's how he earned a living. Another one was a tailor, another a shoemaker. They were honest people, they did honest work.

And the entire village was huge, altogether some 700 houses, a presbytery and a church. The remaining people were Poles, mostly farmers. Some of these farmers had children who became priests, teachers, because the village was very close to the city. The village was three kilometers from the railroad tracks and that was where the city limits began. Those neighbors also had different attitudes to us, Jews. It happened that they sometimes called us 'parch' [Polish, literally 'pimple', 'blister,' but also used as a derogatory term for Jews]. In spite of that my parents had friends and acquaintances among Poles. The priest would even come to play cards with Father in the winter and really enjoyed talking to him. He was an older man. He was the parish priest in Przybyszowka. I don't remember what his name was, but I didn't like him. Whenever he came, I'd leave. He must have pestered me with some questions about religion and I didn't like that. Why should he examine me like that? And that's what I told him. He later complained to Father that I was impolite.

World War I

I remember the first war [World War I] a little bit. Some man came on a horse and announced mobilization. I remember how, in the beginning, there were many announcements of deaths of men drafted into the army and how it would be said that such a family received the 'dead card.' I remember how I was moved from place to place because our village was being bombed. [In World War I Galicia was in the Austro-Hungarian and Russian front zone.] This servant carried me on her back across fields, to the city and we rented an apartment there. But I don't remember this very well, because I must have been very young. I was born in 1909, but I remember when those bombs were being dropped. I remember when Mother was outside in the yard and she was holding a cow on a line and a bomb fell right next to her. This bomb made a terrible hole and Mother miraculously jumped up and was saved, although the cow was wounded. During the war Father worked on the farm, only at the end of the war he was mobilized into the army and was stationed in Przegorzaly [near Cracow].

Of course, I do remember how Poland regained independence [see Poland's independence, 1918] 9 . Euphoria, difficult to describe. Everyone took part in this: Jews, non-Jews, everyone was very happy. They cheered and everything. There were all kinds of assemblies. At first, it was fine for Jews, it [anti-Semitism] only came later, because that's how history went forward, the nasty face of fascism showed up everywhere.

Continuing my education

I didn't help Mother much at home, because I didn't have time, I was ambitious and wanted to do well at school. My favorite subjects? Not mathematics. This I remember for sure. Well, I was always interested in drawing and I received all kinds of distinctions for that. Literature - I used to read a lot, Russian literature was fashionable at that time. I also knew Polish literature very well. Slowacki 10, Mickiewicz 11 and other classics. I knew them perfectly. I knew them so well that when at one time I found myself among people who read and dealt with literature I was the only one to know Slowacki's 'Anhelli' [a poem written in prose, 1838]. Well, lots of things interested me. Except for math and geometry - everything.

I had two good friends in the village since the first grade - Poles. We were very close, like family. They really loved me. And I loved them. Henryka Raczy got married to a neighbor who had some position in sports in France and she settled in France even before the war. And there Henryka was

called Henriette Raksi. And they really wanted to take me with them. And the second friend was Waleria Wisniowska; she died very early, of pneumonia.

They went to secondary schools, trade schools, in Rzeszow. Those were schools on the same level as my school - the Artistic Crafts School, because Father signed me up for that school after eight grades [Editor's note: There were only seven grades of elementary public school in Poland before the war], because he thought that I'd learn some trade, that I'd know something after graduating from this school. There was this girls' gymnasium in Rzeszow and, of course, different types of colleges - teachers' training colleges, trade schools; there were lots of possibilities for getting an education. My school was a private one, four grades and it had the status of a secondary school. It was a very good school. There were army headquarters in Rzeszow, and Polish officers weren't allowed to marry anyone who didn't have a secondary education. So girls from manor houses went to that school with me, daughters of officers and other officials. And again I was the only one [only Jew] there. There were more than 40 girls altogether. No, I wasn't separated. On the contrary, I had lots of friends.

I learned how to make hats, lingerie; I learned sewing, clothing design, all kinds of embroidery. I learned how to design dresses for operas, I was often given assignments for the holidays, to prepare dresses for some opera, or to draw them on these large panels. I remember this, because we took a special subject for that, costumology. So you had to know all kinds of costumes which were worn in Europe since the earliest times. I don't remember this today exactly, those were complicated things. I also studied French. I could learn everything there, including cooking and baking, but I didn't want to take advantage of that, because I didn't like that. [What the interviewee means is that she would not eat non-kosher food.] I had an internship during my fourth year of studies. This fourth year was not obligatory for all students. Only if you wanted to.

After this school, I unfortunately didn't do anything more, although I wanted to educate myself further in this area, but you needed to have a recommendation for another school. Yes, there was the 'numerus clausus' at universities and in those schools, when they had a look, they'd say, 'We don't have any openings.' There was no government statute, but they wouldn't accept you. Anyway, these schools were very expensive and, by that time, my parents were not doing so well anymore. After Grandfather died, the brick factory went bankrupt. Yes, it didn't take long. Grandfather was the first one to start a brick factory, but then all those people around us set up two more, so there was competition and, by then, there was already: 'Nie kupuj u Zyda' [Don't buy from a Jew.]. And that's when it started. I remember these signs and the first incidents. These signs - 'Nie kupuj u Zyda' and 'Bij Zyda' [Get the Jew] - were posted on all announcement boards. And there were these direct incidents too, I recall. They would barge into a house, shoot at the ceiling [the interviewee is referring to the Pogrom in Rzeszow] 12. My parents were very worried about my brothers, that they could be close to something like this.

But because my parents weren't doing very well financially, I took advantage of my education from that school of mine and started working on my own. I started sewing, embroidering, I gave cutting lessons. I didn't belong to any organization. I was interested in that, but I didn't have time for that, because I was already doing what I had learned to do, in order to help my parents. How old could I have been? Some 18 to 19 years old.

Yes, already then I thought I wouldn't settle there [Poland]. That I'd never stay there. And I rejected all the [marriage] offers I got as a young girl. I didn't want to start a family there and to live there. Nobody wanted to talk me into marriage, but I had some heroes. I called them 'heroes,' because when I was talking to one of them I'd say, 'You have to think very well about what you want! Do you know me very well?' But I knew there was no point in starting a family in those conditions. Because what would have happened? A cousin of mine graduated from law school in Cracow; she was my age. She married a physician and what was that for? Did it last long? Occupation came and she went to Treblinka 13 with that doctor of hers. She was a pretty girl this Renia.

During the war

I saw this exodus of Jews right after the war broke out, because they sent entire transports to us and those were people who didn't have anything left. [The Nazis deported approx. 6,000 Jews to Rzeszow from the Polish lands incorporated into the Third Reich.] By then I was aware that the end must be coming, because I saw what the Germans were doing. Local people were helping those Jews, but not for long, because they were liquidated shortly afterwards.

My brothers left for Russia soon. They did it while it was still possible. When the borders were not closed yet and the Germans had already reached Staroniwa. Father's brother from Gorlice came to us with his entire family and with horses, because they had them. But my parents, unfortunately, didn't want to go. They were too old, that they didn't want to wander about, that they had survived the first war, that they were independent. They had different arguments - yes, like all of those who would later die. So they [the family from Gorlice] took all three brothers on the horse- drawn wagon with them, without Maks, the married one, because he stayed with his family. From Russia the brothers telegraphed and asked for us to send them our picture. And this picture still exists. But Mother was already very worn out in that photograph, exhausted with all the experiences we were going through then.

At the very beginning of the war a German, a soldier, was quartered at our house. And these soldiers wanted to get in touch with us, because they had their eyes set on some nice girl, a teacher. A young one. And this German wanted to well... you know, with this teacher, but he didn't speak a word of Polish. So he followed me and kept saying 'Sabinchen, Sabinchen' to me, so that I'd tell him who could teach him a few words of Polish, so he could go to this teacher and somehow contact her. I told him I didn't understand anything and couldn't do it. He went to my neighbor and kept pestering her to teach him something nice. She spoke some German, she learned it at school, and she was a very witty person. 'Listen, fine' - she said to that German. Tell her this: 'kochana pokaz kolana' ['honey, show me your knees']. It was a joke, because he went there and this teacher was furious. She would have rebuked him, but she was afraid. He went there and said: 'Honey, show me your knees!'

I was working, one of the things I was doing was minding my friend's children. Her husband was at the front. Her name was Wiktoria Szalacha. She had two sons and I raised them. Once she said to me, 'I have this problem, because Christmas is coming, the family will come to visit and he should know how to sing a Christmas carol.' One of these sons, Tadziu, was very little. So I said, 'Fine, I can teach him.' When I went to school, I had to listen to these carols all the time. So I taught him 'Syn bozy w zlobie lezy...' ['Son of God is lying in a manger...', fragment of a Polish Christmas carol titled 'Do szopy pasterze' - 'To the shed, oh shepherds'] and he looked at me, he was 4 years old

then, and said 'No! He's lying in bed!' I repeated what I had to say, he repeated what he had to say. Later, when I was telling my own [family] that I could even teach Christmas carols, they shook their heads in disbelief.

Yes, but this was happening early on, before this entire slaughter was organized. And, unfortunately, my brother Monek came back from Russia quickly. He had a girl here, his sweetheart, and this girl - Giza kept writing to him that she couldn't live without him. So he came back. And the Germans took him immediately. They took him to some quarry and he died there. I don't know what town it was in, when, nothing. And then this album which I gave to our neighbors before we were forced to move to the ghetto, got lost there. So I don't even have pictures of what Monek looked like. He was such a nice man, everyone's favorite brother. And then Maks went to Belzec 14 [probably in December 1941 when the ghetto was formed in Rzeszow]. He managed to have two sons, but the Germans destroyed it all. When the other brothers were running away to Russia, he wanted to stay with his family, because he was afraid to leave them without someone taking care of them. He was a very good father and husband. I didn't even say goodbye to him. There [in Belzec] I was supposed to meet my fate too, but at the last moment... I left.

My sister Malinka, my parents and I, we were all supposed to go to the Rzeszow ghetto 15. I don't remember how I found out about it, that we had to move to the ghetto [an ordinance was issued on 17th December 1941 about the creation of the ghetto in Rzeszow], but it was difficult not to know, because panic broke out among people. This was organized by the Germans very well. They designated Jews who were responsible for registering the remaining ones. And they had to make sure that everyone turned up in the ghetto. You could only take personal items with you. We walked on foot, it wasn't far.

In the middle of the city the Germans organized this 'Sammelplatz' [German for assembly point], where everyone had to show up; it was in the ghetto. Before that time, poor people traded there, they didn't even have stalls set up, but just sold some goods on the street. An old Jewish cemetery, several hundred years old was also a part of this 'Sammelplatz.' [Editor's note: it was a 16th century cemetery on the current Victims of the Ghetto Square (Plac Ofiar Getta), completely destroyed during the war, the tombstones were used for the construction of a road. Currently not fenced off, almost completely devastated, a park is located there and a road runs through it.] Of course, they destroyed the walls of the cemetery and this 'Sammelplatz' was there.

Well, we didn't know what to do. Malinka had completed seven grades of school and my parents wanted to educate her further. But, unfortunately that wasn't possible. Well, I was supposed to be working. My parents told me then, 'We believe that if you save yourself, you will save Malinka as well.' Malinka and I were designated for forced labor and asked to wait somewhere on the side, that's when we managed to leave that 'Sammelplatz,' because no one was watching us. There were these old tenement houses on one side of this 'Sammelplatz' and we climbed up into the attic of one of them with Malinka and we observed this square through this hole, like in a theater, all day long. The other people were sitting on the ground, one next to the other, beaten, harassed, and my sister and I saw everything. This massacre lasted all day long.

My parents were quartered together with a family of complete strangers, but they were nice, decent people. Not everyone was so lucky. Many Jews from Kalisz, who were deported to Rzeszow right after the war broke out, lived in that part of the city. And those people had been wandering

about for some time, without the possibility of washing themselves, they were in horrible condition, they were living in some basements... And some of our Jews were quartered together with those from Kalisz.

Malinka worked in a workshop, where they repaired soldiers' uniforms. I saw her and my parents from time to time, not every day. I was assigned to unload bricks from cargo trains. That was in the fields, there was one railroad track running through the fields, from Rzeszow to Cracow. So it wasn't a developed area, it was outside the city. And the Germans had plans of building something there. Transports of bricks would arrive there. Large, railroad cars full of bricks, it was organized by the Germans, so that the bricks were passed on from one person to another, like a relay. Because there were so many of them, we had to take these bricks further into the fields. In the evening we went back to the ghetto. I lived with the people I worked with, so that I'd always be available for work.

There was a gate in the ghetto, with one side facing the train station. Not the main train station, the smaller one, where there was a railroad track to Jaslo. And the Germans deported Jews from that station [Rzeszow Staroniwa; the first deportation took place in July, the second one in August, the third one in November 1942]. At first my friends, non-Jews of course, would walk up to the ghetto gate from one side. They brought me whatever they could. They really wanted to save me. They must have liked me. And they tried to convince me to leave that place, that it would be the end; this was in the first days of the ghetto [the ghetto was closed off in January 1942]. I didn't want to, because I was sick of it all. I didn't want to live in this world, I didn't like it. But they dragged me out, almost by force. I posed a condition, if you help me, you have to help my sister as well.

My parents were in the ghetto for a short time, a few months in the winter. I managed to say goodbye to them. They were probably sent to Belzec. [Editor's note: Her parents were most probably shot in the forest near Rudna or Glogow, the place of execution of several thousand Jews from the ghetto in Rzeszow].

Malinka was saved from the ghetto in the summer [of 1942]. It turned out that her friend had been designated by the Germans for forced labor in occupied Austria. Of course, a non-Jewish friend. And there was a huge tragedy there, because this girl, her name was Wladzia, Wladzia Zyracka, was in poor health. She was pretty, but so delicate. And then there was this project to take Wladzia's documents and give them to Malinka. Such bravado! And I came up with all of this. Friends led Malinka to the train with those documents and she went to Germany. She used the name of her friend, Wladzia.

I stayed in the ghetto. We were often segregated. [Such actions took place since the beginning of the ghetto, for example in March 1942 the Gestapo murdered the inhabitants of two houses in the ghetto, on 30th April, 35 people were shot, and on 12th May approx. 250 Jews were shot to death in nearby forests.] We had to stand in these long lines and the German guards came. They took whomever they liked from this line, took them to the side, and you know what. They sent them off into the unknown. I mean later we all knew where, because everyone from the ghetto in Rzeszow was sent to Belzec. This Belzec must have been nearby. [Belzec was the extermination camp located closest to Rzeszow, 239 km by train.]

They were observing me from time to time, because these line ups took place every day, these segregations - so the Germans were observing me. And that's how I felt that they didn't like me very much. But this didn't make me leave. What decided things was a hemorrhage, a very strong nosebleed. It was really hot, July or August, I don't remember. We were carrying bricks from railroad cars to these piles. And I got this nosebleed. My friends carried me to a pile of bricks and laid me down there, because if some German had seen me, he would have shot me right away. That's what it was like. I lay there for some time, I looked around and it happened to be an area I knew. Near my home. So I got up and started walking forward. I didn't run, I just walked on [Editor's note: The interviewee was working outside the ghetto unloading bricks, in an area which wasn't fenced in. The date of escape which she submitted to TSKZ (Social and Cultural Society of Polish Jews) raises doubts, because she spent almost three months with the three families that were hiding her after her escape. She reached the fourth family before Christmas, that is in December 1942. The circumstances of the escape also suggest that the date might be incorrect: it is not very hot in October and potato harvest is almost over. For these reasons it may be assumed that the interviewee's escape took place in late August 1942].

I remember that it was getting dark and I was feeling very weak. I went into a potato field where potatoes were growing and slept there in the open field. I had always detested lying down on the bare ground, but I did it then, among those potatoes, I slept there and nothing happened to me. I don't remember how long I slept. I woke up thinking 'where should I go?' But I had this friend, Janka. Her father played the organs at church. So I thought that maybe she'd take me in. And she did. She and her mother cried over me. Then they started washing me, because I was in horrible shape. Horrible. I had lots of ulcers on my face, because of the temperature, malnutrition, not just malnutrition but hunger. They cured me, but I don't remember their name. [Editor's note: According to a written statement submitted by the interviewee to TSKZ it was the family of Janina Stachowicz, a teacher from Staroniwa.] But I couldn't have been there for very long. Well, I don't know - perhaps some two weeks. I couldn't stay, because they detected me immediately. [After the escape from the ghetto she was hidden by Polish families in villages. Each of these families was threatened by neighbors.] Everywhere, wherever I was.

Moving around

I saved my life, but I had to move from one place to another, using my contacts. I couldn't stay anywhere longer, unfortunately, because Poles are not tolerant and anti-Semitism runs deep in them - well, not all of them, but most of them, yes. Well, so it was very difficult for me to survive, because there were immediately suspicions and denouncements, and so on, and no one wanted to keep me. But my friends, who risked their life for me, helped me. So after Janka's family it was the Wisniowski family who kept me, also neighbors from Staroniwa. This Mr. Wisniowski was a farmer, a very decent man. They carried me out in a basket at night to the barn and that's where I slept for two months, on these stacks of straw. But it was good for me there. Very good. They took care of me, they loved me. Well. They prayed for me. They went to holy places. Yes. They were such caring friends that they went to the presbytery and they found a birth certificate for me. This Wisnowski got the certificate of some 'hadra' [dialect from Lwow and Silesia: a quarrelsome woman], who had been sent off for labor to Germany. I took care of their daughter; I taught her whatever I could.

They wanted to save me, no matter what it took. Even though I didn't want that. I didn't. I had had enough of everything. I couldn't imagine a life like that: in hiding and constantly afraid someone

would recognize me. It was life with a death sentence. But if the Germans caught me and proved that I was Jewish, they would have all paid with their lives. All those, who helped me. Because such was Hitler's law that those who helped, were punished as well. So I had to be aware of that. And then when I was so bored with everything that I had enough, I didn't know what to do with myself, because there was no way out. This Mr. Wisniowski would always say 'you'll be fine', but, finally, he couldn't keep me any longer. I cared about them. Especially since they had been suspected several times, because of their helpful neighbors... I had no enemies there, but it was like the plague. Yes, the plague. It was then that I understood what kind of a plague this anti-Semitism was and how prevalent it was among society, and how everyone welcomed it. And it's never as easy to entice someone to love as it is to entice them to hatred.

Almost everything [photographs] was destroyed during my wartime experiences. There were times when I had to cover my tracks, because there were people who were interested in my past, of course. Someone had some feeling, but nobody knew exactly. And, unfortunately, I didn't manage to save anything. I remember how I gave this Wisniowska an album which had a picture of my grandfather from Hungary. After I left their house at night, there was a search for me and, supposedly, they buried this album. And it was never found.

After the Wisniowski family, an acquaintance of mine, Wiktoria, whose children I had minded at the beginning of the war, helped me. She took me to her family. It was quite a distance from Jaslo, in some village. I don't remember the exact name. [Editor's note: Skolyszyn, according to a written statement submitted to TSKZ.] I worked there on the farm, with all the members of that family. The Germans used to come and take away everything they had. They were living very modestly; they didn't have proper food on that farm. I didn't stay there very long, because word got out in the village that they had some suspicious person out there, because I showed up suddenly, as an adult.

In my free time I taught them whatever I could: sewing, cutting material and so on. I don't remember what their name was. [Editor's note: according to a written statement submitted to TSKZ it was the Dybek family.] And they wanted to help me, but their neighbors threatened that if they didn't get rid of me, they would denounce them. They hunted me down. So they walked me at night through the forest, the father of that family and the brother, to the train station in Jaslo, so I could go to Cracow, because I had some addresses in Cracow from my friends. So I could stay there. I walked through fields for - how long could it have been? - several hours, I guess, at night. Because you couldn't walk in the daytime, that would have been suspicious. And from Jaslo I got to Tarnow.

I wanted to get on a train to Cracow there, but it was almost impossible, because there were so many people. There was a long line to the ticket office, young people were trying to get onto the train through the windows and doors. But I couldn't do that, because I was afraid I'd attract attention and, secondly, I couldn't simply hold on to the window and later enter through the window. I was quite fit, but not fit enough for such an endeavor. So I looked at that long line of people waiting to get on that train and wondered what I could do. And I noticed a nice looking lady who smiled at me. So I approached her and stood behind her. And I started talking to her. I pretended that I had been standing in that line. Such fraud. And I boarded the train with her. I started a conversation on the train and talked to her all the way to Cracow. And she liked me. She had visited her son in Tarnow. I told her I was going to Cracow to look for work and she told me that if I couldn't find anything better, she was looking for a secretary for her husband. They lived

near Cracow, in Niepolomice [approx. 20 km from Cracow].

In Cracow it turned out that it was all unrealistic, because the Germans were everywhere and everyone was afraid. I couldn't use the addresses I had. I don't remember what street this was on, but there was this large tenement house, and someone who knew about me was supposed to be there, at the caretaker's. So I entered the backyard, but it was just after an action, lots of bodies in the yard. So I walked around Cracow all day, until late afternoon. My friends had also given me the address of the Ursulines [Ursuline Sisters of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus, a female order founded in Poland in 1920 by blessed Urszula Ledochowska, dealing mostly with education and charity]. They thought that if these Ursulines accepted me, I would be safe there, because they dealt with education. They ran private schools. So I could teach something there, but somehow I couldn't force myself to go there. Something repelled me, I couldn't enter. I don't know what it was until today. And I thought to myself that it was getting dark, it was December, there was nothing to wait for, nothing could be done. So I went to the train station.

And at this train station, same story, people everywhere. I was wearing a hat, I must have looked very interesting. And this railroad guard, who was supervising that train, noticed that I was standing helplessly on that platform and couldn't get inside, because there were so many people. More than these trains could hold. And he asked me, 'Do you want to go?' I said, 'Yes, I'd like to.' So he said, 'Well, you won't get on now,' he took my hand and led me somewhere to his place. He said, 'You're not looking well, perhaps you're hungry?' 'Oh, no' - I said. He got out some red pork fat with red pepper and wanted to share it with me. I looked at what he was eating and thought to myself, if I eat that, it's the end. Anyway, I was disgusted, I wouldn't have eaten anything of the kind. Never in my life. Such a thing - no.

Anyway, I was so bothered with it all. And when the train started moving I thought to myself something not very nice. I was thinking that if that train got derailed with me on board that would have been the end. I had had enough of everything, there was no direction I could go in. I couldn't live or anything. And this guard took me to Podleze with him [a settlement near Cracow] and wanted me to keep going with him. And I was supposed to get off in Podleze to go to that lady who had invited me [Podleze is the train station closest to Niepolomice]. And he kept asking me to stay, to stay with him. So I thought, what a perspective for me. A career like hell! Finally, he led me down the steps, said goodbye and then: 'Think about it again. I'll let you know after the war.' Well, he never did contact me, didn't look for me. There were these horse-drawn carts from Podleze, they took several people to Niepolomice. I reached that lady in such a cart.

It was a time when if one person from an entire family was saved, they'd say it must have been God's hand, that God must be looking upon him kindly. That's what people said about me, because I managed to make it through some incredible situations. And I managed to make it. At the last moment. When the danger was already very serious. Yes, for example when I was introduced into this German family: the Gemrots, one hundred percent German. This lady's husband, this Gemrot, was a true German. He had papers for this, German for generations. He came from near Berlin, but he wasn't a Volksdeutscher 16, because they were obliged to declare themselves as Volksdeutsche, but they didn't. They didn't speak Polish very well, but used some dialect, also a bit of Czech. This wife of his, whom I met in Tarnow, was Czech from Petrvald near Opava, she came from an aristocratic family. She was someone. Her name was Florentyna.

They used to live in Zaolzie and when there was a plebiscite there they voted for Poland. [The plebiscite planned at the Versailles Conference, which was supposed to decide the fate of Cieszyn Silesia, did not take place. It is possible that the Gemrots took part in another plebiscite, in Upper Silesia (March 1921), which was supposed to decide whether Silesia would be part of Poland or Germany. The result, unfavorable for Poland (40% of votes for Poland) led to the outbreak of the Third Silesian Uprising.] This Gemrot, his first name was Franciszek, was an educated man, he had graduated from some agricultural university and, before the war, was a manager at different manor houses, on the Polish-Czech border. And they moved around in that area. When it was bad for them, they looked for another manor house and managed those estates, so they were quite well off. That's what they were doing in Niepolomice before the war.

When the Germans came they entrusted Gemrot with the task of organizing German style agriculture in the district of Cracow. He was supposed to educate farmers according to German rules, teach them about crop rotation and so on. I got there before Christmas Eve. Perhaps earlier? I don't remember. As soon as I came, this Gemrot looked at my hands and said, 'She's not a country girl. She doesn't have coarse hands.' He told me this straight away. Before Christmas [in 1942] his wife came to me and said that I had to go to mass with her, because, as she said, 'What will the neighbors say, who am I keeping here?' And Grandfather [Franciszek Gemrot] said: 'You brought yourself a girl, so you take her, but I won't go to church, because I don't like it.' It had nothing to do with me. He practically didn't go to church, he was a kind of freethinker with regards to religion. He didn't have to go, but Mrs. Gemrot made sure that I practiced.

I remember that Christmas Eve, how happy they were to have a guest for Christmas Eve. Their son Wilhelm came, the one whom this lady visited in Tarnow, and that was when I met him. And he became interested in me right away. Right from the start. I remember they had this custom, I don't remember whether it was German or Czech, that they put money underneath everyone's plates. And they gave me some as well. And this Wilhelm - my future husband - lifted his plate and put all his money under mine. We became fast friends that Christmas Eve. Yes, we did.

Wilhelm, called Wilus, was the youngest son and the apple of their eye, pampered. A handsome man, very polite and cultured. Delicate, wise, not a simple man - absolutely not! In no way! He was a musician by trade, he was in the military orchestra in Cracow since he was 13 years old. His uncles Fredek [Ferdynand] and Rudolf were conductors at the Cracow Philharmonic. And Wilhelm was excellent on all the brass instruments and everything. He mostly played the trumpet and the cornet. He had four sisters. The oldest one was Henryka and she stayed in Petrvald, in the Czech lands. There was also Nuska [Franciszka], Maria and Waleria. One of them lived in Tarnow. These sisters were not as smart as he was. They all knew German, because, in Petrvald, their parents sent them all to schools run by nuns who taught in German.

Some Germans used to come to this Gemrot, for reports, because he had to submit reports of the results of his work. He told me everything and I wrote these reports. When he was talking with these Germans I would feel cold shivers running down my spine. When I was still at school our teacher told us that there are different dialects of German, that German is divided into different types, a different dialect in Vienna and a different one near Berlin. When I was listening to my father-in-law speaking with those Germans it was difficult to understand what they were saying. They barked, like dogs.

The Gemrots lived alone in a bungalow, they had a small yard, on the outskirts of Niepolomice. Some Jews who were forced to move must have lived in that house, because I found different things in the attic. When I had nothing to do, I'd go upstairs, find some rags, dye them and sew some fantastic things from that. They were delighted. I made bathrobes for this lady. All kinds of decorative things, because it was wintertime and I had nothing else to do.

And it was good, because when Mrs. Gemrot, my future mother-in-law, went to visit her son in Tarnow, she met some people from my village along the way and they started talking. And she told them what my name was. And they looked at her strangely: 'Damn, that's the greatest hadra around.' Because she gave them the name from the documents which that Wisniowski had arranged for me. My last name was Kloc, or something like this, I don't remember. My first name was changed to Maria.

The situation there was that I was working for them, I was a secretary and I also did whatever I could for them, so the neighbors became jealous. And some guys were interested in me. I didn't want anyone, which was suspicious. And there were other girls around who were attractive for them. Whenever I went somewhere, after all I had to leave the house, I was always sure I wouldn't be back because they would find out I am Jewish and arrest me. I always looked around to see if someone was following me, spying on me. And I even had this one incident when I met a man from near Cracow, who was a Polish officer, although he wore civilian clothing, because of the Germans... and he harassed me with his courtship so much, that at some point I told him off, I don't remember how exactly. And he said to me, 'Don't be so tough, because I saw you in Kazimierz 17 this and that year.' The earth was moving from under my feet. There was no place for me any longer.

My husband

Those friends of mine couldn't do anything for me, because they didn't have a place for me, they had been helping me for such a long time, they had used up all possibilities. But their son, Wilus, helped me and said he would marry me to cover the tracks. And that's what happened. This husband of mine was a very decent man - very. He was ready to do anything... anything. He took me from there at night to his kitchenette in Tarnow and wondered what to do with me. In the morning he took me to a small settlement near Krynica, I don't remember the name, to find a place for me there. I didn't stay, because my husband didn't like the conditions which they were offering me and he said, 'You'll go back with me.' And those friends of mine from my home village, the Wisniowski family, changed my documents to say I was married and my last name was Gemrot, they managed to get an official stamp saying that I was a wife and they even went to the local priest for this. And then no one could say anything, because I had a name that was not a wartime name. Because before that I had some pretty bad wartime names. [The interviewee used the names Maria Tomaka and Maria Kloc when in hiding.] Well, but my in-laws didn't like it, they didn't say anything, but they were suspicious. They didn't denounce me only because they were afraid there would be joint responsibility for this... And I couldn't be touched because of that name. They couldn't. No one had the courage to denounce me.

My husband worked in a German factory, they produced weapons in Tarnow. I worked as a babysitter. At the end of the war, because they were removing their employees further into the Reich, they offered a railroad car to my husband, so he could go to Germany with his family.

Somewhere near Cologne or wherever - who knows, to some weapon factory. But I didn't want to go. It was the end of the war and I thought to myself 'I've been running away from them for so many years, why should I go there now? I don't want to, I don't want anything anymore!' And he was very sad, because he wanted to go. But I wouldn't go. We stayed.

Post-war

Of the six of us, siblings, four managed to save themselves. Zygmunt and Salek, who survived in Russia, Malinka who worked near Vienna and I. Zygmunt, in Russia, joined Anders' Army 18 and fought with that army in the Battle of Monte Cassino 19, but God must have been protecting him, because he wasn't wounded. By the end of the battle, he was only an undertaker. He told us how he had to pack the remains of his friends into bags and bury them in common graves. Those few who survived Monte Cassino were later sent to England. Each of those soldiers there received some benefits, so this brother of mine settled in England. He worked there as a jeweler. He didn't marry, but he was in touch with me, because he found me after the war. And I know that he took part in the war here, because he is listed in those documents from Plaszow [camp] 20. He had some contacts with the prisoners, but I don't know exactly. He helped somehow, but I don't know how. I know, because I found his name in some publication. [Editor's note: this was probably a different person with the same last name. In 1939 Zygmunt Krygier crossed the border to the Soviet Union, later joined Anders' Army and fought on the Italian front. Aiding prisoners from Plaszow would have been physically impossible for him.]

Salek also managed to survive in Russia and it was quite good for him there. He's a very resourceful man, he did different things there, he could buy and sell things, arrange something, he was also talented. He performed somewhere, taught in some school... He was always very handsome, exceptionally so. And this was his misfortune. Because when there was a girl somewhere, he always thought that one wasn't enough. During the Russian occupation he found himself one - some midwife or something like that at a hospital. They later came back to Poland, she was Polish, and unfortunately, he didn't marry well, this 'hadra' drove him nuts, because she wasn't Jewish. My husband did everything possible, so that Salek wouldn't marry her. But he did and it's his business. He was well off here; after the war they settled in Bielsko.

After the ghetto Malinka was assigned to the town of Niederstrahlbach near Vienna, for forced labor. [Editor's note: Niederstrahlbach is actually near Zwettl, Lower Austria, and about one-and-a-half hour's drive from Vienna.] She survived there. It was horrible for her there, because the lady of the house, a German, simply starved her, but she met some friends who taught her what to do, so she wouldn't die of starvation. And she fed herself eggs from that farm, raw eggs and everything else, so she wouldn't die. She came back to Poland, but she didn't stay here long. She left for Israel [in 1947 or 1948].

I remember when there was an account from America of the anniversary of the creation of Israel; I read about it somewhere. And those Orthodox Jews were demonstrating there [in the USA] on the streets against the creation of Israel, because they thought that God should have led the people... I remember my outrage, because how could they have protested against Israel. I remember the beginnings of Israel, because we followed this very closely and Malinka went there immediately, when there was this exodus after the war [approx. 12,000 people left with legal passports in 1947 and 1948. After the state of Israel was proclaimed legal emigration was significantly limited by

communist authorities. Emigration of more people was allowed only in 1949] organized by this Hakhsharah organization [Editor's note: There was no such organization, hakhsharah means in Hebrew preparation for settling in Palestine]. Of course, they set her up to it.

My brother Salek helped her then. There was already some organization of life there and whoever was lucky managed to find these settlements which were being created. And whoever wasn't lucky had to live in very primitive conditions in the desert. They struggled in these shacks and farmed the land with their hands, because they didn't have anything. Luckily she had some contacts, she arrived in Haifa and entered a community of people who were already organized, and that's where she met her first husband, Kornhauser. He was considered an aristocrat there, because he came from this family of writers, well known in Polish literature. He left from those lands near Wroclaw. He was a wonderful man. They worked physically, because that was in fashion at that time, that each one had to work physically and was responsible for some situation. So they all said that they needed wise people there, for creative work.

Malinka married this Kornhauser and their first child, a boy, was born. On the very day the son turned one, Kornhauser died in some horrible accident at work and Malinka was left alone. But she became independent: she took some massage course, although it turned out soon that her hands were too weak for this. Then she remarried and her current name is Szif. Father's family from Gorlice helped Malinka a lot in the beginning, because they had some position there. They immigrated to Israel in the very first days after the war. They sold the house in Gorlice and went there with their entire family. This cousin Romek [Roman], also Krygier, organized the planting of forests, he was involved in forestry. He started setting that up there and immediately became somebody.

Father's second brother, Zelman [or Zalmen] from Glogow, didn't survive the war. Together with his sons and wife he died in Belzec. Only one daughter, Helena, was saved from Samuel Krygier's family, Father's brother who lived in Cracow. His son Dawid died somewhere in Ukraine. He was murdered by Ukrainians, they accused him of something, I don't know what. He managed to get married there, although he left a longtime fiancée in Poland. His sister, Maria, also died in Ukraine with her husband Edmund Milet, who was a lawyer.

And I started a family. From the remains of the estate I had some money, after the sale of the house in Staroniwa - I didn't manage to get anything else back - we bought a house in Wieliczka. And this is where I lived and gave birth to two children. Ala [Alicja] was born in 1945 [in Tarnow] and when she was a year old she got sick with Heine-Medina [children's paralysis, a contagious epidemic childhood illness; food infection, the course of the disease can vary from mild to fatal], because there was an epidemic in Poland at that time.

Ala was sick all the time. I had all kinds of problems, because they wanted to throw me out of the house. This was during the PRL. Yes, they would send all kinds of volunteers who liked the house and wanted to throw me out. When we bought the house, Salek purchased the second floor of the house, the previous owner moved out immediately and I moved in quickly, because I had been living in an apartment in a complex for railroad workers in Tarnow and we had to move out, because my husband was transferred to work in Cracow. They later pestered me, the authorities, that I didn't have an official allotment. [After the war there weren't enough apartments, due to wartime damages. Housing offices were formed to allot the remaining apartments to families.

Some families which had more space per person than the norm accepted by the Housing Office had to accept additional new residents in their apartments.] Some official summoned me and told me that I had to leave, because this apartment was reserved for someone else. For some official. This was right before the Easter holidays, I think in 1949. Their holidays began on Good Friday, and on that Good Friday I was summoned there and they told me that after the holidays I had to empty the apartment for some buddy of theirs. And, of course, I talked to this official, but he made me angry by shouting, 'You can buy an entire street if you want to, but if you want to live somewhere, you need my permission,' and so on. He let me know that a bribe was needed. I understood that immediately. He made me so mad I said, 'I know what you want, just tell me how much and if I can... if I can get a receipt.' I did all I could to make him mad. I thought to myself there was nothing to lose anyway. He looked at me as if I was from a different planet. He told me to get out before he got really mad.

So I came home and thought to myself - what am I to do? I didn't have the other children yet, only Ala, so I thought to myself, 'What will I do with a sick child? Where will I go? I don't even have a place to go to.' And then I remembered that I had this friend from Rzeszow, a Jew, whom I knew since childhood; we were good friends. Milka Garfunkel was her name. She got married in Cracow to someone who was a printer, a well qualified printer. His name was Iziu, he survived the war in Russia and made it to Warsaw from there and they gave him a good position in some publishing house. And because he was a nice and kind man he had lots of contacts there. A Jew wouldn't have stupid acquaintances, only wise ones, that's how it was. They were both very assimilated and he was friends with the director of a department at the Ministry of Justice. And this Milka was in touch with me. So I thought that I would write her, perhaps she could help me somehow. My husband didn't know what to do either. But I thought: 'What if I write her and during that time they evict me? There's no time.' I had to board a train and in the evening, on that Good Friday, go to Warsaw. I left the child with Grandmother.

In the morning I reached Milka. She looked at me and asked, 'Holy Lord, what happened?' And I told her then and her husband, this Iziu, says: 'So what do we do? I'll go to this buddy of mine who is the director of the department and ask him for advice.' He went there and that buddy said - no problem. He wrote a certificate that they should .... well, that I was untouchable and his signature was on it, of course. So I took this certificate to those wise guys on the day I was supposed to move out and showed it to them. You should have seen the face of this guy who tried to be so smart when I wanted a receipt for the bribe, he must have thought I was crazy. And they left me alone. What nerve I had. But later others admired this and said, 'Were you crazy? How could you insist on a receipt for a bribe? You're not thinking like a sane person.'

I don't know who, but after the war someone on my husband's side was interested in who I was and where I came from. And they denounced me to the militia, that I had false papers, because I didn't have an identity card, but this German 'Kennkarte' [identity card] written out in my wartime name. They came, the militia, all dressed up in uniforms! They took this 'Kennkarte' from me, they tore it up and threw it in the corner. I was supposed to show up at the militia in Cracow, as a suspect. I went there with a heavy heart, because even the Germans never treated me like that. I went there, it was some important office. Several people were sitting behind a desk and I was being interviewed by some, forgive my language, ditz, no more than a teenager. So they looked at it [the document], because they picked up this 'Kennkarte' then and put the pieces together and glued

them. And in this 'Kennkarte' I was seven years younger than in reality. I was born in 1909 and in those documents it was 1916. This woman looked at me angrily and said, 'You're one arrogant Jew to make yourself so much younger.' What a circus. And I looked at her and thought, 'You bimbo, why are you angry?' And I said to her, 'Why do you think no one ever questioned this before. You're the first one. And how dare you address me like that? Why? What times are we living in?'

A friend of mine, Marysia, a friend of the family and a Catholic was there with me. She got really scared. And she said, 'What is she doing?' But they didn't do anything to me for that, because she didn't have the right to address me like that. Oh, these are interesting memories. My husband would sometimes stop me and say, 'You know, you're behaving like a drunk.' And that's when they forced me to get a new identity card, the proper kind. I had to go to Rzeszow, find my birth certificate the way it was and now I have my last name and maiden name in my identity card and everything. That was the one and only time I went to Rzeszow, for that birth certificate, but I didn't visit anything, didn't walk around. I just went to the Jewish community, collected my birth certificate from them and went back. I couldn't even walk on those streets, because I remembered very well what it had been like.

I don't remember when these stories with the house and the 'Kennkarte' happened, but I know it must have been during the PRL [Polish People's Republic], when the PRL was in full bloom. I had some problems, but I didn't worry about them too much. Later, unfortunately, I got acquainted with the [Polish] society very well ... that was fascism, one hundred percent. The worst kind of anti-Semitism, sometimes a bit softer, but often the softer kind is enough. Cruel, ruthlessly cruel. I defended myself, because I had to, I couldn't tell them who I was in such a society, could I? But I always asked, 'Well, where's your commandment about loving your neighbor? Who do think is your neighbor anyway?' I tried to shake them up a bit.

That's why I never talked about my life with strangers. I wouldn't have wanted to, because those were times when one person spied on another and wanted to find out something. Those were the times - no use talking about it. That's why my children attended [Catholic] religious classes. I didn't want them to be different. One time a priest visited me, about the children. There was some kind of collection of money for the church... I don't remember it exactly, but I do remember how he looked at me and said, 'Why have I never seen you at church?' 'Well, I'm not attractive enough for you to notice me.' He blushed, said he was sorry and left.

I was never in close contact with the people here in Wieliczka. There was a neighbor here who wanted to keep in touch with me and she did, because I helped her when her daughter wanted to learn ballet, I sewed dresses for that daughter and so on. There was a second neighbor who really adored me, but she doesn't come anymore. She's afraid I'll give her something to do. Well, people are different... And those others, they're secretive, but they somehow managed to find out who I am. Well, people are helpful, aren't they? For example they were very interested in my birth certificate and in my marriage. Yes, the community is divided, but there are anti-Semites, intolerant people, they have no political class, no political orientation. They are just like everyone else and that's why they win elections; I know them.

My husband worked as a musician in an orchestra, he was often summoned to different units for all kinds of events, but he later reached the conclusion that he couldn't support a family by playing music. So I sewed. Two, three nights in a row I'd stay up sewing. Sometimes the lights would go out

[during the PRL there were often restrictions in the supply of power], so I'd sew by a kerosene lamp. Tailoring, if you want to do it properly, is a lot of effort. There was this institute in Gliwice where you could learn a trade and my husband learned two trades there: locksmithery and welding. In both of them he had excellent results. He got a job at the ironworks [the Lenin Ironworks, created in 1954, the largest industrial plant in the area of Cracow] and that's when we started to have more money. And that's when he threw all my customers out. I wasn't allowed to continue sewing. 'If I come home and these hags are here, I don't know what I'll do.' But there were always two or three, waiting for measurements. But I was well prepared for this job, my customers were always satisfied and the clothes were always very carefully finished, even embroidered.

My children

Ala was born in 1945, Krysia [Krystyna] in 1950 and Edziu [Edmund] in 1951. I wasn't that stupid to have one child after another, but somehow it worked out that Edziu was born one year after Krysia. Ala spent several months receiving treatment in a hospital, in Warsaw. I had to be there with her, because they didn't have enough staff and those children were there after the epidemic, there were so many of them. I barely found a place for Ala. Milka helped me then. She kept me all that time in the apartment. I sewed for her, helped her do the housekeeping.

They were treating my Ala there, but they had some stupid method: x-rays. The child had to lie down on this table, face down and I had to put on rubber gloves, because those were x-rays, and a protective apron and I was supposed to hold her bottom and her head, so she wouldn't move around. It was about the backbone, the backbone was supposed to be exposed to the x- rays. It didn't hurt at all, but this machine made a strange sound which made her nervous, because she shouted at the top of her voice. And she flung herself about, I wasn't able to hold her down, because those gloves were so heavy and clumsy and the apron weighed me down. Dear God, I just wished this would all be over, because I couldn't handle it any longer. So I took off the apron, threw away the gloves and held her with my bare hands. The doctor came in, looked at me, outraged and said, 'What are you doing?' I explained that I couldn't do it. 'Do you know what you've done?' - he said. 'You could become infertile.' So I just asked him, 'Only?' And he said, 'Not enough for you?' So I didn't say anything more to him. I came back home with the child, I didn't say anything to my husband. Well, so I won't have any more children, well, that's fine with me. I thought I'd have just two and that would be good. And it turned out I was 'so infertile' that I got pregnant the following year.

And that's how Edzio was born in 1951. It was good, because when he was born I said 'Edmund' and my mother-in-law came and said: 'please, use Franciszek for his middle name.' So I said, 'Very well.' And when Edziu started growing up Grandma loved him very much, because he was such a clever child. So she used to say to him, 'You're not Edmund, you're Franciszek, because I want you to be like my husband, your grandfather.' Father-in-law was already dead by that time. And when Edziu started talking, he liked it very much when I told him, 'Edziu, there's company, please go and introduce yourself.' He would go, straighten his jacket, hold out his little hand and say, 'Jo jestem Jan Cisek.' [literally 'I am Jan Cisek.' He wanted to say 'Franciszek', but couldn't pronounce the word].

Milka's entire family went to America, because the family there told them: 'Either you leave Poland, or we never want to hear from you again, because there's no life for Jews there. Horrible things

await you there and we won't try to save you, because it won't be possible.' And they took them all to America, with this printer and his daughter. She had graduated from high school by then. But this Irka was a nice girl and Milka is dead by now. The Wisniowski family, who hid me in Staroniwa, also immigrated to America. Their daughter is still there. She's sick now. I am in touch with her and that family treats me as one of their family members, because when her son comes from America he always pays me a visit. The second one also calls. They're in touch with Ala. I always get holiday and name day [widely celebrated in Catholic countries: each day of the year corresponds to one or more names.] cards, also letters from time to time, phone calls. All the time.

This marriage of mine, during the war, it was fake. I only later straightened all this out, after I had all the children. I don't remember exactly, but I know it was 15 years after this fictitious marriage, when I had a civil marriage [in 1958]. It was in Bielsko. My brother Salek did this for me. His friends joked that in such a situation they wouldn't get married. And my husband very solemnly... kept cheering me on to get married, for the entire 15 years - when and when? And I had so many other worries. It's just like Krysia says, 'Mom, you never got bored in your life.' Yes, I had a varied life, that's true.

None of us belonged to the Party [Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR)] 21. No one managed to convince my husband to sign up, in spite of everything. Even those friends from Warsaw, who helped me stay in that house, because they were in touch with my husband, would sometimes come and try to convince him. They'd say, 'You won't achieve anything, if you don't sign up for the party.' And he would answer, 'Too bad, I'm not fit for this. I won't do anything I'm unsure of.'

Ala studied pedagogy and then she also did library studies at the Jagiellonian University [in Cracow]. When she graduated from university, she started working in a library. She was very talented. She could do everything. She was involved in the theater. She made dolls and wrote scripts, so she was later well known. Krysia managed to be accepted at AGH [University of Science and Technology, in Cracow], because my husband worked in metallurgy, at the Ironworks, and somebody from there helped. She was not well suited for these studies, metallurgy, but this was the only department which accepted her, although she had excellent grades.

Then my brother Zygmunt wrote me from London, 'What will you do with those children there? There's no future for them. Send them to me, I'll take care of them.' Ala stayed, but Krysia and Edziu, who had just graduated from high school, were supposed to go. Edziu was about to be drafted into the army. He was terrified, he didn't want to join the army. He was terrified, because he had heard what they do there and he received notification that he had to show up one day before Christmas. Meanwhile, I was arranging all the papers from my brother and everyone was saying they wouldn't let him leave the country. And he left at the last moment. It was in 1970. Later, they came to get him. To our house. That's how it was. But Zygmunt had taken those two children of mine to England and helped set them up there. Zygmunt is not alive anymore.

Salek also left Poland, when in the 1960s they were forcing all the Jews to leave [Anti-Zionist campaign in Poland] 22. He felt threatened, so he sold everything and went to Sweden, because Sweden was accepting emigrants from Poland. He received some benefits there, he managed to work for ten more years at a factory, where they made all kinds of decorations. He made some money, he's now retired. And he's still there. He's alive, but this 'hadra', this wife of his, is killing him. Salek's health isn't very good.

I've never been to Israel, but I really wish I had. This is the biggest mistake I ever made in life. My sister Malinka's husband, the first one, used to say he wouldn't sleep until he got all of us there, but he died in that horrible accident, unfortunately. I wasn't sure, but I think I would have made the decision. It was always about my husband. He would have gone with me anywhere, without a doubt. He was a talented man, but he didn't have a knack for languages. He would have never learned. Well, the Germans worked on him all they could, but they never taught him German. I could communicate with them quite well.

But my Krysia, she did go to Israel. First she was in England, she was working there. And this cousin from Germany, Erich Sternszuss, Aunt Berta's son, he talked her into going to university there, because after the war he emigrated from Germany and settled in England. He married a Jewess from Austria, a kind and nice lady and he had one son. Krysia went there and they admitted her to the University of Jerusalem. And she managed to teach herself Hebrew so well in one year that she passed all the exams. Yes, it's true. Almost incredible. She later returned to England and that's where she lives now. She has this job where she has to go on delegations to all countries. She's working in some electronic corporation for computers, so she's someone important there.

Malinka has two very successful children and grandchildren in Israel. She has just written to say that Amit - whom I know, because she was here on a trip - a pretty girl with beautiful hair - passed her high school final exams and just this Sunday entered the army for two years [the first conversation with Salomea Gemrot took place on 3rd February 2005, so she's referring to Sunday, 30th January 2005]. Her brother is already serving in the army. In Israel Malinka is in touch with Giza, the one who couldn't live without my brother. She's alive there and has a family.

I belong to the Association of Jews [TSKZ]. Last year I had an accident, I fell so unfortunately that I broke some important element in my hip and what's left is this injury and pain. So I don't walk. Since that time I have rehabilitation at home, but I don't have much hope. When I was in hospital after this happened, the doctors started considering surgery. One doctor came to see me and I asked him, 'Well, how long will the recovery take?' He said, 'Up to three years.' So I said, 'We can't do it, because there's no guarantee I'll live for 100 years.' 'Yes, you're right indeed' - he admitted. Well, after all who's got a guarantee to live so indecently long on this earth? And, unfortunately, the way it is now, I can't really go anywhere, but earlier - well, I didn't go for events to the association [TSKZ], because I'm too old for such things, but for all these meetings, sometimes I did. Ala still attends them, pays the dues and so on. Every year I get compensation from the Germans, from the Foundation. [The foundation Polsko-Niemieckie Pojednanie (Polish-German Reconciliation) was created in 1992. The Germans have remitted 500 mln German marks to be divided between the living victims of the Third Reich]. This compensation arrives here in the mail.

After the war, I didn't really practice. I didn't practice, although I was never Godless. Never. I always thought something was watching over me and every evening I'd pray, not in Yiddish, but in Polish, I'd always say to myself, 'Thank you God for one more day of my life.' And there, at the association, when I was signing up, there was this chairman, I don't remember his name [Mr. Winnicki]. A very nice man. He was a Jew, of course, and he kept his wartime name. And he explained it to me: 'if you're a believer, you have to accept the name you were saved with as God's will, because he gave you that name.' This name was supposed to stay, because God interfered with life and gave you that name. Well, this was a possible interpretation for believers. And he listed the members of that organization who kept their wartime names. I had several of these last

names: Kloc, Tomaka and one after some priest from Lwow, I don't remember. And there in Cracow they told me that I shouldn't have allowed them to take that name away from me, because none of them [members of TSKZ] changed their names, they all kept them. And they took my name away from me by force, after the war. But I couldn't keep any of the wartime names, because I had another last name - Gemrot, my husband's name.

This is fate. The way my life turned out, it's as if there was some fate for me. Something awaited me, everywhere something. My husband used to tell me that he was also unlucky. In 1939 when they were running away from the Germans, he evacuated from Tarnow with the unit where he was working. And he said that when they reached the borderlands, close to the Russians, they started bombing. They were walking in one group, all those who were running away, through fields, walking forward. And my husband broke away from this group and told his buddies not to go that way, because he didn't want to. He told them to go off the main road and take the smaller paths. They listened to him and as soon as they got off the main road, bombs were dropped there and made these huge holes. No one would have survived that. So there's something to it [fate]. I believe that. This terrorist of mine [the rehabilitation specialist who visits her two times a week] she gives me such a workout that I cannot move at all afterwards. But that's good, because the following day it's always a bit better. I remember I was always dissatisfied, because how can you be satisfied with such a fate? My husband used to say, 'Don't cry, it can always get worse.' That's what he told me. He died 20 years ago [1985], of heart failure.

Glossary

1 Galicia

Informal name for the lands of the former Polish Republic under Habsburg rule (1772-1918), derived from the official name bestowed on these lands by Austria: the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria. From 1815 the lands west of the river San (including Krakow) began by common consent to be called Western Galicia, and the remaining part (including Lemberg), with its dominant Ukrainian population Eastern Galicia. Galicia was agricultural territory, an economically backward region. Its villages were poor and overcrowded (hence the term 'Galician misery'), which, given the low level of industrial development (on the whole processing of agricultural and crude-oil based products) prompted mass economic emigration from the 1890s; mainly to the Americas. After 1918 the name Eastern Malopolska for Eastern Galicia was popularized in Poland, but Ukrainians called it Western Ukraine.

2 Anti-Jewish Legislation in Poland

After World War I nationalist groupings in Poland lobbied for the introduction of the numerus clausus (Lat. closed number - a limit on the number of people admitted to the practice of a given profession or to an institution - a university, government office or association) in relation to Jews and other ethnic minorities. The most radical groupings demanded the introduction of the numerus nullus principle, i.e. a total ban on admittance to universities and certain professions. The numerus nullus principle was violated by the Polish constitution. The battle for its introduction continued throughout the interwar period. In practice the numerus clausus was applied informally. In 1938 it was indirectly introduced at the Bar.

3 Hahalutz

Hebrew for pioneer, it stands for a Zionist organization that prepared young people for emigration to Palestine. It was founded at the beginning of the 20th century in Russia and began operating in Poland in 1905, later also spread to the USA and other countries. Between the two wars its aim was to unite all the Zionist youth organizations. Members of Hahalutz were sent on hakhshara, where they received vocational training. Emphasis was placed chiefly on volunteer work, the ability to live and work in harsh conditions, and military training. The organization had its own agricultural farms in Poland. On completing hakhshara young people received British certificates entitling them to emigrate to Palestine. Around 26,000 young people left Poland under this scheme in 1925-26. In 1939 Hahalutz had some 100,000 members throughout Europe. In World War II it operated as a conspiratorial organization. It was very active in culture and education after the war. The Polish arm was disbanded in 1949.

4 Autonomy of Galicia (1867-1918)

Following the 1867 Ausgleich (Compromise between Vienna and Hungary and the founding of the Austro- Hungarian double Monarchy) the predominantly non-German provinces of Cisleithania (The Austrian half of the double state) were also provided greater authonomy, although the previous Czech and Polish plans for incorporating their lands into a greater federal structure failed. Although the Poles were in majority only in Western Galicia, in 1867 the Galician Sejm (Parliament) was founded in the Eastern Galician city of Lemberg (Lwow, Lvov, today Lviv). It was responsible for various internal matters, i.e. education, taxation, culture, etc. The Galician Sejm also delegated deputies to the Reichsrat (Austrian Parliament) in Vienna. In 1871 a Minister for Galician Affairs was appointed in Vienna. Polish was declared official language in the whole province and administration, justice sytem and education was distincly Polish, while the overwhelming majority of Eastern Galicia was Ukrainian. The Universities of Cracow and Lemberg were Polonized (1870) and the Polish Academy of Sciences was founded in Cracow (1872). The Polish administration of Galicia attempted to Polonize Eastern Galicia that invoked Ukrainian resistance. Many of the leading Galician Polish intellectuals (Jozef Szujski, Stanislaw Tarnowski, Stanislaw Kozmian, Ludwik Wodzicki, etc.) welcomed the chages and emphasized economic growth and the streangthening of Galicia's authonomy within the Austro- Hungarian Monarchy instead of armed struggle fot national independence. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galicia_%28Central_Europe%29)

5 Polish Scouting

Soon after the founding of the Scouting movement by R. Baden-Powell and the publishing of his 'Scouting for Boys' in 1908, Polish Scouting was created in 1911 by Andrzej Malkowski in the Galician capital of Lemberg (Lwow, Lvov, today Lviv). The magazine 'Skaut' (Scout) was issued. Troops were soon organized in the Polish lands under Germany and Russia too. The scouts were actuively involved in the fight for Polish independence before and during WWI. In 1918, after Polish independence was gained, the troops from all the three partitions (Austria, Germany anmd Russia) were joined into one organization - ZHP (Union of Polish Scouting).

6 May 3rd Constitution

Constitutional treaty from 1791, adopted during the Four-Year Sejm by the patriotic party as a result of a compromise with the royalist party. The constitution was an attempt to redress the internal relations in Poland after the first partition (1772). It created the basis of the structure of modern Poland, as a constitutional monarchy. In the first article the constitution guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion, although Catholicism remained the ruling religion. Members of other religions were assured 'governmental care.' The constitution instituted the division of powers, restricted the privileges of the nobility, granted far-ranging rights to townspeople and assured governmental protection to peasants. Four years later, in 1795, Poland finally lost its independence and was fully divided up between its three powerful neighbours: Russia, Prussia and Austria.

7 Kosciuszko, Tadeusz (1746-1817)

general, Polish national hero. Born in Poland, studied military engineering in Paris and later moved to America, where he joined the colonial army. Gained fame during the American Revolution for his fortifications and battle skills, especially during the siege of Saratoga. Returned to Poland in 1784. In 1794 he led a rebellion against occupying Russian and Prussian forces, known as the Kosciuszko Uprising (Powstanie Kosciuszkowskie). Jailed in Russia from 1794 to 1796, later left for France, where he continued efforts to secure Polish independence.

8 HIAS (Hebrew Immigration Aid Society)

founded in New York City by a group of Jewish immigrants in 1881, HIAS has offered food, shelter and other aid to emigrants. HIAS has assisted more than 4.5 million people in their quest for freedom. This includes the million Jewish refugees it helped to immigrate to Israel (in cooperation with the Jewish Agency for Israel), and the thousands it helped resettle in Canada, Latin America, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere. As the oldest international migration and refugee resettlement agency in the U.S., HIAS also played a major role in the rescue and relocation of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust and of Jews from Morocco, Ethiopia, Egypt and the communist countries of Eastern Europe. More recently, since the mid-1970s, HIAS has helped Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union. In Poland the society has been active since before 1939. After the war HIAS received permission to recommence its activities in March 1946, and opened offices in Warsaw, Bialystok, Katowice, Cracow, Lublin and Lodz. It provided information on emigration procedures and the policies of foreign countries regarding emigres, helped deal with formalities involved in emigration, and provided material assistance and care for emigres.

9 Poland's independence, 1918

In 1918 Poland regained its independence after over 100 years under the partitions, when it was divided up between Russia, Austria and Prussia. World War I ended with the defeat of all three partitioning powers, which made the liberation of Poland possible. On 8 January 1918 the president of the USA, Woodrow Wilson, declaimed his 14 points, the 13th of which dealt with Poland's independence. In the spring of the same year, the Triple Entente was in secret negotiations with Austria-Hungary, offering them integrity and some of Poland in exchange for parting company with their German ally, but the talks were a fiasco and in June the Entente reverted to its original demands of full independence for Poland. In the face of the defeat of the Central Powers, on 7 October 1918 the Regency Council issued a statement to the Polish nation proclaiming its independence and the reunion of Poland. Institutions representing the Polish nation on the

international arena began to spring up, as did units disarming the partitioning powers' armed forces and others organizing a system of authority for the needs of the future state. In the night of 6-7 November 1918, in Lublin, a Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland was formed under Ignacy Daszynski. Its core comprised supporters of Pilsudski. On 11 November 1918 the armistice was signed on the western front, and the Regency Council entrusted Pilsudski with the supreme command of the nascent army. On 14 November the Regency Council dissolved, handing all civilian power to Pilsudski; the Lublin government also submitted to his rule. On 17 November Pilsudski appointed a government, which on 21 November issued a manifesto promising agricultural reforms and the nationalization of certain branches of industry. It also introduced labor legislation that strongly favored the workers, and announced parliamentary elections. On 22 November Pilsudski announced himself Head of State and signed a decree on the provisional authorities in the Republic of Poland. The revolutionary left, from December 1918 united in the Communist Workers' Party of Poland, came out against the government and independence, but the program of Pilsudski's government satisfied the expectations of the majority of society and emboldened it to fight for its goals within the parliamentary democracy of the independent Polish state. In January and June 1919 the first elections to the Legislative Sejm were held. On 20 February 1919 the Legislative Sejm passed the 'small constitution'; Pilsudski remained Head of State. The first stage of establishing statehood was completed, despite the fact that the issue of Poland's borders had not yet been resolved.

10 Slowacki, Juliusz (1809-1849)

one of the most outstanding Polish romantic poets and revolutionary, next to Mickiewicz and Krasinski, called 'the national bard.' Born in Krzemieniec (Kremenets, Ukraine), graduated from university in Vilna (Wilno, Vilnius, Lithuania), later went to Paris as the Courier of the National Government and settled there. He spent several years in Switzerland, traveled all over Europe, to Egypt, Palestine, Syria. His poems dealt with the struggle for independence, the past of the nation and the causes of the partitions. After the Wielkopolskie Uprising (1848) broke out, Slowacki went to Poznan (Posen, Prussian partition) in spite of advanced pneumonia, later he joined the Polish expatriots in Paris, where he died. (http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/s/slowacki.asp)

11 Mickiewicz, Adam (1798-1855)

Often regarded as the greatest Polish poet. As a student he was arrested for nationalist activities by the tsarist police in 1823. In 1829 he managed to emigrate to France and worked as professor of literature at different universities. During the 1848 revolution in France and the Crimean War he attempted to organize legions for the Polish cause. Mickiewicz's poetry gave international stature to Polish literature. His powerful verse expressed a romantic view of the soul and the mysteries of life, often employing Polish folk themes. 12 Pogrom in Rzeszow: It broke out on May 3rd, 1919. Due to food shortages an angry crowd gathered in front of the District Seat in Rzeszow and started protesting. In response, the officials announced that local Jews had lots of food. The angry mob stormed Jewish stores and apartments, destroying and raiding them. One of the synagogues was seriously damaged, as was the shtibl (Chasidic house of prayer). Sixty Jews were wounded during the incidents, many seriously.

13 Treblinka

village in Poland's Mazovia region, site of two camps. The first was a penal labor camp, established in 1941 and operating until 1944. The second, known as Treblinka II, functioned in the period 1942-43 and was a death camp. Prisoners in the former worked in Treblinka II. In the second camp a ramp and a mock-up of a railway station were built, which prevented the victims from realizing what awaited them until just in front of the entrance to the gas chamber. The camp covered an area of 13.5 hectares. It was bounded by a 3-m high barbed wire fence interwoven densely with pine branches to screen what was going on inside. The whole process of exterminating a transport from arrival in the camp to removal of the corpses from the gas chamber took around 2 hours. Several transports arrived daily. In the 13 months of the extermination camp's existence the Germans gassed some 750,000-800,000 Jews. Those taken to Treblinka included Warsaw Jews during the Grossaktion [great liquidation campaign] in the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942. As well as Polish Jews, Jews from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Yugoslavia and the USSR were also killed in Treblinka. In the spring of 1943 the Germans gradually began to liquidate the camp. On 2 August 1943 an uprising broke out there with the aim of enabling some 200 people to escape. The majority died.

14 Belzec

Village in Lublin region of Poland (Tomaszow district). In 1940 the Germans created a forced labor camp there for 2,500 Jews and Roma. In November 1941 it was transformed into an extermination camp (SS Sonderkommando Belzec or Dienststelle Belzec der Waffen SS) under the 'Reinhard-Aktion', in which the Germans murdered around 600,000 people (chiefly in gas chambers), including approximately 550,000 Polish Jews (approx. 300,000 from the province of Galicia) and Jews from the USSR, Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Holland, Germany, Norway and Hungary; many Poles from surrounding towns and villages and from Lwow also died here, mostly for helping Jews. In November 1942 the Nazis began liquidating the camp. In the spring of 1943 the camp was demolished and the corpses of the gassed victims exhumed from their mass graves and burned. The last 600 Jews employed in this work were then sent to the Sobibor camp, where they died in the gas chambers.

15 Rzeszow Ghetto

It was created in January 1942 and contained a total of approx. 25,000 Jews from Rzeszow and the surrounding area. In the summer of 1942 over 20,000 people were murdered in the extermination camp in Belzec, several thousand were shot to death in the forests near Rudna, Szebnie and Glogow. The ghetto was finally liquidated in September 1943. Persons suitable for labor were deported to labor camps in Szebnie and Plaszow, the remaining ones were killed in Auschwitz. A few Jews remained in the Rzeszow labor camp until July 1944.

16 Volksdeutscher

In Poland a person who was entered (usually voluntarily, more rarely compulsorily) on a list of people of ethnic German origin during the German occupation was called Volksdeutscher and had various privileges in the occupied territories.

17 Kazimierz

Now a district of Cracow lying south of the Main Market Square, it was initially a town in its own right, which received its charter in 1335. Kazimierz was named in honor of its founder, King Casimir the Great. In 1495 King Jan Olbracht issued the decision to transfer the Jews of Cracow to Kazimierz. From that time on a major part of Kazimierz became a center of Jewish life. Before 1939 more than 64,000 Jews lived in Cracow, which was some 25% of the city's total population. Only the culturally assimilated Jewish intelligentsia lived outside Kazimierz. Until the outbreak of World War II this quarter remained primarily a Jewish district, and was the base for the majority of the Jewish institutions, organizations and parties. The religious life of Cracow's Jews was also concentrated here; they prayed in large synagogues and a multitude of small private prayer houses. In 1941 the Jews of Cracow were removed from Kazimierz to the ghetto, created in the district of Podgorze, where some died and the remainder were transferred to the camps in Plaszow and Auschwitz. The majority of the pre-war monuments, synagogues and Jewish cemeteries in Kazimierz have been preserved to the present day, and a few Jewish institutions continue to operate.

18 Anders' Army

The Polish Armed Forces in the USSR, subsequently the Polish Army in the East, known as Anders' Army: an operations unit of the Polish Armed Forces formed pursuant to the Polish-Soviet Pact of 30 July 1941 and the military agreement of 14 July 1941. It comprised Polish citizens who had been deported into the heart of the USSR: soldiers imprisoned in 1939-41 and civilians amnestied in 1941 (some 1.25-1.6m people, including a recruitment base of 100,000-150,000). The commander-in- chief of the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR was General Wladyslaw Anders. The army never reached its full quota (in February 1942 it numbered 48,000, and in March 1942 around 66,000). In terms of operations it was answerable to the Supreme Command of the Red Army, and in terms of organization and personnel to the Supreme Commander, General Wladyslaw Sikorski and the Polish government in exile. In March-April 1942 part of the Army (with Stalin's consent) was sent to Iran (33,000 soldiers and approx. 10,000 civilians). The final evacuation took place in August-September 1942 pursuant to Soviet-British agreements concluded in July 1942 (it was the aim of General Anders and the British powers to withdraw Polish forces from the USSR); some 114,000 people, including 25,000 civilians (over 13,000 children) left the Soviet Union. The units that had been evacuated were merged with the Polish Army in the Middle East to form the Polish Army in the East, commanded by Anders.

19 Battle of Monte Cassino

Also known as the Battle for Rome, it was a costly series of battles fought by the Allies at a strategic hill, with the ancient Benedictian monastery, with the intention of breaking through the Gustav Line and seizing Rome. The first battle started on January 4th, 1944 and the monastery was destroyed by Allied bombing on February 15th. During three failed attempts to take the heavily-guarded monastery of Monte Cassino, the forces of the USA, the UK, India, Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand lost approximately 54,000 men yet did not manage to seize the city or the castle. The Fourth Battle of Monte Cassino was fought by the 2nd Polish Corps under General Wladyslaw Anders (May 11-May 19). The first assault (May 11-May 12) brought heavy losses but also allowed the British Eighth Army under General Sir Oliver Leese to break through German lines in the Liri river valley below the monastery. The second assault (May 17-May 19), carried out at immense cost by the Polish troops and the key outflanking movement in the mountains by skilled

Moroccan soldiers (French Expeditionary Corps CEF), pushed the German 1st Parachute Division out of its positions on the hills surrounding the monastery and almost surrounded them. In the early morning of May 18th a reconnaissance group of Polish 12th Podolian Uhlans Regiment occupied the ruins of the monastery after it was evacuated by the Germans. The capture of Monte Cassino allowed the British and American divisions to begin the advance on Rome, which fell on June 4th, 1944 just two days before the Normandy invasion. Over 74,000 soldiers, including over 1,000 Poles, were killed in the battle. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_18)

20 Plaszow Camp

Located near Cracow, it was originally a forced labor camp and subsequently became a concentration camp. The construction of the camp began in summer 1940. In 1941 the camp was extended and the first Jews were deported there. The site chosen comprised two Jewish cemeteries. There were about 2,000 prisoners there before the liquidation of the Podgorze (Cracow) ghetto on 13th and 14th March 1943 and the transportation of the remaining Jews to Plaszow camp. Afterwards, the camp population rose to 8,000. By the second half of 1943 its population had risen to 12,000, and by May-June 1944 the number of permanent prisoners had increased to 24,000 (with an unknown number of temporary prisoners), including 6,000-8,000 Jews from Hungary. Until the middle of 1943 all the prisoners in the Plaszow forced labor camp were Jews. In July 1943, a separate section was fenced off for Polish prisoners who were sent to the camp for breaking the laws of the German occupational government. The conditions of life in the camp were made unbearable by the SS commander Amon Goeth, who became the commandant of Plaszow in February 1943. He held the position until September 1944 when he was arrested by the SS for stealing from the camp warehouses. As the Russian forces advanced further and further westward, the Germans began the systematic evacuation of the slave labor camps in their path. From the camp in Plaszow, many hundreds were sent to Auschwitz, others westward to Mauthausen and Flossenburg. On 18th January 1945 the camp was evacuated in the form of death marches, during which thousands of prisoners died from starvation or disease, or were shot if they were too weak to walk. The last prisoners were transferred to Germany on 16th January 1945. More than 150,000 civilians were held prisoner in Plaszow.

21 Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR)

communist party formed in Poland in December 1948 by the fusion of the PPR (Polish Workers' Party) and the PPS (Polish Socialist Party). Until 1989 it was the only party in the country; it held power, but was subordinate to the Soviet Union. After losing the elections in June 1989 it lost its monopoly. On 29th January 1990 the party was dissolved.

22 Anti-Zionist campaign in Poland

From 1962-1967 a campaign got underway to sack Jews employed in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the army and the central administration. The background to this anti-Semitic campaign was the involvement of the Socialist Bloc countries on the Arab side in the Middle East conflict, in connection with which Moscow ordered purges in state institutions. On 19th June 1967 at a trade union congress the then First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party [PZPR], Wladyslaw Gomulka, accused the Jews of a lack of loyalty to the state and of publicly demonstrating their enthusiasm for Israel's victory in the Six- Day-War. This address marked the start of purges among

journalists and creative professions. Poland also severed diplomatic relations with Israel. On 8th March 1968 there was a protest at Warsaw University. The Ministry of Internal Affairs responded by launching a press campaign and organizing mass demonstrations in factories and workplaces during which 'Zionists' and 'trouble-makers' were indicted and anti-Semitic and anti-intelligentsia slogans shouted. After the events of March purges were also staged in all state institutions, from factories to universities, on criteria of nationality and race. 'Family liability' was also introduced (e.g. with respect to people whose spouses were Jewish). Jews were forced to emigrate. From 1968-1971 15,000-30,000 people left Poland. They were stripped of their citizenship and right of return.