

Stefan Minc

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Warsaw

Poland

Interviewer Marta Cobel-Tokarska

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Mr. Stefan Minc is a short, elegant man with a small mustache.

He is always dressed with care – in a suit and a hat. He is invariably quick and energetic, despite his advanced age.

I met with him several times in the offices of Warsaw's Jewish organizations on Twarda Street.

After each of our meetings Mr. Minc would run on to take care of some urgent business, and never seemed to be tired.

Due to his excellent memory, the narrative is filled with detailed information, dates and names.

At times it reminds one of a detailed life report.



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• My Family Background

I will first tell you about the family of my father – Izydor Jozef Minc. My father's family comes from Warsaw. My grandfather was Adolf Mintz, spelled with a 'tz.' We spelled our name the same way, with a 'tz,' until the 1930s. [The original German spelling of the family name was Polonized in the interwar period, after Poland regained independence.] Grandfather Adolf came from Lomza. He died in 1925.

My grandmother and his wife, Roza – her maiden name was Imergluck – came from Cracow. In Cracow there was an entire huge clan of Imerglucks. The sister of grandma Roza, whose married name was Haber, lived in Cracow at 10 Grodzka Street, and was a well known doctor.

They owned their house there. Her husband was a dentist. Grandma Roza's brother was named Wilhelm Imergluck and was a representative of Lloyd, an English shipbuilding quality assurance company. At first he worked in Hamburg, but when Hitler came to power [1933], the headquarters

were moved to Paris.

There was also quite a numerous family of Imerglucks in Podgorze [district of Cracow]. Among others, there was an old grandpa there, I forget his name, who lived to be 93. He fought in the January Uprising. [National uprising in 1863-64 against Russian rule.] I don't know how he ended up in Kongresowka [see The Kingdom of Poland] [1](#), but I do know that he was a veteran of 1863. I even visited him as a child... he was a hunter and their home was filled with stuffed animal trophies.

My grandparents lived in Warsaw. Their home was in a very elegant place, on Smolna Street, opposite what is now the drugstore at the corner of Smolna and Nowy Swiat, on the third floor [the house was destroyed in WWII].

That's where the two eldest sons of my grandparents were born: Bernard Mintz, who later became a doctor, and my father – Izydor Jozef. My father was born in 1877, on 22nd March, and his brother was born some two or three years earlier. Later my grandparents moved, and the youngest son, Zygmunt was born at their new place, at number 40 Marszalkowska Street, right at Zbawiciela square. In 1913 my grandparents moved to Cracow and lived at number 2 Czarneckiego Street.

Then there were also two daughters: Anna, who was older than my father, and Natalia, who was younger – both were, of course, called Mintz. And later they both married their uncles, the brothers of my grandmother Imergluck, so their names were then Imergluck. It was quite a complicated situation, and really amusing, because they were simultaneously each other's aunts and sisters in law of their own mother.

My father's eldest sister, Anna Imergluck, née Mintz, had four children, but she died young, when she was in her thirties. For her husband, Izydor, this was terribly painful. And half a year afterwards he died as well. So the four children were left behind.

These children were raised in the home of my grandmother Roza's sister, Jetka [Jettit] Imergluck in Cracow at 33 Jozefinska Street. The costs of their upbringing were covered by the younger brother of grandmother Roza, Wilhelm. He had bought a house in Paris [for rent] and the income from this huge house was used to cover the costs of living of those children.

My father's older brother, Bernard, completed his studies in Vienna around 1908-9. There he married and her name was Maria (people called her Mitzi). She was a native of Vienna, and although there are many Catholics in Vienna, she was a protestant.

Until 1926 they lived in Lodz, at 6 Plac Wolnosci [Freedom Square]. They were childless, but since they loved children, they always had Christmas parties at their house and all the children of my mother's sisters would come visit them. Bernard and Mitzi could afford this, they were quite wealthy.

Bernard was the head of a ward in a hospital, and he also worked in a doctors' co-operative called Sanitas. Since we were also doing quite well, the gifts he gave us were rather modest. But my mother's sisters were not so well off, so for them he would prepare more meaningful presents. It was all very nicely arranged. Bernard had never been baptized but his wife was a protestant.

My father's younger brother, Zygmunt, graduated in law some time in the early 20s, and he became a judge in Bochnia near Cracow. Up until the war he was a judge in a town court. There was some pressure, but he never got baptized. Zygmunt had a wife named Erna.

In 1927 or 1928 their son Adam was born. Before the war Zygmunt would sometimes visit us in Lodz – he came rarely, but he did come – and then we would sometimes travel to Cracow, for family gatherings of sorts.

My father's whole family was quite polonized, assimilated, several generations back they had spoken only Polish, the children were sent to Polish schools... In any case, a nice bit of evidence of the extent of their assimilation is that my father had given us Polish names.

Moreover, he insisted that other children born in my mother's family should be given Polish names, too. The point was for the kids to have an easier time later in their lives. So that my older brother, he was my senior by some 6 years, was named Wladyslaw, then I was named Stefan, and the youngest one was called Ludwik. Wladek, Stefek and Lulek [Polish diminutives for the three brothers].

My mother's maiden name was Fajner, she was named Anna, but everyone called her Andzia, Anele. My mom's documents said she was Chana vel Anna. She was born in Olkusz in 1891. Her parents' names were Maurycy and Roza Fajner, but I don't know the maiden name of my grandmother.

Later her family moved to Lodz. There were very many of them. In my father's family there were three brothers and two sisters, but here there were as many as eight children. Her sisters: Bella and Helena; and her brothers: Samuel, Jakub, Maksymilian, Adolf and Jozef. Eight altogether.

The eldest was Samuel Fajner, who served in the tsarist army and was involved in the social-democratic movement. As you know, this was an illegal party in Russia [SDKPiL] [2](#) and right before the revolution of 1905 [Russian Revolution] [3](#) he was warned by some officers who were his friends, that his name was on the proscription list – as one of the people to be shot.

He ran away from the army with his friend Roghovy, a native Russian. They stopped at home for just about half an hour, they were so scared of the tsar's security forces following them. They emigrated to the USA, through Germany. And from about 1906 onwards he lived in the United States.

Up to about 1922 Adolf worked for my father. My father had an electro-technical establishment. Adolf learned the profession while working for him, but then things got difficult in Poland, so he emigrated to Germany, to Dortmund in the Rhine region. He lived there until more or less 1938, working, among other things, as a taxi driver.

Then he moved to Manchester in England. He was struggling financially and he believed things would work out better for him in America. And just before the war he was planning to join his brother Samuel in Cleveland, he even sent all his belongings out there. Then the war broke out and he stayed in England, in Manchester. He survived the war, just as Samuel's family in Cleveland did.

My mother's younger brothers, Maksymilian and Jozef, both took part in the 1905 revolution – they were on the barricades as young boys. My uncle Jakub Fajner was quite an active member of Poalei

Zion ⁴. The brothers of the husband of Helena, my mother's younger sister, that is Wolf and Jakub Eichner, were activists in Bund ⁵. My relatives were so numerous, that when I arrived in Cracow after completing my high school finals in 1939, I had a difficult time stopping by and visiting each of them, to collect my presents... It was a family of about one hundred people, maybe more than that.

My father was an engineer, specializing in electric technology. He graduated from Russkoye Realnoye Uchilishche [Russian Highschool with emphasis on the Sciences in its curriculum] on Nowy Zjazd street in Warsaw. After that he studied in Germany. He completed one faculty in Sachsen Anhalt, and then another, that is mechanics, he did in Charlottenburg, Berlin.

He spoke German very well, and he spoke French, and then later he taught himself English as well, in his mature years. Why did he choose to study abroad? German technical universities had an excellent reputation. And my father wanted to have the diploma of a polytechnic that really meant something in the world.

Anyway, in those times a degree in engineering was not what it is today, the position of an engineer was incomparably higher. My father did his apprenticeship in the 'Lazarz' coal mine near Sosnowiec, and then another in the paper-works of prince Druckolubecki in the Smolensk province.

How did my parents meet? That is a long story. After my mother's oldest brother ran off to the United States, it was the grandfather, Maurycy Fajner, who supported the family. He did trade in Lodz, but what he traded in I don't know exactly. So here was the situation: seven children, and two parents, and suddenly there is no income.

That was when my mother, who was 17 at the time [it was 1908], decided to set up a sewing workshop for women. She got her sisters involved in this project, they had three sewing machines, and they supported the entire family. My mother, being so brave and so smart, enjoyed great respect in the family.

She was the unwritten head of the household. She even managed to put aside a dowry for herself, of 700 rubles [the equivalent of 15 average salaries of an office worker]. This was a huge sum of money! She kept it in a postal savings account. They thought after the war [WWI] that there would be something left of it... but of course they never saw any of it. And she also prepared her whole trousseau.

Because she was working so hard, she would take her vacations in Ojcowo [near Cracow]. But then one year she went to Kazimierz on the Vistula [small very old town about 50 km west of Lublin], and this is where she met my father.

So this is where they met. And my father decided to move to Lodz for my mother's sake. He opened his electro-technical office there. They got married on 18th March 1914. My older brother, Wladek, Wladyslaw, was born on 26th January 1915.

Soon after that the Russians left Lodz [on 5th December the Russian army began its evacuation. On 6th December 1914 the Germans took over Lodz]. My younger brother Ludwik, known as Lulek, was born on 27th March 1922.

• Growing up

And I was born in August 1920 in Lodz. In fact I was born on the 14th August, but in my papers they put the 15th, and since I was already the second son, my father was not so particular about what it said in the papers. I was born in the apartment building at 44 Kilinskiego Street, but at that time it was still called Widzewska.

My parents also owned a villa in Wisniowa Gora [about 15 km east of Lodz]. I spent my childhood with my parents. We often traveled, because I was quite a sickly child, so my mother would take me to health resorts more often than the other boys. To Ciechocinek for instance. My brothers were stronger than I was. But later I grew to be strong as well. Thanks to sports I got to be no worse than the others.

We kept on living at Kilinskiego 44 until 1936. Afterwards, for a brief while, my father rented an apartment at number 1 Glowna Street, but we basically moved into our villa in Wisniowa Gora. On Kilinskiego Street we paid very high rent: 133 zloty per month. That was quite a lot. As long as my father earned a full income, this high rent was not such a big problem. But then it became a real burden for him. And since he didn't like to get behind on the rent, we had to get rid of this apartment.

Kilinskiego 44 was a huge apartment building, constructed a short time before the first war [WWI]. It was owned by Wislicki – a Lodz capitalist of Jewish descent, who owned a number of houses. Our apartment was on the second floor in the side annex, it was number 44, so my father would often joke 'And his name was 44' – like in Mickiewicz [allusion to famous quote from 'Dziady' by Adam Mickiewicz] [6](#).

Our apartment consisted of three rooms and a kitchen. It was quite spacious and well furnished.

There was a hallway, a corridor, and then opposite you faced my parents' bedroom. On the left there was the largest room: dining- and living-room in one. And from this dining-living room, if you turned right, you walked into my father's study. You could also enter this study directly from the staircase.

So there were two entries into the apartment: the main one was on the right, as you walked up the stairs, and the other one you faced straight from the stairs, and it led directly into the study. Later, when things got rough, my parents rented out the study.

At the beginning, in the first three years of my life, because I was a bit sickly, I used to sleep between my parents. My brothers slept in what later became the study. When Wladek graduated and left, Ludwik and I slept in the dining room, but this did not last very long, because later we moved out of the apartment.

Our apartment on Kilinskiego Street had a bathroom, with running water. In this period Junkers gas stoves were just only being introduced [Junkers – the make but also popular name of water-heaters; the company has existed since the beginning of the 20th century]. We had a coal stove.

At least once a week the children were bathed, but in the summer it was more often. The kitchen stove was also a coal one, but there was a gas stove as well. We had electricity. My father was, in general, a great enthusiast of all technical novelties, such as the radio for instance.

In 1925 the first radio transmitting station was activated in Warsaw [Editor's note: the first radio station was activated in Warsaw in 1918; subsequent ones started working in 1924, 1926 and 1931], so we had 'detectors' – a kind of crystal operated receivers.

Later on a friend of my father's, Ignacy Strasfogel, brought us a lamp-based receiver, with a speaker. This must have been in 1926. Half the neighborhood would come over to listen to that radio. It was such a novelty. And later, for instance – there was the vacuum cleaner.

Two companies made them in this period: Elektrolux and Protos, both of them Swedish. My father bought a Protos, and I think it was the only vacuum in our building. I remember also that my father bought a car one time – an roofless Ford, a sports-car – and this car gave him two great moments of joy.

The first joy was when he bought it, and the second one, even greater than the first, was when he sold it. Because this ford would work a bit, but more often it broke down. It would be parked downstairs, in the courtyard, and the kids would go there, and break it. So when my father got rid of it, he was enormously happy.

Later there were these machines, a sort of half-washing machine, these were not yet automatic machines. In the years 1936-37 there was a wave of Polish Jews coming in from Germany to settle in Poland again, because in Germany they were being persecuted. So one of these returning Jews offered my father such an addition to our boiler – a washing machine.

In this apartment building on Kilinskiego Street there must have been at least seventy apartments, with two courtyards. One was bigger, one was smaller, and then there was a number of annexes. The people who lived there were mostly Jews, more or less assimilated. Directly under us lived the Rozenbergs.

I was good friends with a boy my age, Samuel Rozenberg, who – if still alive – is settled in Australia, a doctor, the owner of a polyclinic in Sydney. His uncle lived right next to us, but to enter his apartment you had to go through the other courtyard. Then there was the Zylberszac family – they owned a factory that made, among other things, poplin for shirts.

So they formed a joint company: Zylberszac and Rozenberg. The oldest Zylberszac brother studied in Belgium and was a member of the communist party. Anka Zylberszac, the older sister, was in Vienna. Later she and her husband emigrated to the Soviet Union. The youngest sister, Ruth Zylberszac, who was more or less my age, got me involved in the communist youth cells. Samek [Samuel] Rozenberg, on the other hand, did not hold any leftist views.

Downstairs in our building there also lived the Kons. After the war Leon Kon became the district governor of Walbrzych, but by that time he called himself Leon Kan. In the front annex there was a department store, the owner's name was Leon Rubaszkin. He was a Jew from Moscow.

In Russia they had these settlement border rules for Jews, showing where Jews were allowed to live and where they were not. In Moscow, generally Jews were not allowed to live, but the intelligentsia – doctors, dentists, tradesmen on the first guild, in other words the very rich – they could live there. [see Jewish Pale of Settlement] [7](#).

My father had his electro-technical office on the ground floor, and further inside we had the house of prayer, which you entered from the other courtyard. My grandfather, Maurycy Fajner, was one of the people who went there regularly. But there were very few such religious Jews living in our building, only a few families...

The others were all assimilated, maybe they did believe in God but they did not practice on a daily basis. It was rather people from the outside that came to the house of prayer, because in our part of town [center of Lodz] there lived plenty of Jews.

Lodz had the second largest Jewish community in Poland, and possibly in Europe as well – Warsaw had the largest one. In Warsaw there were over 400,000 Jews, and in Lodz there were almost as many [Editor's note: In 1939 there were 200,000 Jews in Lodz – 30% of the city's population.

Pre-WWII Warsaw had over 300,000 Jews, also about 30% of the entire population]. There are good reasons that even today Lodz is referred to as 'a city of four cultures': Polish, Jewish, German and Russian. Even among our acquaintances in Lodz there were many Russians, who had stayed after the evacuation of Russian authorities and the Russian army.

One of my classmates, for instance, was Wlodek Nikonorow, a good friend of mine. We also had the Gombergs, immigrants from Russia. They lived at number 49 on Kilinskiego Street. This was another of those assimilated Jewish families. Lodz had quite a mixture of nations in those times, but I must say they all lived on friendly terms with one another.

My father was very assimilated, but despite this he did belong to the Jewish community, and he paid his dues on time. Moreover, since he had so many Jewish clients, it was considered in good taste for him to have a collection box for financial gifts to Keren Kayemet Leisrael [8](#). It was a sort of initiative for supporting and for the buying of land from Arab hands into the hand of Jewish settlers in Palestine.

My father was a non-believer, and my mother – though she had very leftist views, basically communist ones – was quite a believer. Of course, she did not practice – only at New Year's [Rosh Hashanah] and on Yom Kippur she would go and pray for all of us. Sometimes I would go there to the synagogue with my mother and she did take care to have me confirmed [i.e. that I had my bar mitzvah], and I had to learn alef beys and so on.

My grandfather, Maurycy Fajner, was still alive then, I think he died in 1936. He was the patron of my bar mitzvah. The ceremony took place in the house of prayer in our building on Kilinskiego Street. But my mother did not interfere in our views – as you choose it, so it will be, she'd say. And we, in general, had these extreme left wing views, so we were non-believers, but we respected my mother's views, and so we didn't bother her, and neither did my father – and that is the way it was in our family.

Grandpa Maurycy was a religious man, but progressive, too. Certainly, he did celebrate seders, we went over to his place for them a lot. And then later, when grandpa got older and weaker, it was aunt Bela's husband, Leon Herszman, who did the seders, it was to their place that we all went. But this was all the contact with religion, with tradition, that I had. I never recited the Haggadah, it was always only Jurek Herszman [the son of Bela and Leon] who did that, because he knew it better than I did, so he would ask these questions.

My Father had a lot of clients who preferred to speak Yiddish. If a man came over who was more comfortable with Yiddish, my father was able to understand him, because he was fluent in German. And so, since my father was so used to Yiddish, the conversation would go on, with the other man speaking Yiddish, and my father speaking German.

But there were few such customers, because most people, after all, did speak Polish, even if they were Orthodox Jews. My mother, however, did know Yiddish from childhood, even though they spoke Polish in the household of grandfather Maurycy. But from time to time, when they had some intimate matter to discuss, and didn't want us children to understand them, then they would speak Yiddish with each other.

And in our household for such situation it was German they would use. But why did my parents know German so well? Because my father had done his studies in Germany and my mother had a lot of her business in Gdansk see Free City of Danzig] [9](#), and then in general, German was widely known in Lodz.

We had a housekeeper – in those days you would say we had 'a girl' – who came to us when she was 17, and her name was Jozia Nowak. She was from Belchatow. She stayed with us at least 20 years. We had this little room off from the kitchen, and this is where Jozia slept.

Jozia was treated like a family member, and the children had to obey her. Jozia learned from my mother how to run the kitchen, and how to bake excellent cakes. At our house a home-made cake was baked every Friday – for Saturday and Sunday. And there had to be two types of cake: one was a yeast-based cake and the other was some kind of cheese-cake or an apple pie.

The cake would just sit there in the living-room cupboard, and nobody had to ask if they could have some, each child could just take as much as they wanted. And sometimes, when they expected guests, they would have cakes sent off to the baker's, to be baked. What we liked most about the cake was the crumble topping, and we would pick at it when it was still hot.

Then my mother would tell Jozia: 'You'd better make the crumble for them separately, so they don't ruin my cake.' And then I remember in the kitchen cupboard there were almonds for baking, and my mother noticed that I stole some occasionally when I thought nobody was looking. So she said to me: 'You know what, we will put the almonds for baking over there, and these here, they will be for you.'

Our household was managed very well, and the kids were always being spoilt, there was great variety of foods at breakfast, and lunch and dinner. I was a bit more picky where food was concerned, but my younger brother, Ludwik, he was well known for his appetite.

When he got hot milk with pasta, he would say: 'More pasta, more, more.' Later, when we moved off to Wisniowa Gora [to the family villa in a small town near Lodz], Jozia became the chief cook. By then my mother did not have to take care of kitchen matters personally, she would just give directions, and sometimes a recipe – if it was some new dish. The food was wonderful, always. My mother was enormously hospitable, and she entertained lots of guests, especially on Saturdays.

On Kilinskiego Street there were these small shops. I remember especially this one really wonderful dairy shop, which belonged to the Segals. Like Chagall [10](#) – it was the same name, really, except that he had come from Vitebsk, and our shop-owner was a Segal from Lodz.

So from him we got our milk, cheese, butter, eggs, everything was from his shop. In those days it was the custom not to pay right away, but instead there was this little book [credit book], and then each month you would pay what was due. This was how things worked.

I remember one more thing: it was considered enormously important at our house to have fresh bread. It came in round 2-kilogram loaves. And we especially liked the bread heels. I used to go buy this bread near to my aunt's place, at 29 Narutowicza Street, that's where the bakery was.

On my way home I would often rip off a piece, it was so good I couldn't help myself. On Piotrkowska Street there was this lady called Mrs. Bluska, who ran a bakery that sold these teeny-weeny little buns, really crunchy. They were 2 groszy apiece, while a normal bun cost 5 groszy.

Then there was this shop on Ceglana Street, near Piotrkowska, it was called 'Dorotea.' My mother was always buying sweets there. Candy, small chocolates, chocolate in bars. When I was a bit bigger, I would help mama out at home, and she would send me to this 'Dorotea,' with a list in my hand, so I would buy exactly what she wanted.

And another shop was a delicatessen, owned by Mrs. Jaworska, a Polish woman, on Narutowicza Street. My mother used to buy tapioca and some other specialty foods there, and from time to time she'd buy cranberries. That is where you'd buy wine, except for wine for Passover dinner, because that had to be kosher, so we'd get it in a special store.

When we went over to my grandfather's for a seder, we always took two or three bottles of this kosher wine with us. So as to be accommodating, and to make a contribution to the meal.

My mother would buy meat from a Jewish butcher, at 50 Kilinskiego Street. Jewish meat had one big advantage, that is why my mother bought it. You see, it was koshered. What does this mean? It means that all the veins were taken out. So it didn't require work at home. At our house meat was mostly marinated. First it was marinated, rubbed with garlic, and then only a few days later it was cooked.

The same for the cold-cuts, and it's interesting that we did that, in a way, because we did not keep kosher. It was only at Passover that my mother koshered the food. But she genuinely liked kosher meats, especially this special goose sausage.

Later, when I became a bit more independent, my younger brother, Ludwik and myself rented a room in same the building where Helena, our aunt, lived, at 31 Narutowicza Street. My parents were living at Wisniowa Gora by then, and this arrangement was made so that we wouldn't have to walk to the station every morning in the winter, so it would be a bit easier for us.

I was the one who ran our household, but it was arranged that I had lunch every day at a this restaurant, at Handelsman's, at 21 Narutowicza Street. The owners had a daughter, Bella, Izabela Handelsman, who was later my fiancée. Breakfast and supper we would make for ourselves, at home. And there was this Jewish dairy-grocery shop, where we would always do our shopping on credit.

I would take care of the bills later, I as a marvelous housekeeper, if you know what I mean. Our favorite dish was raspberry jam. We would buy bread, butter and jam in this shop, everything we bought in this shop. It was a corner house: number 57 on Kilinskiego Street, and 31 on

Narutowicza. But the owner's name – that I don't remember.

It was only rarely that we would go to the market in Lodz. My mother had her own deliverymen from villages, and so this cream for instance, so thick that the spoon would stand in it, this cream was brought directly to our home. It was the same later on, and at Wisniowa Gora. She wouldn't even have to check if the cream was clean or not.

Because some of them would add flour to the cream. Then there was this door-to-door salesman who always brought Wysocki's tea. Wysocki, it was a Moscow company, which brought tea from China, and India. [The company still exists, it is now called Wissotzky Tea Company, and has its base in Tel Aviv].

We didn't drink much coffee, and more often it was ersatz coffee, not the real thing, because it was for kids. The basic drink in our house was tea, my father was a great tea-lover. He learned to drink it in Russia, when he was working in the Smolensk province, with prince Druckolubecki.

He was a young engineer, just beginning his professional life, and in those days it was real prestige, quite a social position, not like an engineer today. He often told us how the prince invited him to join him at the table, and everything was served Lithuanian style.

Among other things, they served bear meat with honey, and he had to eat that. He could hardly swallow the stuff, but he ate it anyway. Anyway, this is where he learned to drink tea. And at our house evening tea was quite a ritual. Everyone else used normal powder sugar, but for my father it had to be sugar cubes, because he liked to drink his tea Russian style, 'na prikusku' [biting on a chunk of sugar while he drank his tea].

My father rarely smoked cigarettes – just for the sake of style. I did not smoke either, but Ludwik got into it when he reached the age of about 16. And he would smoke secretly. He had to hide the habit for health reasons, because everyone said that smoking was bad for you.

Our uncle Minc from Cracow also used to smoke, but later he gave up. Obviously, when the guests came, there would be an ashtray ready. Cigarette brands? Ergo, Egipskie. Egipskie were very expensive, and if I bought cigarettes at all it was Egipskie. They would just sit around waiting, so I could have one once in a few months. I could smoke with my parents around, even as a boy, because they were not worried I would get hooked on it.

What did we read? What newspapers did we have at home? My father was basically a liberal, but in the late 1930s he got closer to socialist views. When he had some qualms or hesitations we would watch him closely [making sure he voted for the socialists].

We didn't have to watch mother, but father we did, so he would always vote for the socialists, for 'number two' [the election list number 2] in Lodz. So at home we would have two Lodz newspapers. One was more liberal – 'Republika.' For a long time we used to subscribe to 'Republika.'

And the other paper, which was more of the left wing shade, was 'Glos Poranny,' and later my father began to subscribe that paper. But there was a period of time when he bought both papers. There was an open kiosk, right in front of our building. My father would also buy weeklies. There was a lot of reading going on in my family. My father hated to miss any news. And mother also read a lot. This is why they spoke Polish so beautifully.

We were all enrolled in Polish schools. At first I attended the primary school number 122 at 27 Narutowicza Street. Later, I went on to the Wisniewski gymnasium. Wisniewski was the owner of this school, which was named after Boleslaw Prus. My older brother also attended this school.

At first he had gone to the public school named after Nicolaus Copernicus, on Ceglana Street. And my younger brother, Ludwik, when he completed elementary school, he went to a technical gymnasium. I was only at Wisniewski's school until 1935, because after that things got a little difficult for our family and there were problems with paying the tuition, which was quite high.

My cousin Teofila, that is Tecia Herszman, prepared me for the competitive exam. I passed this exam and I went on to a city school, the Jozef Pilsudski Boys' Gymnasium at 48 Sienkiewicza Street. The city school was different from the other one in that the tuition was much lower to begin with, and then it was basically determined by the parents' committee on the basis of the financial situation of a given family.

We paid an average tuition, which, in any case, was much much lower than tuition in the private school. And it was from this school that I graduated. I was good at studying. I was one of the students who excelled, especially in the sciences. In 1939 I took my finals. If you got 5 [the highest grade] in the written exam, then you were excused from taking the oral.

So I was excused both from the Polish language and literature oral, and from the one in math. But I did have to take physics and chemistry because this was what my class specialized in, we were being prepared to enter the polytechnic. I passed all the exams with excellent results.

What later helped me a lot in mastering other languages was Latin. I had such luck that only two boys out of the entire class were taking French, Wlodek Merle and myself. So I mastered French rather well for school expectations... but then the expectations in our school were rather high, we had 2 hours of French 3 times a week. And since there were only two of us, we always had to be prepared.

The teacher had time for us, so we worked our way through French literature and history and the geography of France and Paris. When I later got to France, and found myself in Paris, I knew it all. We had to study languages. The situation at Polish universities was very tense, very difficult, there was 'numerus clausus' [see Anti-Jewish Legislation in Poland] [11](#) and Jews were being persecuted, so we were seriously considering the possibility of my going to France or to England to study.

Let me now tell you a bit about my interest in sports. Some time in the 1930s they opened a swimming pool in Wisniowa Gora, and this was where I learned to swim. At first I just jumped into the water and I nearly drowned... Then I learned to swim so well, that I even became an instructor. I made an extra bit of money for myself at the pool. In 1935 I joined the Maccabi club [12](#), they were based at 21 Kosciuszki Street in Lodz, in a side annex on the ground floor.

Hanna Torunska lived on the first floor, she was a sort of family friend whom we called 'aunt.' In this club the most important thing was swimming. We used to go to Zgierz, where they had a swimming pool, not so big but quite good. We would take an electric train to get there, about 10 or 12 km. Later, at school, we went to the YMCA, it's American: Young Men's Christian Association.

Well, this was Christian, and the climate there was not so good for Jews. As a student of my school I could go there, but members of the Maccabi club were banned at the YMCA, it was out of the

question for them to take part. In any case, at least twice a week I would go swimming.

I got first class qualifications, took part in competitions and did rather well. I later got a swimming badge of the Polish Swimmers' Association, and then the badge of a lifeguard and instructor.

As far as leisure time is concerned, I must say that we really enjoyed music. My father was a great music lover, and my mother, too, had a really good ear. But there was no permanent Jewish theater in Lodz. [From 1912 onwards Jewish actors gave performances in the building at 18 Ceglana Street (today 15 Wieckowskiego Street) in the Scala theater. The Lodz troupe, named Folks un Jugnt Teater, gave many performances in Lodz in the 1930s. The building of Scala was burnt down, reconstructed in 1950 and used by Jewish actors until 1956.]

But there were many visiting performances, among them the famous theater of Habima [13](#), who later settled and performed in Palestine. They gave their performances in Yiddish, and later they also played in Hebrew. He came to Lodz with various plays. I remember, for example, the stories my parents told about 'Dybuk' [Der Dibuk] [14](#) by An-ski [15](#), the enormous impression it made on them.

My father didn't know Yiddish and mother had to translate for him, but the play was so intense that this did not bother him too much. At the time there were no headphones like they now have in the Jewish Theater [Reference to simultaneous interpretation of works in Yiddish offered to audiences of the Jewish Theater in Warsaw].

Moreover, my mother and father never missed a chance to go if there was a performance of some opera or operetta. My father knew all the melodies, and he could play the piano himself, we had a piano at home. Ours was, in general, a very musical family, because Natalia Imergluck, my father's younger sister was a professor at the conservatory in Cracow.

My brother Wladek learned to play the piano. I, on the other hand, was supposed to learn to play the piano, but unfortunately, it never happened, even though I was quite musical. I considered myself a kind of cripple for this reason, but unfortunately by the time I was ready we were in financial difficulties, and my father sold the piano.

The Polski Theater was very close to our house, on Ceglana Street. At the turn of the 1920s and 1930s this theater was ran by Zelwerowicz [Zelwerowicz, Aleksander (1877-1955): actor, director, teacher. Played in about 800 theater pieces. Directed the work of a number of Polish theaters, played also in films and performed on the radio.

The creator of theater academies in Warsaw]. My father helped out in the installation of electricity in this theater, its illumination so to speak. And so, since he had business ties to this theater, he also met Zelwerowicz, the great master of Polish stage, one of the greatest actors of the old generation. Since my father offered his services to the theater, he received tickets free of charge, on an honorary basis.

And I would go to various plays with my father. I was quite young then, 8 or 9 years old. Later on, we got season's tickets at school, both at my gymnasium and at the Pilsudski lyceum. To make things fair, they gave us different seats each time. One time you had better seats, another time you had worse ones. We went regularly with my schoolmates, at least once a month. And in the later years we would write reviews from the plays we saw.

My father also knew Arthur Rubinstein [16](#), way back when he was still a very young, enormously gifted musician, at the beginning of his career, a pianist – and later, as is well known, he would be world-famous. My father had such artistic connections. For instance, he knew Szyk [17](#), the painter, very well known in Lodz. And my mother knew Tuwim [18](#), but of course in those days he was just starting out as a poet.

She also knew his wife-to-be, Stefania Marchewka. But it was quite natural that my parents knew these people, because they were well rooted in the circles of the intelligentsia, and had a huge number of acquaintances.

Before the war, I also went to the cinema a lot. From my youngest years I was a great movie fan, and I had great conditions to pursue this interest. Why is that? Well, it's quite a long story. My mother sewed very well. One proof of her skills as a dressmaker is that she could make a model dress for herself in two and a half, or maybe three hours.

But my father wouldn't allow her to sew, he thought it was a dishonor to himself. He believed he should be the one to support the family, and my mother should not try to make extra money. But my mother had these lady friends, and these ladies would put pressure on her to sew for them, because they valued her talent so much.

My mother would secretly make dresses for them, hiding the fact from my father. My father pretended not to notice, and when things got more difficult [financially] he pretended even more, and so my mother kept on sewing. From this work she had a huge array of acquaintances, some of them going back to her maiden days.

There were some owners of cinemas among them, or rather the wives of cinema-owners, who were good friends of my mother. The first cinema was on Ceglana, at the corner with Piotrkowska Street, and it was called 'Czary' ['Magic']. They were always playing cowboy movies there, silent ones of course and I had free seats.

Then I also went to the 'Corso' movie theater, on Zielona Street. I would never miss a Tarzan movie of course. Later on, when I was an older boy, 12, 13, 14 years old and a bit more, my mother had this client who owned the two largest cinemas in Lodz: one was 'Europa,' on Narutowicza Street, near Pilsudskiego, formerly Wschodnia Street, right behind the Lodz Philharmonic, and then the other was on Piotrkowska Street, near 6 Sierpnia Street, it was called 'Casino.'

I had free entry into these two big screen cinemas, and I would never miss a movie. And not only did I have free entry, but thanks to this connection, I could also sometimes bring in my closest friends, but with the owner's permission, of course.

I also went to other movie theaters, the cinema-going-bug was so deep inside me. I saw basically all the Chaplin movies that were shown in those days: 'The Dictator,' and the famous one called 'City Lights,' and 'The Kid,' and so on... I remember that sometime in 1936-1937 there was a boycott of German movies and we wouldn't see any of those.

In the summer months we stayed in Wisniowa Gora, and when the weather was bad we would go spend the day in Lodz – a whole group of boys and girls – and see movies, at least two in one day one in the morning and then another in the afternoon.

Moreover, in Wisniowa Gora, there was a summer cinema, but the films they showed there were not the most popular ones. My brothers also loved the movies. Wladek was a bit of a film-fanatic, but Ludwik was less into it than we were.

Then there was dancing. I never had to attend a dance school. When I was 9 years old, we had these boarders in our bed and breakfast in Wisniowa Gora – the Sladkowskis. They had a daughter, Stefania Sladkowska, who was about 11 years older than me. I was desperately in love with her as a child. And she loved me too. She would take me dancing with her. And it became her ambition to teach me how to dance. She started out with the hardest dance – the English waltz.

Later she taught me the foxtrot and so on. So at the tender age of 9 or 10 I was already an excellent dancer. I remember that later, at the Jewish gymnasium for girls I got a prize for classical dances and national dances. Later this would turn out enormously useful to me. My brother would come home from Cracow, for his vacation, he would take me to dances – and his girl friends were always eager to dance with me, because I was just a small kid, but such a great dancer.

In the later years in Lwow, when I was moving in the academic circles, I taught all the girls I knew, who were coming from the rural areas, from Wolyn. And whenever they got something good from home, they would bring it right to me, because I was the main dancing instructor.

As far as more serious matters are concerned, politics... It was a general phenomenon, that kids from enlightened, well-to-do homes had leftist leanings. Extreme left, in fact. Take for instance, Mieczyslaw Librach, a friend of my brother's. His father owned a factory on Pomorska Street, and the boy was a communist.

The best joke was when he took part in the strike of the workers in his father's factory – against his father. This phenomenon was due to enormous differences in the level of life, in financial status. There was such a mass of poverty, and it wasn't just Polish poverty, but Jewish as well. For instance, in Baluty, it was a one of the poorest districts of Lodz.

My older brother had ties with the Communist Union of Polish Youth [19](#). My mother begged him to take his finals first, because he would make his views known at school, and he often got into trouble for that reason. The school principal would go after him and so on. So he promised he wouldn't get too deeply involved.

Later he went to Cracow to pursue his studies in law, at the Jagiellonian University. He nearly graduated, he was done with all the coursework [when the war broke out]. During his studies he was active in the The Union of Independent Socialist Youth (ZNMS) [a student organization established in 1917.

Active mostly on Warsaw and Cracow campuses. Politically linked to the Polish Socialist Party. Dismantled in 1938, reconstructed in 1946]. In 1948 it became part of the Academic Union of Polish Youth.

These were the 1930s still, a period when the Polish Communist Party [20](#) was banned... thanks to Stalin, after all. I only remember that sometimes these messengers would show up in our summer house in Wisniowa Gora, bringing these materials, illegal papers.

Wladek wouldn't tell me what it was, he would just say: 'you hide it well, so well that even the devil can't find it.' And I would hide the stuff somewhere under the house foundations... I didn't ask who or what, I knew you were not supposed to ask, this is how it was.

I did get involved a little. In 1937, when the war in Spain was going on [Spanish Civil War] [21](#), we collected money at school for MOPR – International Organization of Support for Revolutionaries [subordinate to the 3rd International, in Poland also known as the 'Red Help']. It was illegal. There were these tiny little photos of Spain in struggle, and we distributed those.

For a brief period I belonged to the youth Zionist organization Hashomer Hatzair [22](#). It was a leftist scouting organization. How did I end up in it? One of my friends told me – listen, you come, and you see. And I liked it there, they taught us dances, songs.

Later I had less and less time, because most of it was used up studying. Moreover, my views gradually shifted more towards the left, so I did not identify with the Zionist movement any longer. Although I did sympathize with them in the sense that I knew their aims were right.

At some point in the 1930s the activity of extreme nationalist political organizations became more intense. More than anything else it was the ND [Endeks] [23](#). But as far as Polish youth is concerned, all of this [the fascination with nationalist ideas] was really quite superficial.

In my class, besides myself, there was also Rosenblum and Rutsztajn, which made 3 [Jews] out of 25 persons. And mostly, the attitude towards us was quite decent. But in the years closer to the war, to 1939, the mood changed.

In the Pilsudski school the teachers were mostly leftist in their views, with maybe one or two exceptions. There were very few supporters of 'sanacja' [Derived from the Latin 'sanus' (health) it means healing and refers to the political group which came to power in Poland after the May coup in 1926 and governed until the start of WWII.] and Jozef Pilsudski [24](#) among the teachers.

In our lyceum there were different kinds of student organizations: study groups, co-operatives, sports clubs. We made sure that after the elections each of those groups was ran by boys with left wing views. This was our political nursery, so to speak, it shaped our attitudes.

Anyway, you could always count on your friends, regardless of their views, I think. In the early days of the German occupation in Lodz I ran into Tadeusz Filipczynski, who had right wing views. Jews are already forbidden to walk the streets, and he meets me on Plac Wolnosci [Freedom Square] and says: 'Stefek, you are putting yourself at risk of repression.'

And I say to him: 'Listen Tadzio, you aren't going to tell anyone that you saw me, are you?' And he says 'Are you crazy? Of course I'm not telling, no way would I tell anyone, don't you know me?' It was impossible even to consider such a possibility, of denouncing someone of Jewish descent. Political views had nothing to do with it.

• During the war

In 1939 we already knew that Hitler was going to attack Poland. Especially after the speech of our foreign minister Beck in the Parliament in May, it became clear that war with Germany was only a matter of months [on 5th of May 1939 the minister of foreign affairs Jozef Beck gave a speech in

the Parliament in which he opposed strongly Hitler's demands made to Poland: his claim on Gdansk as part of the Reich, and his plan to construct an extra-territorial railroad and highway across the coastal region].

So we were beginning to prepare ourselves a bit. In the summer of 1939 I went to visit my relatives in Cracow. My older brother Wladyslaw, Wladek, was a student at the Jagiellonian University [25](#) and in 1939 he was in his last year of law.

He was living in a dormitory at number 3 Przemyska Street, near the Debicki bridge, which leads to Podgorze, off from Starowislna. I was staying with him in the dormitory and visiting relatives. Wladek was a very good student, he was enormously gifted

Then I went back to Lodz. My mother was busy in Wisniowa Gora at this time, running the guest house with her friend Lewinska. My school friends were coming there to rest after the final exams. For instance Arnold Juniter, who later became an officer of the Polish army, a pilot in the 1st Army, Warsaw Contingent. My summer passed rather happily, but we all felt that carefree, normal life is coming to an end for us. We had this feeling, but we did not really know what war meant.

I mentioned already my fiancée, Izabela Handelsman, the daughter of the people who owned the restaurant on Narutowicza Street. There were two daughters – the older one, whose name I do not remember, and this younger one, named Bela. We met and we fell deeply in love.

I respected her very much, and anyhow in our family it was the rule that you should respect a girl for whom you had serious intentions. She would come visit me from time to time, but God forbid that I should even think of touching her, nothing of the sort. She went with me to the school ball held 100 days before the finals. Izabela had ties to the left, to communist youth, even more so than I did. In those days, all of that was secret. The Communist Union of Polish Youth had been dismantled already.

We quarreled over a trifle that summer [1939]. I was offended that she wanted to take her vacation somewhere else than I had imagined, and finally we spent the summer separately. But when the war broke out we made up immediately.

We made this agreement: that she would come to Lwow, that we would settle there... she was supposed to come to Lwow with my mother. But none of this worked out, and we didn't see each other till after the war.

In the very first days of the war I evacuated myself to Warsaw. I mean I did it on my own. On foot, and sometimes by train. I was shot at a train station between Skierniewice and Koluszki [this might have been the town of Rogow, Lipce Reymontowskie or Makow – all located about 30 km east of Lodz]. This was my first experience with real war – the Germans were shooting at the line Koluszki – Warsaw.

You couldn't go any further than that by train, and we continued on foot at night, since the Germans were shooting at refugees in the daytime. This is how I reached Grodzisk [Grodzisk Mazowiecki – small town located about 25 km south-west of Warsaw].

I was hoping to reach my father's school friend, Ignacy Sztrasfogel, who was a high-level official in the ministry of transport and the head of the Railroad School. He was childless, and you could say

that he treated us like his adopted children.

In the years before the war I would sometimes cycle to Warsaw on my bicycle, and he always welcomed me, and showed me around the city. But this time he wasn't there because, along with the whole regional management of the railway system, he had been evacuated to Brzesc [Brzesc on the River Bug – city located about 200 km east of Warsaw].

I reached Warsaw on 7th September. The next day, on the 8th, there was a recruitment spot of volunteers set up on Trzech Krzyzy Square, and so I joined the Army. I was in the military through the entire September campaign [26](#). Some men from Lodz met me and got me out – I was moved to the motorized column of general Czuma [Gen. Walerian Czuma was in charge of the Command of Warsaw's Defense, which was created on 3rd September 1939]. We were stationed at the Citadel.

Later, in the final days of the mass air attack, and bombing of the Citadel, we were moved to underground garage, at 77 Jerozolimskie Avenue. That is where I stayed till the day of surrender [28th September, 1939]. Incidentally, it was right here that I was shot at, right on Twarda Street, and I survived only thanks to the fact that I was wearing a cavalry helmet. Because a splinter of a shrapnel hit the helmet, and merely made a dent in it.

I got a higher rank, I was even decorated with a medal for my participation in getting the wounded out, and bringing food and ammunition to the first line of battle. On 25th September, our commander, lieutenant Wysocki, told us to take off our uniforms – there was no need for the Germans to catch us.

I returned to Lodz. One had to walk on foot to Pruszkow first [12 km to the south east of Warsaw]. Once you got there, there were some trains, freight trains of course, and I got to Andrzejow that way [town near Lodz]. Wisniowa Gora was just 2 kilometers from there, and I expected to find my parents there. Unfortunately, they were not there.

In the very first days of the war they moved to Lodz and stayed with my aunt Helena Eichner, my mother's younger sister. She had a large apartment, so there was no problem with designating a room for my parents. Things were very very difficult.

My father was an exceptionally honest man. He had some financial obligations, and to settle them he gave away the last bit of money in the first days of the war, so my parents were left with almost nothing. It was lucky that I brought with me some cigarettes.

Because in Warsaw they were being given away. I mean, not exactly given away, but when the Germans were about to take over, the tobacco monopoly was opened and whoever got a chance just took some. I took some, it was worth a few zloty and this was help for my parents.

It was clear that there was no point for young people to stay in Lodz, we knew there would be a ghetto, and so on. So I was getting prepared to cross over the eastern boarder with the Soviet Union. The idea was to get as far as possible away from the Germans.

In the meantime, we got news from Lwow [The city was in Soviet annexed Eastern Poland] [27](#) that Wladek and his wife Berta were there, and that I should also come – they were waiting for me. So in November 1939, together with my friend Edward Klein, we set off for Lwow.

What made me leave so quickly was that the Germans had already started persecutions of Jews. The older folks still remembered those Germans from the first world war, but these were not the same Germans, and their methods were not the same, either.

On my way east I had to pass through Warsaw once again, and this time I met Ignacy Strasfogel, and stayed at his place at 25 Sienna Street. I slept there and then got across the Bug [Border river between Poland (1939-1945 General Governmentship) and the Soviet Union after September 1939].

We crossed over during the night, more or less at the level of Siemiatycze [i.e. 200 km east of Warsaw]. We didn't see any Germans, and luckily enough we did not run into any Russians, either, I mean Soviet border patrols. It wasn't so easy to cross the boarder, but at this point it was still sort of fluid.

Life was very difficult in Lwow that first year. The winter was severe and there was no work. My brother, Wladek, was receiving some kind of stipend at the Polytechnic: somehow he got a spot as a student of veterinary medicine. He did that even though he was a lawyer, but they offered food, and later he got a room as well. I don't recall how long it took before my younger brother, Ludwik, joined us, and then also my father and my cousin Jurek Herszman.

Mother stayed in Lodz. Some time after that I got a better job - I was operating these construction machines in 'Voyenstroy', that is in military construction. Jurek Herszman was not able to adapt to Lwow life, so he and Ludwik went back to Lodz. And somehow the plan for my mother to join us in Lwow never worked out.

In Lwow I took the entrance exams to the Polytechnic, but I didn't have a high enough score in Ukrainian, it was a miracle I even got a 3 [passing grade], so I was accepted at the physics and mathematics faculty of the Pedagogical Institute, on the basis of my high score in math and other hard sciences.

This was in 1940. I also worked as a stoker in a hotel... I managed to live on my modest salary, and on top of that I made some money by collecting bottles in hotel rooms. Wladek was living with his wife and our father.

As for me, at first I lived the Worker's House [workers' dormitory], and later in student dormitories, many of those. The last place where I stayed was at 12 Ormianska Street, on one of the sides of the old Square, opposite the Town Hall.

On 22nd July, Germany attacked the Soviet Union. So war had caught up with us [Editor's note: The war between Germany and the Soviet Union broke out on 22nd June 1941]. I was preparing for my last exam. During the night of 22nd of July, Lwow was bombed...

So in those first days of the war we were trying to decide what to do next. I had lived through the Warsaw bombings, so I had a certain amount of experience with Germans, and I was trying to calm down the girls in my dormitory. The panic was enormous.

We talked it over at home with my father and my brother, and their verdict was that under no circumstances should I stay in Lwow. As a politically engaged young man, I would be killed right away. I was in the Komsomol [28](#). In Lwow, generally, the refugees were not welcome in any

organizations, regardless of our political views.

We were still living in the shadow of the dismantling of the Polish Communist Party, and the Union of Communist Youth. But in my case, there were testimonies of activists from Cracow, who gave their word that I was 'a decent man' and so I was accepted into the Komsomol.

Young people such as myself were being sent over to factories, to brick-yards. On 27th June [1941] I was on my way back from this brick-yard and I was shot at by Ukrainian guerilla fighters. These were people from the OUN, Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists [29](#), but somehow I got home alive. In any case, it was clear I had better leave.

After I left Lwow, Ludwik did not come back again. And mother never got there, either. My father stayed in Lwow, it's a miracle they didn't capture and transport him away..., but since he spoke Russian so well, he showed his documents to the local head of NKVD [30](#), showed him his German diplomas and explained he was a Polish citizen of Jewish descent.

This man allowed him to remain in Lwow. My father, Wladek and his wife Berta, lived at 29 Na Bajkach Street in Lwow, and this is where I said goodbye to them.

When Germans entered the city, my brother, Wladek got himself some fake papers, and continued working at the Polytechnic (the Polytechnic as such was closed, but individual sections kept on functioning). Later I found out that after I left my younger brother was also in Lwow, along with his wife. But at the time I did not know this. I never met her.

Both my brothers were killed a short time before the Soviet army entered Lwow, I mean, before liberation [1944]. My younger brother was killed about half a year before the Soviet army came in, and the older one just 3 months before. Wladek was so sure of himself that he even gave shelter to a Jewish friend, Henryk Meth.

The Germans came to get this other Jew and they asked him about Wladek. He said: 'at the Polytechnic.' So they went to get my brother, then they took Berta, and that was that – my brother and his wife were killed together with this friend of theirs.

My younger brother was captured together with his wife in a round-up in Lwow, in a restaurant. They deciphered his papers, I mean they figured out they were fake, and so he, too, was killed. Out of my direct family I was the only one left, alone like a thumb. In Kiev I got in touch with an old school friend, asked him about my family's fate – he found nobody. Moreover, I also tried to find out what happened to my fiancée, Izabela Handelsman, who was supposed to come to Lwow...

But unfortunately, I got no news at all. Apparently my parents did get together in the end, in the ghetto in Czestochowa. They were both killed in the early months of 1943, [the liquidation of the Czestochowa ghetto took place at the turn of 1942-43] in Treblinka. [31](#).

We tried to leave Lwow in an organized way, but we were under fire, so after that each one of us tried on his own. I had this friend from the Polytechnic, Jurek Berenstein, who was from Warsaw, and his parents lived in Slonim in western Belarus, as refugees. So he and I got through to Kiev together.

On foot, and also taking freight trains. We walked to Winnica. We joined a military transport. And in Kiev we went to the Ministry of Education. They gave each of us 30 rubles of relief money, and this was just enough for a pair of shoes, because my old ones were all worn out.

I was almost barefoot by the time we reached Kiev. They put us in a school. And in this school I met my future great friend – Adam Kostaszuk, a Lwow native. He knew Wanda Wasilewska [32](#), and he himself was politically involved. So Wanda Wasilewska made it possible for us to join the military as volunteers, I mean the Red Army.

At first they sent us to Priluki. This place is well known from ‘With Fire and Sword,’ because it was one of the homes of prince Wisniowiecki [Historical novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz, on the events in the 17th century, in Poland’s eastern borderland]. So these were historic sites.

We went through military training there, and later they sent us to the southern front, but not for long, just a few weeks. Later the order came from the main headquarters of the Soviet Army, that all volunteers born in Poland should be picked out and sent to army units stationed behind the front. Because they were afraid.

It is true that there were some diversionists, people sent by the Germans... but unfortunately they applied the Stalinist rule of collective responsibility. If they were unable to pick out the right people, they had to isolate all the volunteers. So we were taken off to Siberia, to the back units of the army, the construction battalions of the Soviet Army.

Our first job – we built fuel reservoirs for the army. The idea was to put those reservoirs far from the front, so they would not be within reach of the German air force. To be precise, it was in Berdsk, about 25 km from Novosibirsk. And later we got a new task: the Soviet Union had its strategic resources there.

They were stored in these barracks. There was natural rubber and other raw materials. So we were supposed to empty out the barracks and prepare them for receiving factories which were being evacuated from Ukraine, Belarus and western Russia. So we were taking part in that.

Within two months a weapons factory was set to work, which had been removed from Kharkov. Before the war, in Kharkov, this factory was making photo cameras, and during the war it was shifted to military production, for the air force.

They were making, for instance, some optical equipment. It was a work-commune, organized out of abandoned children, in Russian they were called ‘bezprizorni’ – these were kids left over after the victims of the civil war [Russian Revolution] [33](#).

These children were being raised by the NKVD, and the head of this commune was the NKVD general Berman. He made a cadre out of these kids, which later run the factory. I knew something about electric technology, and then I learned about metalwork as well, so I was involved in opening the factory’s power plant. And I had employees working under me, out of this cadre. They were working in terribly difficult conditions, sometimes the temperature would go down to 30 degrees below zero.

In the fall of 1942, we were moved to Perm, at the time it was called Molotov, on the river Kama, in the Ural. We were also building reservoirs out there. In the meantime these working battalions of

the Soviet Army were transformed into construction columns of a more civilian status. In 1943 they moved us to the Udmurtia, near the town of Sarapul on the Kama, again to build reservoirs. And since I had education, knew the language and they trusted me, therefore as early as 1943 I was in charge of transport of machines to Leningrad.

I learned to drive a car and worked as a car mechanic. In 1943 they gave this gift to Stalin, at the cost of huge human loss: on the anniversary of the October Revolution [see Russian Revolution of 1917] [34](#) Kiev was liberated. By then it was clear that we would be shifted over to Kiev, to work on rebuilding the city. In the spring of 1944, a few months after the liberation, we were sent over there. In Kiev I worked in the Ukrinyechestroy.

We were reserved, in Russian it was called 'bronivarniye,' and it meant they could not recruit us into the military, because we were working for the Army. At this time I wanted to join the First Army [see The 1st Kosciuszko Infantry Division] [35](#), and my efforts were already quite advanced, but then it turned out that I would not be let off.

This was a terrible disappointment. Ukriniechciestroj received the task of reconstructing Kiev's industry. The Germans had destroyed absolutely all the factories, and we were supposed to rebuild, first of all, the ones that served the needs of the army. So Ukrinyechestroy was renamed as Kievpromstroy, that is the Kiev Industrial Construction.

While working in Kiev, I was living in a workers' house on Kierasinnaya, and this is where I later met my wife-to-be, Maria Kipnis. She was working in Svyatoshyn (a suburb of Kiev), in a provisions base. I was enormously attracted to her, but I still kept thinking I shouldn't be making any commitments because, after all, I have a fiancée. And I didn't make the decision as long as I wasn't sure, that is until I got news that I had no one left in Poland. But, I said, there was one condition: we can only get married if I can go back to my country.

She was a Russian with Jewish roots. She came from Korosten, a city in the Zhytomyr district, about 80 km from Kiev. And she said to me: 'Alright, I'll go with you wherever you want, but my parents have to agree to this.' When we went over to her parents, her father, a wise old man said this: 'A wife's place is by her husband's side. If he wants to go back to his country, to rebuild his country, then you should go with him.'

My last job in Kiev was in the outpost of the Union of Polish Patriots [36](#). I took part in the repatriation of Poles from Ukraine; most of them were actually Poles who had been evacuated to Siberia, to the Ural. These people had often lived in terrible conditions.

Wanda Wasilewska made sure that before returning home they were given a chance to stand up on their own feet again, because they were physically exhausted. So they were placed near a sugar factory in Ukraine. The supplies were good over there, and they were receiving sugar in return for their work, so they could buy other products for the sugar. And slowly they did stand on their own feet. Then, and a bit later, when they had regained some strength, they were gradually repatriated.

• After the War

After the war, in March 1946 I returned home from the Soviet Union. At the beginning I was in Lodz. There was nobody left from my closest family, and Bela, my fiancée was also gone. I was

continually in touch with my uncle Adolf Fajner, the one who lived in Manchester. After the war he played the role of a link between the family members who were still alive.

Everyone would ask him to find out about the others. So he put me in touch with my uncle Samuel, my mother's oldest brother. Uncle Adolf was also the one who told me that only two people survived, namely, the son and the daughter of my mother's older sister, aunt Bela – Jerzy and Teofila Herszman. They were somewhere in camps in Germany, I am not sure exactly, and from Germany they went to the United States and settled in New York.

I met Teofila again some 50 years later, because in 1992 she came here and found me. I was also the guest of her daughter in 1998, and later in 2003 I came to visit them in America with my second wife.

Out of my mother's family there was also Samuel Fajner, and his three sons, the one who had emigrated through Germany to the United States. Financially he was doing quite well: together with his friend Rogovy they were running this big construction company, which was well anchored in the market, and existed for many years.

All his sons were educated, and during the war between the USA and Japan they were all commanders of American sea units. They were captains of these small units and after the war they were decorated. The two older brothers were married, but the youngest one did not get married until 1955, and I even got an invitation to the wedding. But I was not able to go to the United States, so I sent my best wishes and this had to be all.

Oh yes, there is one more person I should tell about: Helena Eichner's son, she was my mother's sister – he also lived through the war. Karol Eichner. I found out he was alive from Adolf Fajner, the one in Manchester. Like many children with Jewish backgrounds, he ended up in the territory taken over by the Soviet Union, in an orphanage in Slonim [Belarus], I believe.

This orphanage was later evacuated to Central Asia, somewhere in Uzbekistan. And later, together with the Anders' Army [37](#), he was evacuated further east, and then to India. Later he joined the army and fought in western Germany. He survived and found his way to Israel. He became a high rank military man, but decided not to continue his career in the army.

His name is still Eichner, if he is still alive, that is. And his Hebrew name is Amos. He lives in Tel Aviv. When my daughter, Zosia, was there, she met with him, but he was not very eager to be in touch with his old family. I am not sure why, but he gave them a rather chilly welcome.

It's true that out of the Imergluck family you could count those who survived on the fingers of your one hand. I told you there were four children left of Anna and Izydor Imergluck. And out of those four only Marysia Imergluck was left alive; I am not sure what her married name was. I met her near Walbrzych, where she lived, and later they emigrated to Israel, or perhaps to the United States via Israel, I do not know this exactly. Her husband was the director of a linen factory near Walbrzych.

There was also Staszek Imergluck, they were in Zlotousta in the Ural, but he died in exile... he worked in a copper mine. His wife, Anka, was alive and she returned to Cracow. Then out of the Cracow branch of the family there was also Zygmunt Minc, my father's younger brother, and his wife Erna and their son Adam.

During the war he lived in Yoshkar-Ola, the capital of the Autonomous Republic Mari El. Later they settled in Bytom, and after that Adam came to Gliwice. We saw them after the war. There was one more of the Imergluck family, Wilhelm was his name, a lawyer who specialized in inheritance cases.

I met him in Lodz and later in Cracow, but I do not know what happened to him after that. Another one that survived was a daughter of my aunt Natalia, Nacia Imergluck, who lived in Cracow at number 8 Sebastiana Street.

This aunt Natalia, she had two daughters: Janka and Zosia. Zosia was the one who survived, she too had been in the Soviet Union, she married Walter Zybert and they had a son. They lived in Katowice. Her husband was from Bielsk.

Maria Minc was also alive, the wife of Bernard Minc, the doctor. She lived at 6 Kolberga Street in Cracow. When the war broke out, Bernard Minc had already retired, he left the city and he died in 1939, as early as September I think, in Mszana Dolna. She [the wife] had the body brought back, and had him buried in the Rakowiecki cemetery in Cracow.

I got in touch with her after the war. She was the one who was given all the family photos to keep through the war. Why her? Because, due to her birthplace – she was born in Austria – the Germans decided she was not a Volksdeutsch [38](#), but rather a Reichsdeutsche [A citizen of the German Reich]. And not only that. Because she was a qualified nurse, the Germans recruited her into the military, to the Wehrmacht. She got all the way to Kiev; she worked in one of the field hospitals in Kiev.

She kept helping her family and relatives, and if she could manage to help anyone else – she always did. In one of the first post-war rehabilitation trials she was immediately rehabilitated, and, moreover, her house was returned to her, and everything else, too. She was a wonderful human being. Later she made a living by knitting sweaters... She died at the turn of the 1950s and 60s.

When I realized that nobody had survived out of my closest family, I decided to go to Walbrzych, to Lower Silesia [Jews settling in Lower Silesia after World War II] [39](#). In Walbrzych I got registered at the Central Committee of Polish Jews [40](#) and they helped me a bit.

They would receive, for example, things from UNRRA [41](#), but as help for Jews, who had suffered during the war. So I would go over there from time to time. I was also accepted into the party [Polish Workers' Party] [42](#), because I was a committed left-winger.

The man who recommended me was Arnold Mostowicz [43](#). This was a pre-war communist and a friend of my brother's [Wlodek], who knew that he was a communist. I was also recommended by Kujawski, who worked in the ceramic industry union.

At first I was working at the Tilsch porcelain factory – it is called The Walbrzych Porcelain Factory nowadays. At the same time, I was active in the labor union. A few months later I was elected secretary of the board of the labor union section of construction industry materials, which included ceramics. Later I was elected as vice-president of the regional board in Wroclaw. And then I was picked for the national union secretary in the field of construction ceramics.

1948 was when I took my first vacation. It was also that summer that my first fiancée from before the war, I mean Bela, Izabela Handelsman, came to Poland, and showed up in Walbrzych. Prince

Bernadotte [Count Folke Bernadotte (1895-1948): Vice-President of the Swedish Red Cross in 1945; attempted an armistice between Germany and the Allies. Just before the end of WWII he led a rescue operation transporting, first of all, but not exclusively, Danish and Norwegian inmates from Nazi concentration camps to Swedish hospitals. 27,000 people were liberated this way, many of them Jewish.] had rescued her out of Bergen-Belsen [44](#), where she had caught consumption.

The fact that she survived is probably due to her knowing German – and she was also a ‘dolmetscher.’ ‘Dolmetscher’ means translator. In the last years of the war she was shipped off to Sweden, where they cured her.

She returned to her older sister, who lived in Dzierzoniow, near Walbrzych. Bela had my address, she came to Walbrzych and found out that I had a wife and a child. But still, she was determined to see me. Our meeting was very tragic. We both cried. Fate had done it to us, she did not blame me at all, she knew I had not done anything wrong. My wife was very anxious what might come out of this. Later she told me so. But, you see, I told Bela right away: ‘I have brought my wife here, whom I love.

I never stopped loving you, obviously, but this is where things stand.’ Bela understood this and went back to her sister. Bela was even more involved in the left wing movement than I was. The shape of Poland at the time was very much to her liking.

This was the Poland she had dreamt about. But since her feelings for me had not died down, she was afraid she might cause some complications in my family life, because, after all, my wife was not to be blamed for all that happened.

We already had a child. In August 1946, as I told you, my first daughter, Anna, was born. So as a result of all the bitterness, and because of her fear that she would not be able to just watch all this calmly, Bela went back to Sweden, and stayed there for good.

We lived in Walbrzych until the end of 1948. In October 1948, at the National Convention of the Union of Construction of Ceramic Industry and Related Professions, I was elected secretary of the National Board – which meant we had to move to Warsaw. The first week I lived in Warsaw in a hotel. But apartments were already being prepared.

So I had a choice: we could get an apartment immediately in a very distant part of Zoliborz, basically in Bielany, or we could wait a bit for another apartment – in Mokotow, in the Warsaw Housing Co-operative, at Dabrowskiego Street.

I wanted my wife to decide. So I brought her here to come and explore, and decide which one she wants. My wife did not hesitate for a minute, she chose Mokotow, and said: ‘I can wait these few months.’ So in fact I brought my family here on 22nd January 1949. And this apartment I still have today.

I was in the Construction Union until 1950. In March 1949, the Union President and I went to Rome, as delegates to the meeting of the International Labor Organization of the Construction Commission. I spent over four weeks there. I was a guest of the Italian government, we were even invited to see the pope. It was Pius XII.

We decided to protest against his political attitude. He had a soft spot for the nazis, he had never said a word in defense of the Jews, and he did not officially acknowledge the fact that the Western Territories were now a part of Poland. [see Regained Lands] [45](#) So we did not go to see the pope. And it was not just us, the French delegation didn't go either, and the Italians, too – it was an expression of protest.

There was one more interesting moment in my life – when I was leaving the Union [of Construction of Ceramic Industry and Related Professions] they wanted to send me off to Officers' School, as a political employee of the military. But I refused.

The head of the Central Union Board, Aleksander Zawadzki, who was later the Head of the State Council [Rada Panstwa], spoke in my defense, and so I stayed on in the Union. In 1950 I moved to the Ministry of Light Industry, to the headquarters in charge of the whole ceramic industry. There I became the head of personnel and pay section. This ministry was later divided, but I stayed in my place – I was the head of my section, with responsibilities of vice-director of the department.

In the meantime, my wife learned to speak Polish beautifully. It was really important to her not to stand out, because people's attitudes towards Russians varied a lot. She had completed a Ukrainian school, so she spoke both Russian and Ukrainian very well.

Besides, she was very hard-working, so she mastered Polish grammar, and she did exercises and she read in Polish a lot. If she came across a word she did not know, I would help her out. She was never annoyed when I corrected her mistakes, quite the opposite, she wanted to master the language as quickly as possible.

For a long time she did not work, she only had a job after 1960. We went to the Soviet Union a lot, because my wife had a huge family there. They would also come and visit us, but we went there every summer, to spend our vacation. Thanks to this, my children learned Russian perfectly.

In 1949, after my return from Rome, on 29th April, my son Wladyslaw was born, and my youngest daughter, Zofia, was born on 12th May 1953. We had three kids, so life became a bit more difficult. In any case, we had not intended to have three children, but the doctor advised my wife to have one more. So, naturally, we did not think about it too long, because nothing is more important than health, so despite all the difficulties we decided to have this third child.

We were living in Warsaw, and we had many friends, though not from Jewish circles any more – for the most part, our friends were our neighbors. In the ministry there was an engineer, his name was Szejwac, he became my superior later on. I was in charge of distribution of construction materials.

When the Palace of Culture [grandiose social-realist building in the center of Warsaw] was being built, all the materials passed through my hands. I had to prepare reports to my ministry concerning the influx of these materials. I was a highly valued employee. The minister would send me as his plenipotentiary to the cement factory Wierzbina, he even wanted to make me the director, but I said no out of consideration for my family.

I was very active and I devoted much time and energy to work for the party, which is why in 1958 they took me out of the regular party position and I began working in the Warsaw Committee of United Polish Workers' Party [PZPR 46]. I became deputy head of the industry section, and I was very appreciated there.

Among other things, I was forced to get a telephone line at last. I did not want one, because I was constantly being asked to go to the ministry – in those days people worked like that, through the night. But once I had moved on to the PZPR, I had no choice any more, I had to say yes, and they gave me a phone line.

• Recent Years

In 1960 the opportunity came up for me to enroll in the Advanced School of Social Science at the Central Committee of the PZPR, and finally complete my degree. The argument went like this: I was constantly teaching people, I was lecturing, but I had never had a chance to finish my own education because the War had interrupted my studies in Lwow.

They were also offering a fairly high scholarship, more or less the equivalent of my last salary. These were not high earnings, anyway, but at least they did not lower our standard of living. It was a shortened course of studies.

So I was accepted right off, no questions asked. In 1964 I completed this school. They directed me to work in the Central Committee, and I became a senior instructor in the department of Planning and Finances of the Central Committee.

For two more years I worked on my dissertation, and in 1966 I had a degree in economics. So at last I had completed my education. There was an additional factor that mobilized me to work hard and get good results – the fact that my children were already quite big.

It was my ambition to show them how good a student one can be. I had always said to them that the difference between how hard you have to study for a 4 [good] and how hard you study for a 5 [excellent] is not so great, really, so you should always aim for better results. Anyway, they admired my achievements very much. I don't want this to sound like I am boasting, but the truth is that when I completed this school, I had gathered 133 points out of the 135 point maximum.

I haven't told you yet about the final period of my professional life. I worked in the party apparatus until 1970. In 1970, in the fall, I moved to the Headquarters of the Polish National Bank, because I was, after all, an economist. When I was still in the Central Committee I was taking care of the Investment Bank.

Later the Investment Bank was made a part of the Polish National Bank. For 11 years I worked at the Polish National Bank. Poland was a member of the International Investment Bank in Moscow, and my job was to obtain loans for investments, which then served mostly Poland, but also other countries associated in the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance [Comecon] [47](#). I retired, when martial law was still in place [martial law in Poland in 1981–83], at the turn of 1981 and 1982.

My older daughter, Anna, studied Russian Philology, and she completed her coursework, but she never finished her dissertation. My son graduated from the Warsaw Polytechnic, the department of Machines and Vehicles, and my daughter Zofia completed the Warsaw Agricultural University (SGGW).

She always said to me: 'Wladek (her older brother) is gifted, so school is easier for him.' But I always said to him: 'But you work harder than he does, and I am sure your grades will be no worse

than his.'

She completed the school with honors. She did her degree and she is an engineer. Later she completed a post-graduate study in pedagogy at Warsaw University, and now she works at the Lauder Foundation [48](#) school in Warsaw. She is a librarian and works with children.

I have, unfortunately, little contact with my son, we disagree with each other on many issues. I am closest with my youngest daughter, Zofia, and her children. I will leave my apartment to her, this is quite clear.

My children have always basically known about their Jewish roots, but of course at home we spoke only Polish. They were raised to be Poles of Jewish descent, this is what they felt they were. 1968 [see Anti-Zionist campaign in Poland] [49](#) was a huge shock for my children.

They even pressured us to emigrate to Israel, but I resisted this idea. And later things calmed down somehow. I took many of my friends, unfortunately, to the train station. My former boss, whom I have mentioned, engineer Szejwac – he left for Israel in those days, and others, too, Korentajel, many, many people. I saw them off to the station with a heavy heart and with mixed feelings, but we decided to stay here.

My son had a Polish wife, and my daughter Zofia, also, she married a Pole – Andrzej Jankowski is also a Pole.

My youngest daughter, Zofia, has two children. The older one is called Marta Jankowska, and the younger one is Andrzej Jankowski – he was given the same name as his father. They feel a bit more tied to their Jewishness. Marta studied in Israel, at the Jerusalem University [Hebrew University] English Department.

When the Intifada came, she had this incident happen to her, which really affected her psychologically. She was attacked and beaten up by Arabs. She was not in the army due to her studies, but she has double citizenship: Israeli and Polish. And she will continue her studies in London: in English and Hebrew.

My daughter's younger son, Andrzej, was recently on a trip to Israel, when he came back he was very enthusiastic about what he saw. Now he is at the Sociology Department at Warsaw University, an evening student. My son Wladek got married in 1975 and he has a son named Michal. And my eldest daughter, Anna, has a son named Rafal. Rafal Minc.

He is studying and working in the United States. He had a scholarship, he completed a school over there, and now he continues his studies in the USA, somewhere near New York, in New Jersey. What the direction of his studies is, I don't exactly know.

All I know is that he is still studying. Anna works part time, for a long while she used to do translations from Russian. She is not feeling very well these days. We help her out a bit. Rafal hopes that he will be able to take her over to the States, to stay with him. The future will show how things turn out.

Let me tell you a little bit more about my first wife – Maria. From 1963 on she worked in the Information Center of the Construction Department; she was a translator, because Russian was,

after all, her native language, and she was also dealing with international relations.

She was very sickly, she was ill when we were still in Walbrzych, and later, when we were in Warsaw it returned. And so, because of her poor health, she had to stop working some time around 1973. We managed somehow, I put the kids through school, and I helped her as much as I could.

My wife and I, we shared the same views on how to raise children. But to say the truth, she was the one who bore the main burden of child-rearing, because I was so very active professionally. And later she became incapable of helping out, so things were... as they were. My wife died in 1976, in November. And I was left alone. It so happens that my second wife's name is also Zofia, and we are together till this day.

It all began when my former wife was still alive. Zofia is quite simply a good human being. She believed it was my God-given duty to take care of Maria, who was ill and needed me. Anyway, I always said that I never stopped loving her, it just happened this way, she is not to blame for being ill. It was cyclical depression, and it was best to treat it in the hospital.

So Maria was in the hospital, and I was coming to visit her almost every day, and Zofia would sit on the bench in front of the hospital and wait.

My children would have preferred, naturally, if this was not the case. But after their mother's death, and after they themselves had experienced some hard times in their lives, they did understand their father. And their relations with my second wife are now very warm.

Zofia was born in 1942, so she is much younger than me, a whole 22 years. She is an accountant. At the beginning, when we first met, she was working at the Polish Association of Youth Shelters, and later she had a job at the Headquarters of the Union of Polish Teachers, as the deputy of the head accountant. At present she is retired, but she does accounting for various social organizations, making some extra money that way. This is why we can afford to travel abroad – because we have the means.

Why did my daughter and my grandchildren return to the Jewish tradition... It's very hard to explain. Because, after all, she had a Polish man. But it just so happened that she spent a lot of time among people of Jewish descent, and somehow it all came back...

Then there is this other thing: the prejudice and resentment from the past towards Jews in Poland. You can't generalize, you can't say that everyone is like this. Most people are tolerant. But in various circumstances we encountered such unpleasantness.

And this experience caused them to turn towards Jewishness. Zosia [Zofia] started coming to the Jewish community Center, etc. And her children? The children followed their mother. And they did this despite their father's advice, and especially in spite of his uncle in London, who really wanted them to be Catholic.

But this did not work out, and Marta said to him: 'This is my choice and you must respect it. If you don't like it, then I can stop all contacts with you.' So it really is their choice.

I am not in touch with Jewish circles. I know all about my roots and would never deny them. I never concealed them. In 1968 there was no way I could agree with the position of the top people in the

party, especially Gomulka, that to feel sympathy for Israel is the same as to be a Zionist, and so on. Nor did I like what happened later – throwing people out of the party. [Gomulka Campaign] [50](#).

I was working in the party apparatus, and it was taking a real risk, but still, I never condemned anyone for their choices, for their wish to go to Israel. I always said: 'This is your autonomous choice.' It was a terrible blow to me, that all these highly valued people, highly qualified, and, for the most part, very loyal to the People's Poland, that these people were being insulted and forced to leave.

To me this was a terrifying experience. My choice in my youth had been different: I belonged to a Zionist organization, but then I decided that I ought to be even further to the left, and so I got out of it. And their choice was different.

I did not want to leave, and I still do not. There is this old saying: 'you can't uproot an old tree.' I don't speak the language, and I would feel like a third class citizen there – not even second, but third class. I feel strong ties to Poland. Of course, I am very much intrigued, and we have thought of going there as tourists, my wife and I. But to go there and just see Israel is not enough.

One should also see the [Palestinian] Autonomy. Nowadays, there are even trips being organized, to Israel, but without a visit to the Autonomy. And now we are waiting till things calm down a bit, there is already a light in the tunnel.

And as for Jewish organizations in Poland – I do not participate in those. It is true that my wife has no prejudice, but despite this I do not want to be the cause of trouble for her. There might be some hidden resentment, especially in her family. So I prefer not to tempt my luck.

• Glossary

1 The Kingdom of Poland (other names: the Congress Kingdom, Congress Kingdom of Poland): founded in 1815 by a decision of the Congress of Vienna. It extended throughout the lands of the Kingdom of Warsaw with the exception of the Poznan and Bydgoszcz provinces and the city of Cracow. It had an area (until 1912) of 128,500 km² and a population of 3.3m in 1816 and 10m in 1910.

The Kingdom of Poland was a monarchy linked by a personal union with Russia, with the tsar as king. It had a Polish Sejm (diet), government and army, but was not permitted to conduct its own foreign policy.

The constitution, though formally liberal, was systematically violated. The Kingdom of Poland was a center of the Polish liberation movement. In 1830 the November Uprising broke out; following its failure the Kingdom of Poland ceased to be a separate state and was henceforth to be an integral part of the Russian Empire.

After the January Uprising in 1863 the Kingdom was stripped of its separate identity altogether. In official documents the name 'the Kingdom of Poland' was replaced with the expression 'the Country along the Vistula'. In the second half of the 19th century the country was subjected to intensive Russification.

In 1915 it was occupied by German and Austrian forces; the occupation lasted until November 1918. After 1918 the lands of the Kingdom of Poland became part of the independent Poland.

2 Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL): workers' party founded in 1893, active in the Kingdom of Poland and in the Bialystok region.

In 1895 it was shattered by arrests, and in 1899 rebuilt. It was a member of the 2nd Internationale (the radical wing). SDKPiL postulated the overthrow of the tsars and the introduction of a socialist system through a socialist revolution by the working class (it considered the peasantry reactionary), and offered a brotherly alliance between free peoples as the solution to the question of nationhood (it perceived no need or way to reinstate a sovereign Polish state).

During the 1905-07 revolution it initiated and organized strikes, rallies and demonstrations, and set up trade unions. During World War I it took up an anti-war stance, and in 1917 supported the revolution in Russia. The ideological leader of the SDKPiL was Rosa Luxemburg, and among the leading activists was Felix Dzierzynski. In December 1918 it fused with the left wing of the PPS (Polish Socialist Party) to form the KPRP (Communist Party of Poland).

3 1905 Russian Revolution: Erupted during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, and was sparked off by a massacre of St. Petersburg workers taking their petitions to the Tsar (Bloody Sunday). The massacre provoked disgust and protest strikes throughout the country: between January and March 1905 over 800,000 people participated in them.

Following Russia's defeat in its war with Japan, armed insurrections broke out in the army and the navy (the most publicized in June 1905 aboard the battleship Potemkin). In 1906 a wave of pogroms swept through Russia, directed against Jews and Armenians.

The main unrest in 1906 (involving over a million people in the cities, some 2,600 villages and virtually the entire Baltic fleet and some of the land army) was incited by the dissolution of the First State Duma in July. The dissolution of the Second State Duma in June 1907 is considered the definitive end to the revolution.

4 Poalei Zion (the Jewish Social-Democratic Workers' Party Workers of Zion): in Yiddish 'Yidishe Socialistish-Demokratishe Arbeiter Partei Poale Syon'. A political party formed in 1905 in the Kingdom of Poland, and operating throughout the Polish state from 1918.

The party's main aim was to create an independent socialist Jewish state in Palestine. In the short term, Poalei Zion postulated cultural and national autonomy for the Jews in Poland, and improved labor and living conditions of Jewish hired laborers.

In 1920, during a conference in Vienna, the party split, forming the Right Poalei Zion (the Jewish Socialist Workers' Party Workers of Zion), which became part of the Socialist Workers' International and the World Zionist Organization, and the Left Po'alei Zion (the Jewish Social-Democratic Workers' Party Workers of Zion), the radical minority, which sympathized with the Bolsheviks.

The Left Poalei Zion placed more emphasis on socialist postulates. Key activists: I. Schiper (Right PZ), L. Holenderski, I. Lew (Left PZ); paper: Arbeiter Welt.

Both fractions had their own youth organizations: Right PZ: Dror and Freiheit; Left PZ – Jugnt. Left PZ was weaker than Right PZ; only towards the end of the 1930s did it start to form coalitions with other socialist and Zionist parties.

In 1937 Left PZ joined the World Zionist Organization. During World War II both fractions were active in underground politics and the resistance movement in the ghettos, in particular the youth organizations.

After 1945 both parties joined the Central Jewish Committee in Poland. In 1947 they reunited to form the strongest legally active Jewish party in Poland (with 20,000 members). In 1950 Poalei Zion was dissolved by the communist authorities.

5 Bund: The short name of the General Jewish Union of Working People in Lithuania, Poland and Russia, Bund means Union in Yiddish). The Bund was a social democratic organization representing Jewish craftsmen from the Western areas of the Russian Empire. It was founded in Vilnius in 1897.

In 1906 it joined the autonomous fraction of the Russian Social Democratic Working Party and took up a Menshevist position. After the Revolution of 1917 the organization split: one part was anti-Soviet power, while the other remained in the Bolsheviks' Russian Communist Party. In 1921 the Bund dissolved itself in the USSR, but continued to exist in other countries.

6 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.

7 Jewish Pale of Settlement: Certain provinces in the Russian Empire were designated for permanent Jewish residence and the Jewish population was only allowed to live in these areas. The Pale was first established by a decree by Catherine II in 1791.

The regulation was in force until the Russian Revolution of 1917, although the limits of the Pale were modified several times. The Pale stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, and 94% of the total Jewish population of Russia, almost 5 million people, lived there. The overwhelming majority of the Jews lived in the towns and shtetls of the Pale.

Certain privileged groups of Jews, such as certain merchants, university graduates and craftsmen working in certain branches, were granted to live outside the borders of the Pale of Settlement permanently.

8 Keren Kayemet LeIsrael (K.K.L.): Jewish National Fund (JNF) founded in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel. From its inception, the JNF was charged with the task of fundraising in Jewish communities for the purpose of purchasing land in the Land of Israel to create a homeland for the Jewish people.

After 1948 the fund was used to improve and afforest the territories gained. Every Jewish family that wished to help the cause had a JNF money box, called the 'blue box'. In Poland the JNF was

active in two periods, 1919-1939 and 1945-1950. In preparing its colonization campaign, Keren Kayemet le-Israel collaborated with the Jewish Agency and Keren Hayesod.

9 Free City of Danzig: According to the Versailles Treaties the previously German Danzig was declared to be a free city under the mandate of the League of Nations in 1920; it did not belong to either Germany or Poland; however both countries had access to its port.

Danzig (and the surrounding area) had a population of approximately 367,000 people, mostly Germans; Poles made up about 10 percent of the inhabitants. The Polish government was represented in the FCD by the General Commissioner of the Republic of Poland.

Hitler's demand (1939) for the city's return to Germany was the principal immediate excuse for the German invasion of Poland and thus of World War II. Danzig was annexed to Germany from 1 September 1939, until its fall to the Soviet army in early 1945. The Allies returned the city to Poland, which was renamed Gdansk.

10 Chagall, Marc (1889-1985): Russian-born French painter. Since Marc Chagall survived two world wars and the Revolution of 1917 he increasingly introduced social and religious elements into his art.

11 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.

12 Maccabi World Union: International Jewish sports organization whose origins go back to the end of the 19th century. A growing number of young Eastern European Jews involved in Zionism felt that one essential prerequisite of the establishment of a national home in Palestine was the improvement of the physical condition and training of ghetto youth.

In order to achieve this, gymnastics clubs were founded in many Eastern and Central European countries, which later came to be called Maccabi.

The movement soon spread to more countries in Europe and to Palestine. The World Maccabi Union was formed in 1921. In less than two decades its membership was estimated at 200,000 with branches located in most countries of Europe and in Palestine, Australia, South America, South Africa, etc.

13 Habima

Hebrew theater founded in 1914, initially a touring troupe. From 1917 it was based in Moscow; later it made grand tours of Europe, and from 1926 it was based in Palestine.

14 *Der Dibuk* (The Dybbuk, 1937): The play was written during the turbulent years of 1912-1917; Polish director Waszynski's 1937 film was made during another period of pre-war unease. It was shot on location in rural Poland, and captures a rich folk heritage.

Considered by some to be the greatest of Yiddish films, it was certainly the boldest undertaking, requiring special sets and unusual lighting. In *Der Dibuk*, the past has a magnetic pull on the present, and the dead are as alluring as the living. Jewish mysticism links with expressionism, and as in *Nosferatu*, man is an insubstantial presence in the cinematic ether.

15 An-ski, Szymon (pen name of Szlojme Zajnwel Rapaport) (1863-1920): Writer, ethnographer, socialist activist. Born in a village near Vitebsk. In his youth he was an advocate of *haskalah*, but later joined the radical movement *Narodnaya Vola*.

Under threat of arrest he left Russia in 1892 but returned there in 1905. From 1911-14 he led an ethnographic expedition researching the folklore of the Jews of Podolye and Volhynia. During the war he organized committees bringing aid to Jewish victims of the conflict and pogroms.

In 1918 he became involved in organizing cultural life in Vilnius, as a co-founder of the Union of Jewish Writers and Journalists and the Jewish Ethnographic Society. Two years before his death he moved to Warsaw.

He is the author of the Bund party's anthem, 'Di shvue' (Yid. oath). The participation of the Bund in the Revolution of 1905 influenced An-ski's decision to write in Yiddish. In his later work he used elements of Jewish legends collected during his ethnographic expedition and his experiences from WWI.

His most famous work is *The Dybbuk* (which to this day remains one of the most popular Yiddish works for the stage). An-ski's entire literary and scientific oeuvre was published in Warsaw in 1920-25 as a 15-volume edition.

16 Rubinstein, Arthur (1887-1982): American pianist of Jewish origin, born in Lodz, Poland and studied in Warsaw and Berlin, making his debut in 1900 with the Berlin Symphony Orchestra. He is best known for his performances of [Chopin](#) and his championing of Spanish music.

He emigrated to the US, made his debut at Carnegie Hall in 1906 and in London in 1912. He retired from stage in 1976. (sources: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/r/rubinsta1r.asp> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artur_Rubinstein)

17 Szyk, Arthur (1894 – 1951): Polish Jewish caricaturist and painter, famous for his anti-[Axis](#) political illustrations and [cartoons](#) during [World War II](#). He was born in [Lodz](#) and studied art in [Paris](#) and [Cracow](#). In 1919-1920 during the [Polish-Soviet war](#), he served as artistic director of the Department of [Propaganda](#) for Polish army in Lodz.

In 1921, he moved to [Paris](#). In 1934, Szyk exhibited his works in the United States, including an exhibition of his [George Washington](#) — [American Revolution](#) series at the [Library of Congress](#).

After a period of residence in [England](#), in 1940 he immigrated to the United States (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Szyk)

18 Tuwim, Julian (1894-1953): Poet and translator; wrote in Polish. He was born in Lodz into an assimilated family from Lithuania. He studied law and philosophy at Warsaw University. He was a leading representative of the Skamander group of poets. His early work combined elements of Futurism and Expressionism (e.g. *Czyschanie na Boga* [Lying in wait for God], 1918). In the 1920s his poetry took a turn towards lyricism (e.g. *Slowa we krwi* [Words in blood], 1926).

In the 1930s under the influence of the rise in nationalistic tendencies in Poland his work took on the form of satire and political grotesque (*Bal w operze* [A ball at the opera], 1936). He also published works for children.

A separate area of his writings are cabarets, libretti, sketches and monologues. He spent WWII in emigration and made public appearances in which he relayed information on the fate of the Polish population of Poland and the rest of Europe.

In 1944 he published an extended poem, 'My Zydzi polscy' [We Polish Jews], which was a manifesto of his complicated Polish-Jewish identity. After the war he returned to Poland but wrote little. He was the chairman of the Society of Friends of the Hebrew University and the Committee for Polish-Israeli Friendship.

19 Communist Union of Polish Youth (KZMP): until 1930 the Union of Communist Youth in Poland. Founded in March 1922 as a branch of the Communist Youth International. From the end of 1923 its structure included also the Communist Youth Union of Western Belarus and the Communist Youth Union of Western Ukraine (as autonomous regional organizations). Its activities included politics, culture and education, and sport.

In 1936 it initiated the publication of a Declaration of the rights of the young generation in Poland (whose postulates included an equal start in life for all, democratic rights, and the guarantee of work, peace and universal education).

The salient activists in the organization included B. Berman, A. Kowalski, A. Lampe, A. Lipski. In 1933 the organization had some 15,000 members, many of whom were Jews and peasants. The KZMP was disbanded in 1938.

20 Communist Party of Poland (KPP): created in December 1918 in Warsaw, its aim was to create a global or pan-European federal socialist state, and it fought against the rebirth of the Polish state.

Between 1921 and 1923 it propagated slogans advocating a two-stage revolution (the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the socialist revolution), the reinforcement of Poland's sovereignty, the right to self-determination of the ethnic minorities living within the II Republic of Poland, and worker and peasant government of the country. After 1924, as in the rest of the international communist movement, ultra-revolutionary tendencies developed.

From 1929 the KPP held the stance that the conditions were right for the creation by revolution of a Polish Republic of Soviets with a system based on the Soviet model, and advocated 'social fascism' and 'peasant fascism'.

In 1935 on the initiative of Stalin, the KPP wrought further changes in its program (recognizing the existence of the II Polish Republic and its political system). In 1919 the KPP numbered some 7,000-

8,000 members, and in 1934 around 10,000 (37 percent peasants), with a majority of Jews, Belarus and Ukrainians.

In 1937 Stalin took the decision to liquidate the KPP; the majority of its leaders were arrested and executed in the USSR, and in 1939 the party was finally liquidated on the charge that it had been taken over by provocateurs and spies.

21 Spanish Civil War (1936-39): A civil war in Spain, which lasted from July 1936 to April 1939, between rebels known as Nacionales and the Spanish Republican government and its supporters. The leftist government of the Spanish Republic was besieged by nationalist forces headed by General Franco, who was backed by Nazi Germany and fascist Italy.

Though it had Spanish nationalist ideals as the central cause, the war was closely watched around the world mainly as the first major military contest between left-wing forces and the increasingly powerful and heavily armed fascists.

The number of people killed in the war has been long disputed ranging between 500,000 and a million.

22 Hashomer Hatzair in Poland: From 1918 Hashomer Hatzair operated throughout Poland, with its headquarters in Warsaw. It emphasized the ideological and vocational training of future settlers in Palestine and personal development in groups. Its main aim was the creation of a socialist Jewish state in Palestine.

Initially it was under the influence of the Zionist Organization in Poland, of which it was an autonomous part. In the mid-1920s it broke away and joined the newly established World Scouting Union, Hashomer Hatzair.

In 1931 it had 22,000 members in Poland organized in 262 'nests' (Heb. 'ken'). During the occupation it conducted clandestine operations in most ghettos. One of its members was Mordechaj Anielewicz, who led the rising in the Warsaw ghetto. After the war it operated legally in Poland as a party, part of the He Halutz. It was disbanded by the communist authorities in 1949.

23 Endeks: Name formed from the initials of a right-wing party active in Poland during the inter-war period (ND - 'en-de'). Narodowa Demokracja [National Democracy] was founded by Roman Dmowski. Its members and supporters, known as 'Endeks', often held anti-Semitic views.

24 Pilsudski, Jozef (1867-1935): Polish activist in the independence cause, politician, statesman, marshal. With regard to the cause of Polish independence he represented the pro-Austrian current, which believed that the Polish state would be reconstructed with the assistance of Austria-Hungary. When Poland regained its independence in January 1919, he was elected Head of State by the Legislative Sejm.

In March 1920 he was nominated marshal, and until December 1922 he held the positions of Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army.

After the murder of the president, Gabriel Narutowicz, he resigned from all his posts and withdrew from politics. He returned in 1926 in a political coup. He refused the presidency offered to him, and in the new government held the posts of war minister and general inspector of the armed forces.

He was prime minister twice, from 1926-1928 and in 1930. He worked to create a system of national security by concluding bilateral non-aggression pacts with the USSR (1932) and Germany (1934). He sought opportunities to conclude firm alliances with France and Britain. In 1932 owing to his deteriorating health, Pilsudski resigned from his functions. He was buried in the Crypt of Honor in Wawel Cathedral in the Royal Castle in Cracow.

25 Jagiellonian University – the second university to be set up in Central Europe, after Prague University. Founded in 1364 by King Casimir the Great in Cracow, then the capital of the Kingdom of Poland. Its most famous alumnus is Nicholas Copernicus. The UJ has maintain high standards of learning for over 600 years.

26 September Campaign 1939: armed struggle in defense of Poland's independence from 1st September to 6th October 1939 against German and, from 17 September, also Soviet aggression; the start of World War II. The German plan of aggression ('Fall Weiss') assumed all-out, lightning warfare (Blitzkrieg). The Polish plan of defense planned engagement of battle in the border region (a length of some 1,600 km), and then organization of resistance further inside the country along subsequent lines of defense (chiefly along the Narwa, Vistula and San) until an allied (French and British) offensive on the western front. Poland's armed forces, commanded by the Supreme Commander, Marshal Edward Rydz-Smigly, numbered some 1 m soldiers.

Poland defended itself in isolation; on 3rd September Britain and France declared war on Germany, yet did not undertake offensive action on a larger scale. Following a battle on the border the main Polish line of defense was broken, and the Polish forces retreated in battles on the Vistula and the San.

On 8th September, the German army reached Warsaw, and on 12th September Lvov. From 14-16 September the Germans closed their ring on the Bug. On 9th September Polish divisions commanded by General Tadeusz Kutrzeba went into battle with the Germans on the Bzura, but after initial successes were surrounded and largely smashed (by 22 September), although some of the troops managed to get to Warsaw.

Defense was continued by isolated centers of resistance, where the civilian population cooperated with the army in defense. On 17th September Soviet forces numbering more than 800,000 men crossed Poland's eastern border, broke through the defense of the Polish forces and advanced nearly as far as the Narwa-Bug-Vistula-San line.

In the night of 17-18 September the president of Poland, the government and the Supreme Commander crossed the Polish-Romanian border and were interned. Lvov capitulated on 22nd September (surrendered to Soviet units), Warsaw on 28th September, Modlin on 29th September, and Hel on 2nd October.

27 Annexation of Eastern Poland

According to a secret clause in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact defining Soviet and German territorial spheres of influence in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union occupied Eastern Poland in September 1939. In early November the newly annexed lands were divided up between the Ukrainian and the Belarusian Soviet Republics.

28 Komsomol: Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread the ideas of communism and involve the worker and peasant youth in building the Soviet Union. The Komsomol also aimed at giving a communist upbringing by involving the worker youth in the political struggle, supplemented by theoretical education.

The Komsomol was more popular than the Communist Party because with its aim of education people could accept uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

29 Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, OUN: (Orhanizatsiya Ukrainskykh Natsionalistiv) [Ukrainian](#) political movement, seeking the establishment of an independent Ukraine, it was created in 1929 by the merging of several emigre Ukrainian nationalist organizations in Poland.

In 1940 the organization split into the Banderists and the Melnykovists. The Melnykovists collaborated with the Nazis and created Ukrainian military divisions within the German army (SS Galicia Division). The Banderists created the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). They continued their struggle against the Soviets and were destroyed by the late 1940s. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization_of_Ukrainian_Nationalists)

30 NKVD: People's Committee of Internal Affairs; it took over from the GPU, the state security agency, in 1934.

31 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.

32 Wasilewska, Wanda (1905-64): From 1934-37 she was a member of the Supreme Council of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). In 1940 she became a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. From 1941-43 she was a political commissary in the Red Army and editor of 'Nowe Widnokregi'.

In 1943 she helped to organize the Union of Polish Patriots and the Polish armed forces in the USSR. In 1944 she became a member of the Central Bureau of Polish Communists in the USSR and vice-chairperson of the Polish Committee for National Liberation.

After the war she remained in the USSR. Author of the social propaganda novels 'Oblicze Dnia' (The Face of the Day, 1934), 'Ojczyzna' (Fatherland, 1935) and 'Ziemia w Jarzmie' (Earth under the Yoke, 1938), and the war novel 'Teczka' (Rainbow, 1944)

33 Civil War (1918-1920): The Civil War between the Reds (the Bolsheviks) and the Whites (the anti-Bolsheviks), which broke out in early 1918, ravaged Russia until 1920. The Whites represented all shades of anti-communist groups – Russian army units from World War I, led by anti-Bolshevik officers, by anti-Bolshevik volunteers and some Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries.

Several of their leaders favored setting up a military dictatorship, but few were outspoken tsarists. Atrocities were committed throughout the Civil War by both sides.

The Civil War ended with Bolshevik military victory, thanks to the lack of cooperation among the various White commanders and to the reorganization of the Red forces after Trotsky became commissar for war. It was won, however, only at the price of immense sacrifice; by 1920 Russia was ruined and devastated. In 1920 industrial production was reduced to 14% and agriculture to 50% as compared to 1913.

34 Russian Revolution of 1917: Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over.

The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

35 The 1st Kosciuszko Infantry Division: tactical grouping formed in the USSR from May 1943. The victory at Stalingrad and the gradual assumption of the strategic initiative by the Red Army strengthened Stalin's position in the anti-fascist coalition and enabled him to exert increasing influence on the issue of Poland.

In April 1943, following the public announcement by the Germans of their discovery of mass graves at Katyn, Stalin broke off diplomatic relations with the Polish government in exile and using the poles in the USSR, began openly to build up a political base (the Union of Polish Patriots) and an army: the 1st Kosciuszko Infantry Division numbered some 11,000 soldiers and was commanded first by General Zygmunt Berling (1943-44), and subsequently by the Soviet General Bewziuk (1944-45). In August 1943 the division was incorporated into the 1st Corps of the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR, and from March 1944 was part of the Polish Army in the USSR.

The 1st Division fought at Lenino on 12-13 October 1943, and in Praga in September 1944. In January 1945 it marched into Warsaw, and in April-May 1945 it took part in the capture of Berlin. After the war it became part of the Polish Army.

36 Union of Polish Patriots (ZPP): Political organization founded in March 1943 by Polish communists in the USSR. It served Stalin's policy with regard to the Polish question. The ZPP drew up the terms on which the communists took power in post-war Poland.

It developed its range of activities more fully after the Soviet authorities broke off diplomatic contact with the government of the Republic of Poland in exile (Apr. 1943). The upper ranks of the ZPP were dominated by communists (from Jan. 1944 concentrated in the Central Bureau of Polish Communists), who did not reveal the organization's long-term aims.

The ZPP propagated slogans such as armed combat against the Germans, alliance with the USSR, parliamentary democracy and moderate social and economic reforms in post-war Poland, and redefinition of Poland's eastern border.

It considered the ruling bodies of the Republic of Poland in exile to be illegal. It conducted propaganda campaigns (its press organ was called 'Wolna Polska' - Free Poland), and organized community care and education and cultural activities. From May 1943 it co-operated in the organization of the First Kosciuszko Infantry Division, and later the Polish Army in the USSR (1944).

In July 1944, the ZPP was formally subordinated to the National Council and participated in the formation of the Polish Committee for National Liberation. From 1944-46, the ZPP resettled Poles and Jews from the USSR to Poland. It was dissolved in August 1946.

37 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.

38 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.

39 Jews settling in Lower Silesia after World War II: The Jews of the German province of Silesia either emigrated or were killed during the Nazi regime. In 1939 there were 15,480 Jews living in the region, most of whom perished during the war.

A new influx of Jews began in 1945 after the region was incorporated into Poland. Of the 52,000 or so Jews that arrived there (mostly from Eastern Poland incorporated into the Soviet Union), 10,000 settled in Wroclaw (Breslau), others moved mainly to Legnica (Liegnitz), Dzierzoniow (Reichenbach) and Walbrzych (Waldenburg).

40 Central Committee of Polish Jews

It was founded in 1944, with the aim of representing Jews in dealings with the state authorities and organizing and co-coordinating aid and community care for Holocaust survivors. Initially it operated from Lublin as part of the Polish Committee of National Liberation.

The CCPJ's activities were subsidized by the Joint, and in time began to cover all areas of the reviving Jewish life. In 1950 the CCPJ merged with the Jewish Cultural Society to form the Social and Cultural Society of Polish Jews.

41 UNRRA: United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. It was founded in 1943 to give aid to countries liberated from the Axis powers. There were finally 52 participating countries, each of which contributed funds amounting to 2% of its national income.

A sum of nearly \$4 billion was expended on various types of emergency aid, including distribution of food and medicine and restoration of public services and of agriculture and industry. China, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Italy, Poland, the Ukraine (USSR), and Yugoslavia were the chief beneficiaries.

UNRRA returned some 7 million displaced persons to their countries of origin and provided camps for about 1 million refugees unwilling to be repatriated. UNRRA discontinued its operations in Europe in 1947.

42 Polish Workers' Party (PPR): a communist party formed in January 1942 by a merger of Polish communist groups and organizations following the infiltration of an initiative cell from the USSR. The PPR was not formally part of the Communist Internationale, although in fact was subordinate to it. In its program declarations the PPR's slogans included full armed combat to liberate the country from the German occupation, the restoration of an independent, democratic Polish state with new eastern borders, alliance with the USSR, and moderate socio-economic reform.

In 1942 the PPR had a few thousand members, but by 1944 its ranks had swelled to some 20,000. In 1942 it spawned an armed organization, the People's Guard (renamed the People's Army in 1944).

After the Red Army invaded Poland the PPR took power and set about creating a political system in which it had the dominant position. The PPR pacified society, terrorized the political opposition and suppressed underground organizations fighting for independence using instruments of organized violence. It was supported by USSR state security organizations operating in Poland (including the NKVD).

After its consolidation of power in 1947-48 the leadership of the PPR set about radical political and socio-economic transformations based on Soviet models, including the liquidation of private ownership, the nationalization of the economy (the collectivization of agriculture), and the subordination of all institutions and community organizations to the communist party.

In December 1948 the party numbered over a million members. After merging with the Polish Socialist Party it changed its name to the Polish United Workers' Party.

43 Mostowicz, Arnold (1914-2002): writer and cultural activist. Born in Lodz into a Jewish family; his father was an industrialist but also a cultural activist and theater director. Mostowicz studied medicine in Toulouse, and returned to Poland shortly before the outbreak of World War II.

He worked in the Lodz ghetto as a doctor. He was imprisoned in Auschwitz. He did not return to medicine after the war, turning instead to writing. He wrote science fiction novels and popular science books. He was also a journalist and publicist. He is the author of the novel 'The Ballad of Blind Max', and the volume 'Lodz My Forbidden Love', in which he revealed his ties with his native city. He was the president of the Monumentum Iudaicum Lodzense Foundation.

44 Bergen-Belsen: Concentration camp, located between Hannover and Hamburg, in Lower-Saxony, Germany. It was built between the villages of Bergen and Belsen in 1940, hence the name. Initially it was a POW camp for French and Belgian captives and in 1941 about 20,000 Soviet prisoners were transported there too.

In 1943 it was turned to a concentration camp where Jews of foreign citizenship were kept, to be exchanged for German nationals imprisoned abroad. Very few of such trades were in fact made and as a result about 200 Jews were allowed to emigrate to Palestine and about 1500 Hungarian Jews to Switzerland.

The camp was divided to eight sections: a detention camp, two women's camps, a special camp, neutrals camps, 'star' camp (mainly Dutch prisoners who wore a [Star of David](#) on their clothing instead of the camp uniform), Hungarian camp and a tent camp. It was designed to hold 10,000 prisoners, however, by the war's end more than 60,000 prisoners were detained there, due to the large numbers of evacuees from [Auschwitz](#) and other camps from the East reaching Bergen-Belsen in death-marches.

The facilities in the camp were unable to accommodate the sudden influx of thousands of prisoners and all basic services - food, water and sanitation - collapsed, leading to the outbreak of disease. While Bergen-Belsen contained no [gas chambers](#), more than 35,000 people died of starvation, overwork, disease, brutality and sadistic [medical experiments](#).

By April [1945](#), more than 60,000 prisoners were incarcerated in the two camps located 1.5 miles apart. The camp was liberated by the British on April 15th 1945. As the first major camp to be [liberated](#), the event received a lot of press coverage. Sixty-thousand prisoners were present at the time of liberation. Afterward, about 500 people died daily of starvation and typhus, reaching nearly 14,000. (<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/Belsen.html>)

45 Regained Lands: term describing the eastern parts of Germany (Silesia, Pomerania, Eastern Prussia, etc.) annexed to Poland after World War II, following the Teheran and Yalta agreements

between the allies. After 1945 Germans were expelled from the area, and Poles (as well as Jews to some extent) from the former Polish lands annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939 were settled in their place.

A Polonization campaign was also waged - place names were altered, Protestant cemeteries were destroyed, etc. The Society for the Development of the Western Lands (TRZZ), founded in 1957, organized propaganda campaigns justifying the right of the Polish state to the territories, popularizing the social, economic and cultural transformations, and advocating integration with the rest of the country.

46 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.

47 Comecon: Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Inspired by the American Marshall Plan (refused by the communist countries) Comecon was created to link the economies of the Eastern Block countries with the Soviet Union as well as with each other. It was founded in Moscow in 1949 by the Soviet Union, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania and joined later by East Germany (1950), Mongolia (1962), Cuba (1972) and Vietnam (1978). Yugoslavia was an associated member and Albania discontinued its membership in 1961.

Comecon was an organization to arrange trade within the communist block without market and also greatly limited trade with economies outside the organization. Each national economy specialized on a number of products that were exchanged in kind between the member states.

For example the USSR supplied its Eastern European satellites with oil and gas (pipe lines were built to East Germany via Poland and Hungary via Czechoslovakia and extended further south to Yugoslavia) while cars were produced in Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany and Romania, buses in Hungary, trucks in Poland, East Germany and the USSR. The main agricultural suppliers were Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria.

In Easter Europe Comecon was generally understood to be more beneficial to the USSR than the other member states and a way of exploitation of the more advanced economies. After the fall of communism it was finally agreed to be disbanded in January 1991. (sources:

<http://www.tiscali.co.uk/reference/encyclopedia/hutchinson/m0006083.html>,
<http://www.angelfire.com/mac/egmatthews/worldinfo/glossary/COMECON.html>)

48 Lauder foundation: The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation was established in 1987 in New York by its president, the prominent philanthropist Ronald S. Lauder, to help the Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe. The Foundation is committed to rebuilding Jewish life in that part of Europe where the destruction of the Holocaust was followed by the oppression of Communist rule.

The Foundation sponsors Jewish educational institutions in terms of reviving the Jewish traditions. Today, the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation operates and/or supports 62 programs spread throughout a network of 15 countries: Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia and the Ukraine.

49 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.

50 Gomulka Campaign: a campaign to sack Jews employed in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the army and the central administration. The trigger of 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.

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