

Ichok Grynberg

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Interviewer: Agata Gajewska

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A certain anecdote is passed around in Mr Ichok Grynberg's family. Apparently, his wife Krystyna has long stopped writing down addresses and telephone numbers in an addressbook. Whenever she cannot remember her friend's phone number, she asks her husband. 'It's faster and more effective this way' – she explains. Indeed, Mr. Grynberg has an incredible memory. When talking about his childhood, he can replicate a detailed map of his hometown, place individual buildings, and then list first and last names of their owners. His story consists really of various digressions, which makes it colorful, however, at times seemingly incoherent. Questions bring up new associations, which he would like to share. In result, after each interview I stay for over an hour to listen about various trips he undertook, watch videotapes of his Canadian cousins' weddings, or learn the news from a meeting of his building's committee.

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My family background

I don't know my great-grandparents. Unfortunately, I also didn't know my grandparents very well. The only person of their generation who was still alive during my times was my grandmother – my father's mother. She had two names – Shejna Gitl. She was always coughing. This I remember. My paternal grandfather was born and lived in Goworowo, that's between Rozan and Ostroleka. He was a baker. He was very religious and considered a wise man. His name was Gerer Chusyd [he was a follower of the tzaddik dynasty from Gora Kalwaria, the Alters, called 'Gerer rebe' in Yiddish [1](#)].

I was born after he died, and because there is a tradition among Jews to name a child after a grandfather or father when he dies, I was given my grandfather's name: Ichok Ajzik. His last name was Grynberg. My father, Gedala Grynberg, was born in 1889. He had two brothers and a sister. Their names were: Chajim, Cael and Rywka, whom we used to call Riwke.

Grandfather Szmilke and Grandmother Matla from my mother's side lived in Mlawa. Their last name was Kuperman. I didn't know them at all since they died long before the war. Reportedly, Grandfather was a melamed in Mlawa. My mother came from a very poor, religious family. They used to say that her parents would die from starvation, but if something wasn't kosher, they would never eat it. Mother's name was Hana. She had 3 siblings, 2 sisters and 1 brother: Aron, Jidke and Rachel. She was 2 years older than Father, she was born in 1887.

Father and Mother never saw each other before the wedding. It was an arranged marriage. Mother's parents hired an official shadkhan, that is a matchmaker. He used to go from town to town and say 'Listen, your daughter is 18 years old? If you want to, I'll start looking for a bachelor for her.' And he sent word to another religious man, and that's how it was arranged. They settled the conditions, how long they'd support the marriage, give them money for food, provide a dowry, and so on. So, Dad and Mom saw each other just to tie the knot, under the chuppah. Mom moved in with Dad, to Goworowo. Mother was very small – one of those teeny, tiny people. She was very religious and behaved religiously. She used to wear a sheitl, which is a wig. She also had a very long nose – Dad, whenever he gave her something to drink, always said 'Don't put your nose in the glass!'. I remember as if it was today. But there was a huge love between my parents. They loved each other very much. Religious people, they always respected each other and spoke to each other elegantly.

My father used to bake. He came from a family of bakers. He inherited a wooden bakery from Grandfather. It was on the main street in Goworowo, Ostrolecka Street. My dad also inherited the recipe for the dough. I remember when I was 4-5 years old, my dad built a new, brick, modern bakery. Although he had an apprentice, Father was always getting up at 4am and baking buns in the ovens. Father was calm, I remember as if it was today. He couldn't overwork himself, because he had a hernia. He was a very busy man. He didn't have time to study the writings. He prayed rigorously three times a day. He was going to synagogue, traditionally, Friday and Saturday evenings. On Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah he prayed all day long.

In our family Mother gave birth twelve times. Because, among religious Jews, [there is a saying] 'every year comes a prophet', which means that each child which comes into this world is never a problem, but brings happiness. That's the way it is with religious Jews. Four infants died right after birth. They came down sick with some ordinary illness, but quickly died. Eight of us were left. Later, one brother and one sister died in an epidemic, so there were six of us left until the war. And so: Abram Lejb was the oldest one. He was born in 1910. Then my sister, whose original Jewish name was Rywka, Rywka Rutl. She was born in 1913. Then one more sister – Sara. After Sara, in 1921, I was born. Then, a year later, my younger brother came into this world. His name was Srul Motl. Then there was a break and one more sister came – Malka, born in 1927. All names I'm giving are Jewish, original, as they were used every day.

Growing up

At the front of our house there was a store, a bakery at the back, above the bakery a small apartment, near the bakery a kitchen in which Mom used to cook. Upstairs there was a bedroom. One for everyone. For the parents and for the children. The parents had their bed in there, and the kids slept on the floor. There were straw mattresses, replaced every half year, and that's how we slept. There was a partition in that room, but without a window, without anything. Girls slept behind the partition, boys slept in the part with windows. Only Grandma Gitl didn't sleep with us. When the store was closed, she put her bed in there and slept there. Bathroom? We had to go about a 100 meters behind the house, because there was no bathroom. There was no running water, we had to bring water. Sometimes the town administrator Zaluski came to inspect the house. Then the baits [houses] had to be scrubbed in order to pass the commune inspection.

My mom was very busy with such a big family. She was taking care of the children, she had to raise them. Mom worked very hard. We hired a Polish woman to do laundry. All dirty clothes were gathered and she took them to a river to wash them. They were left to dry in the attic. Sisters were helping Mom a little. That was it. Mother was also selling in the store. The biggest rush was in the morning. They were coming to get bread, buns. Later, Mom would spend most of her time in the kitchen, cooking. She had to be very careful to have everything kosher. If not, we didn't eat. It was out of the question.

On weekdays we ate very little. There was something for breakfast – I usually had rye bread with some butter and drank ground chicory, instead of coffee which we didn't have. If I got a bun, that was good. I usually took rye bread with butter to cheder with me and ate it there. If I was very hungry, I used to make scrambled eggs – it was called feinkochen in Jewish [Yiddish: delicacy]. I would take two eggs, put them in the oven where bread was baked, and when they were ready, I ate them. And in the evening there was 'vyecherya' [Byelorussian: supper], that's how we called that meal. Mom cooked for everyone then. Often there was joich – broth, meat cooked with bones, with potatoes, and that was everything. I liked gefilte fish and challah, which we baked ourselves, best. But, I liked everything! There was nothing I didn't like. If there wasn't enough food for me at home, I used to go to my friend's house – his name was Josel. His family were butchers, they cut and sold meat. They had a larger supper than us. They prepared Jewish meals. Various guests used to go there, and if they came, then there was traditional food. If I wanted to eat better, I used to go – although Mom never allowed me – and I stood by their door. When they ate, Josel's mom would give me something, too.

I also remember what it was like on Saturday. We were six children – four little ones, including me. We would sit at the table, which stood in the store and was used to sell bread from. Girls separately and boys separately. Dad took a baked challah, hot water from the stove – no cooking during Sabbath – and poured that hot water over the challah, and then sprinkled some sugar on it. Saturday morning, for breakfast, he fed all children with this challah. The four of us were sitting and he was giving us a spoonful of that challah with water. That was the kids' breakfast. If I didn't want to eat it, he would make me. Children were arguing if their challah wasn't mixed well with water and sugar. I remember my sister yelling: 'He got more sugar, I got more bread!'. When Mom was dividing it, everyone was making sure nobody got a bigger portion. This I remember as if it was today.

I also remember on Saturdays, in the synagogue after the prayers, Father would brag about what a smart kid I was (I had an excellent memory and whatever I learned in the cheder, I remembered). He would put me up on a table, and I talked about various Jewish religious matters I learned at school. My father had a friend who also had a bakery. His name was Srul Kusze. And they used to visit each other. If there was time on Saturday night, they used to talk. And I used to overhear their conversations: how business is going, how this is going, and that.

I was the worst child of all. I was a rather unsettled child, very lively, very energetic – a little rascal. The oldest brother often used to beat me up, with his fists, whenever I got into trouble. I was very bored. I was going to cheder since I was 4. It was an unpleasant time. All day long I was sitting at school, and had no time to play. Through the window we saw children who were walking around, playing with their toys. Whenever we wanted to play ball or something, we would sneak out of the cheder. We would leave when the melamed was busy with other children. When the river was

frozen, we liked to slide. A kid always wants to move a little – we went out on ice, there was no one around, sometimes the ice gave in. I remember after one Pesach we all started attending a different cheder. I didn't like going there. I was a bit older then. I remember how they chased me on a street because I didn't want to go to the cheder. A teacher and Father came and were yelling: 'You go to the cheder!'. I really didn't want to go, because it was unpleasant. But in the end I got used to it and I studied.

My melamed, I mean teacher, was called Aaron Weinstein and was one of the three melamedim at the cheder. All day long he was at school teaching children religion. I was also going to a private teacher to learn how to write and read in Jewish – Yiddish. That Jewish alphabet I 'hob gelernt' [Yiddish: learned] and until this day I can write beautifully. I had to learn it because in the cheder they didn't teach Yiddish. They taught loshn-koidesh [Yiddish: holy language], that is Hebrew... and to pray.

I attended cheder until I was 9. Then I went to yeshivah in Lomza. Dad and Mom sent me there. It wasn't even a big expense for the family. I lived at my cousin's, who let me stay there. My parents sent me an allowance. The yeshivah was called 'Lomzer Jesziwe' [Yeshivah in Lomza]. It's a well known school. It was the only yeshivah in Lomza. Not a big building, quite a small house really, right next to the synagogue (there was a pretty synagogue in Lomza). I think there were ten or fifteen students at school. We studied all day long. We had a younger teacher (in cheder only older people could teach, but in a yeshivah teachers were mostly young rabbis). His name was Aaron, I don't remember his last name. He lived with his wife in the same building. I remember his wife well, because she used to bake latkes, a kind of potato pancakes. Once when we were hungry we ran away at night and stole those latkes and ate them. She was yelling at us 'Kids, what are you doing!' but she didn't do anything to us. I had a few good friends there. One, whose name was Nachmen Szafran, was very skinny and had such big ears. The second one was Mates Rozencwajg. These friends were also wealthier, because they had a sawmill. I wasn't allowed to stay at school for long. I was 10 at the time and stayed at this school for over two years. Then I started to work.

Goworowo didn't have city rights, it was just a village. Eight kilometers by a forest road to Rozan and 18 km by road to Ostroleka. Three hundred and something Jewish families lived there. The city had mostly wooden buildings, but there were a few brick ones or ones with a brick foundation. There was no sewer system or running water. Near the synagogue there was a 'plimp' – a pump. I think Polish engineers from Ostroleka or Warsaw built it in 1927. Before that water was carried from the river. Entire Goworowo was like one long street. It was called Ostrolecka Street. It was maybe 100 or 200 meters long, no more than that. There was another street connecting to it from the right – it was called Bankowa Street [Polish: Bank Street], because they built a city bank there, a sort of credit bank. The other street, to the right of Ostrolecka Street, was going to Szczawin. There was a huge historic church, which is still there until this day. Further there was nothing, only fields. At the very end of Ostrolecka Street there was a market. On both sides of the market there were sidewalks, and behind the sidewalk there was the River Usz (it was called Usz in Polish, Irsh in Yiddish). There was a small island on the river, where we used to play in the summertime. On the market, more or less opposite the island, there was a mikveh (a Jewish town cannot be without a mikveh. Everyone always went there Friday morning. Women went there in the morning, men at around 1pm, 3pm... because later Sabbath began.

During Sabbath everything was as if dead. God forbid someone would dare to ride a bicycle. No, it was a traditional, religious, Jewish town. When, for example, some kids organized a soccer match on the market during Sabbath (they were kids of butchers and deliverers, who weren't deeply religious; kids that didn't go to a Jewish school), then religious kids came and there was a fight. They chased them away yelling 'You mustn't!'. It was a small, closely knit community. We all knew each other. Everyone knew what the others were having for dinner.

When there was a wedding, the entire town would celebrate. A wedding would take place in the synagogue, of course. On a square in front of the synagogue there were four chuppahs under which there was food, and everyone could have some. There were also special musicians who came from Wyszkow. They were Jews who played violins. As far as I remember, they were always the same musicians, until the end of the war. That was a tradition. When the newlyweds came out of the synagogue, there was an orchestra out on the entire street. They played various Jewish songs, and people were walking around and celebrating. And there was a special butcher, his name was Ajzik Rozen. He had a hall built, a nice one, which he was renting out for weddings. It never happened that you couldn't borrow something from someone. When someone came and said 'Lend me this' – you always lent it to him. And there, in Ajzik Rozen's hall, there were traditional Jewish dances, but also Strausses, various foxtrots – traditional dances from before the war. That's the way it was.

There were two synagogues. [There were two synagogues in Goworowo, a wooden and a brick one. The wooden one was built before WW I, the brick one was built in the 1930s. They both burnt down during WWII.] There was a wooden synagogue on the square, then a new brick one was built. The old one stayed there, and this is where 'achnusat orchim', a reception for guests, was given. There was a tradition among Jews that poor people from other towns and villages would come [to town] on Sabbath. They would come on Friday, walk around the town, and look inside every store. In our bakery there was some money prepared, and each beggar would get a pre-war grosz [a very small unit of currency, equivalent to a penny] or two. After the prayer those hungry Jews stayed around, and everyone would take one home for the Sabbath supper. And since they couldn't travel back home on Saturdays, they slept in that room in the synagogue. A special shelter for poor people. They could sleep there.

The new synagogue was quite nice. Everyone went there, because it was the only one operating, and there were 300 families in the town. Inside the synagogue there was an ument and everyone would stand and pray there. Women were upstairs, men downstairs. I can't recall how the synagogue was painted. I know that there were two tiled stoves, heated with coal or wood.

I remember the rabbi. His last name was Rabinowicz. We met him once in a Jewish bath, in the mikveh. He was short, since Jews weren't tall. (If a Jew was 1.7m tall, he was considered extremely tall. Usually Jews were 1.58m. If someone was 1.56m, then he was short.) That rabbi, Rabinowicz, had one son, Fajwel, and three daughters. Among Jews, if for example milk was spilled on meat pots – there were pots for meat dishes and pots for milk dishes – then you had to go to the rabbi ask a shayle. 'Fregn a shayle' [Yiddish: ask a question], that's what it was called. That meant you had to go ask the rabbi what to do with that pot. Whether to throw it out, or how to fix it, things like that. I remember that rabbi came to have dinner with us once.

My dad, when he had a drink, would get a red spot on his forehead. Mom would know that he'd been to the synagogue and would say 'Gedal, you had a drink, didn't you?'. In the synagogue, after the prayers, there was often this type of 'lechajim' [Yiddish: L'Chaim, literally 'Cheers!', 'To Life!', here used to signify drinking and being merry]. There was kosher vodka and something to eat – and everyone had a bit of vodka. (This is how my bar mitzvah was celebrated, because there was no money to celebrate it differently. I remember I got a tefillin and a tallit.) However, I never drank vodka at all. I used to drink wine, which was made from raisins; on Havdalah, Kabbalat Sabbath I drank, but little. But I never drank vodka, under no circumstances.

Goworowo was a town of shoemakers, tailors, carpenters and 'balagule', that is horse drivers ... Most people in the town made a living from what they produced: assorted pants, suits, shoes (unlike in Warsaw or Lodz, where you could work in various places). Things were produced and then taken to a market in Jedwabne, Lachow, Rozan, Dlugosiodlo, Wyszkw. Everyone had horses, so they would go there and open a stall. In our town, for example, market day was on Thursdays. Everyone would bring their goods – whatever they had, usually clothes or shoes made by poor shoemakers. There were butchers selling parts of meat. Because Jews eat only the front part of a cow, the rear end isn't kosher. Certain veins had to be taken out for it to be kosher. And in the rear end parts of a cow or a calf these veins couldn't be found, so those parts were not eaten. Poles from villages would come to our town and buy that meat. Or Polish butchers, who made kielbasa [Polish sausage], they also bought that meat. They mixed pork, a bit of beef and that's how they made kielbasa. And that non-kosher part was sold to Poles.

Everyone was very poor. If someone had a bicycle, that was a big luxury. Whenever anyone needed a loan, they would go to the credit bank ran by people who had better earnings. They were altogether six families, six respectable families in town. Father belonged to the committee, and also Aaron Szmelc and Juske Potasz (his name was Nusn, that was his real Jewish name). We were the bakers, so we were a bit better off, but some families were poor and lived only thanks to the loans. We used to sell to some families, that didn't have money, on credit. Women had their husbands in America, so before they got money from America, they would take things on credit. There was a book, and it would be written down: Golda or Salcia or Dwora – [owes] this and this much. We had to wait for a long time, because they had to change dollars to zloty (and zloty was very strong back then), then they would come to clear accounts with Father. Father was in the bakery – they cleared accounts, paid, and had more credit.

Only ten Polish families lived in Goworowo. Zaluski was the administrator of the village. Jagielinski was the baker. Wojtacki had a store with cold cuts. Duda had a bakery, on the way out of town. There was doctor Glinka. There was also a police station, on the way out of town. The chief of police was Kurculak. (There was also 'koza' [Polish: colloquial term for detention house] – a small wooden house, in which, when someone deserved it [committed a crime], had to pay a ticket, then he had to stay in there.) There was Zaleski, a shoemaker – I used to play the violin with his children. Wyrzykowski had a textile store. There was Lewicki who cleaned the town. Nikodemski – he was a coachman. Niegowski worked at our bakery. Same as Golebiowski, who lived with us. On Sunday, when Poles went to church, Poles from other towns – Rembisze Dzialy, Rembisze, Zabin, Pokrzepnica, Gogorowek, Szawin, Danielowo – would ride through Goworowo. The church was at the end of the town. Whenever a priest would ride a horse-drawn cart and ring the bells, Poles would kneel down. Anyone, who came to that church on Sundays or other holidays, used to ride

horse-drawn carts.

We were good neighbors with the Poles. We had no problems. Only in the years 1937-1938 other Poles would come from other towns – Ostroleka, usually – carrying signs ‘Nie kupuj u Zyda’ [‘Don’t buy from a Jew’]. It was when Hitler came to power [1933] [2](#) and they started sending Hitler’s agents to Poland. They instigated Poles against Jews. But I can’t complain. I had a lot of Polish friends. Edzio Golebiewski, Jan Lewicki, Wieslaw Nikodemski... I liked them very much. There was also Jarek’s family – they used to come to clean the town after market day. (Everyone usually came with horses. There were no cars, just horse-drawn carts. Those horses soiled, and Jarek’s family would pick it up and take it out to the fields, as fertilizer.) I liked them so much that when they came to clean up, I stole a bun from the bakery, put it in the pocket and took it to those Poles. Wladek Golebiewski and Jan Niegowski worked in our bakery. Wood was needed for the ovens, and they used to cut that wood for us in the forest, and stack it away from the bakery. It was very good for us with them, very good. . We used to stick together. Among Jews it was forbidden to do anything on Saturdays, turn off lights or carry money. Jews used to do shtar mechirah [Yiddish: literally ‘bill of sale’ – customary, in a sense symbolic, sale of estate for the period of Jewish holidays, so that it could be run by non-Jews] – sold it to the Poles for Saturdays. We would go to a rabbi, and the rabbi would sign a document saying that the bakery is sold to Jan Niegowski, but for Saturdays only. And he would do whatever needed to be done on Saturdays, opened, turned everything on. In the bakery also, after a fair, they’d prepare a table and the Poles would come to bargain. I don’t remember any incidents. I just recall one fact. There was an alcoholic. When he got drunk and there were porters (whenever something heavy was brought, like flour from a mill, then it had to be carried), he beat up one Jewish porter. This incident I remember, but other than that there were no problems with the Poles.

Our town was very rooted in Jewish traditions. Everybody belonged to some organization. There were organizations: Poalei Zion [3](#) , an orthodox religious organization Agudat Israel [4](#) and Bund [5](#) – a modern Jewish organization saying ‘We were born in Poland and have to make a life for ourselves in Poland’. Youth organizations were also very active: there was Beitar [6](#), there was Hahalutz [7](#), which prepared kibbutzim in Poland. They exercised, went to farmers to learn farming, and they all got together and went to Israel (if they got a certificate, permit from the English [8](#)). First wave of youth left in 1929 – 1930. My cousin Ester, Necha Szachter, Natan ‘Nuske’ Szron, Lejbce Gewura, Idel Rudka were among them... I remember till today when they went to Israel. They arrived in Palestine long before the war. And I remember, if some of them were earning money, they used to send some home. My siblings had rather Zionist views. Parents were traditional people. They only had to fight with us so that we’d be religious. Only that, there were no world view discussions.

My eldest brother, Abram Lejbl, was a baker. In 1939 he served in the Polish Army in the 72nd Infantry Regiment in Grodno. He wasn’t as religious as parents. Even before the army he belonged to Poalei Zion. When he came back from the army, he immediately went to Brazil. Mother had a brother there, Aaron Kuperman. (He came from Rozan and in the mid 1920s went to Brazil with his family. He had two girls and one boy.) They invited my brother. It was an obvious thing that when he arrived there, he couldn’t work as a baker. In Brazil, whenever someone was hired, that was a big deal. Jews who came as immigrants usually ended up being salesmen – ambulants [from Spanish ‘wandering’, that is a door-to-door salesmen]. They went to villages and towns to sell various goods: clothes, dress fabric... They used to sell on credit. (They had a piece of paper called

'klaper' [Yiddish: something worn on the lapel of a suit] where they would write their clients' debts. Brazilians were very honest and reliable, so it was safe to sell to them on credit.) All immigrants started like that, because there was no other work. And later, once they made enough money doing this, they opened stores and usually became merchants. In 1946 my brother opened a furniture store. He didn't live long. He died in 1952. He didn't get married.

Among young Jews it was rare for someone to get an education. There was only one thought that occupied Jews: to emigrate. To leave and be able to make money. Whoever had arms and legs and could emigrate – left. First a man went, leaving wife and children. Later, when he was able to, he invited his entire family to come over. And from our town, Goworowo, many people emigrated. They usually went to America, Brazil, Uruguay, Mexico or Cuba. I really wanted to get an education. I wanted to study to become a doctor. When I couldn't go to high school but saw other children go there with books, I would hide under a tree and cry. It was a small town. To get an education you had to go to Warsaw or some other big city. But there you had to have a place to sleep, make a living, have money. For me it was impossible.

Among Jews, when a boy was 14, he had to have a profession. My father said to me then: 'Zinele – my son – it's time for you to get a profession'. First Father sent me to a tailor. It was in Goworowo, although the tailor was from Radzilow and everyone used to call that tailor 'der Radzillowicz' or 'Radzillower'. I was very energetic, so I worked with enthusiasm: I sewed, darned... But it wasn't for me. I felt too strong, too muscular for a job like that. I was looking for a more physical kind of work. So Father decided I should learn to be a tinsmith and sent me to Warsaw. I was 15 or 16 at the time [1937]. Father had a friend who lived on Solna Street, near Twarda Street. His name was Sucher. He was a tinsmith – repaired pots, finished beds, filled holes, fixed windows. And Father decided with that friend that I would be there as a 'learning!' [apprentice]. His store wasn't big, maybe 12 square meters. It was a shop at the same time. Everything was made by hand there, everything! At the back there was one room and a kitchen. Sucher lived there with his wife and two daughters. For me – out of some wooden boards that they hung over the shop – they made a mezzanine, a kind of attic separated with a curtain. I slept there. Sucher gave me food and something to drink. I worked as much as I could. From the very morning till evening. I didn't know the words 'work hours.' I didn't like this job too much. On top of that, I wasn't a good boy. I kept on scaring those girls, Sucher's daughters. I didn't want to stay there.

One Pole, his name was Sobotka, used to come to the shop. He had a truck that he used to bring goods to Warsaw. At some point – after 2,3 months of working for Sucher – when I found out that Sobotka was going to Goworowo, I said nothing, but got on the truck, sat at the back with the goods, and went back home. I arrived at Goworowo at 6am. I went to the bakery where Father was working with an apprentice, and said: 'I'm here.' Father was surprised 'How come, you're here?' I surprised Dad. But because a young man has to do something, Father said to me: 'I see no other solution – you will be a baker!' I wanted to be a baker, because I was strong and wanted to do physical work... I was 16 or 17 and worked as a baker for two years. Father sent the apprentice away and I took his place. I remember as if it was today, there were no machines to knead the dough. It had to be done with hands, in flour. And I did all that. We worked nights only. So, as a child, I worked till 4am. I made whole wheat bread, the original one, then rye bread, and in the end buns, and kaisers... And, I remember, if we were getting together for games and dances in the evening, I often slept in and the buns got burnt or overgrown! But I worked well.

When I was 17 I wanted to start earning money. I was an apprentice, which means I was a qualified baker. We usually worked since Pesach, which is Easter, till Rosh Hashanah. For that half a year I was hired as an apprentice. During that time, the apprentice who used to work for us, found himself a job in Nasielsk, near Nowy Dwor. So I asked him to help me get a job there. He found me a job at one baker's whose name was Rajczyk. So I left for Nasielsk on Easter 1939. Rajczyk had his own store. The bakery was in the basement, and he lived on the first floor with his wife. They only took care of the sales. I did the work – I took care of everything myself. They gave me board and clothing. I didn't work on Sabbath.

The worst moment for me was Saturday night when I had to go back to work at night. As a young man I wanted to go have some fun somewhere with the other young people, girls and boys. But instead of getting some sleep and rest – I had to go to work. That was the hardest night of the week, but I managed. I was making big money then, that is 18 zloty a week. That was a big amount. I was sending all the money to Father, thinking that when I go back, he'd return it to me. Besides, my sisters had to be married off [and that cost money as well].

During that time, I remember as if it was today, one girl used to come to the bakery. Her name was Lejba. She was 3 years my senior. Her parents sold vegetables on the market. She simply fell in love with me. She would come and sit in the store while I was working. But I wasn't thinking about things like marriage at that time. Despite the fact that she was pretty, with black hair, a simple hairstyle, religious. I wasn't mature enough back then.

The only sister who got married before the war was Rywke Rutl. She got married in 1934 when she was 21. Her husband came from Szczegowo, near Mlawa. He had a timber warehouse. He would buy wood at a sawmill, cut it into boards, and later sell for construction. Sister had three boys. She stayed in Szczegowo during the war, and then they took her with her entire family to the Warsaw ghetto... She was lost without a trace and we never heard from her again. (Whenever I go by car to Mazury and pass Mlawa and Szczegowo, my heart always cries.)

The second sister, Sara, was studying and working, like me. Like all children in our family she was bahvutsinikh [Yiddish: enlightened] – well read, she had various interests. Sara was born in 1918 and completed 7 Polish grades [in a Polish public school]. Later she went to a religious school Beit Yaakov – Bais Yaakov [9](#), if I were to speak in pure Jewish [Yiddish]. When she graduated from that school, she was 16. Then she went to Pultusk, to my father's cousin who had a photographic shop. His name was Lis. She studied photography there for two years. She worked when she was 17-18. (She took all the pictures I have from before the war).

Some time later she came to Goworowo with a camera and started fending for herself. With time she opened her own shop and was taking pictures. She took pictures of us, of others. She had her own equipment, although very modest. The shop was in the backyard. She hung a blanket there, as background. She had a chair and her own retouching equipment. I remember when the photographs were lying in water, when they were taken to the darkroom in the vestibule of the house. When the war broke out she was 19.

I had a third sister, Malka. She was about 10 in 1939. She managed to go to school. (It was a Polish public coeducational school). I can't say much about her. I was much older than she was, and we never spent much time before or during the war. I know that Malka was always very weak and sickly. Later, during the war, when she was in Russia with Mother, she started having serious heart

problems. They couldn't save her. She died in Poland, in 1951. She was 24.

During the War

On September 1st, 1939, I was working. Poles who came to our bakery to buy bread for their stores told us about the war [10](#). They were buying at Rajczyk's [the baker who employed Mr. Grynberg] and told us that Germans assaulted Poland, that the war had begun. Then I sent all the money I made to Father. I went to the postal office and sent a money order. I dressed nicely, gathered my belongings and said 'I'm going home. I don't want to be here any more'. Then the wife and husband I worked for started to cry. I was their only apprentice who was baking bread, so they were left without any help. What happened to them next, I don't know. I said I was going to Goworowo. I took some dry bread, picked up my belongings, and left. I went on foot. The distance was about 70 kilometers, from Nasielsk to Goworowo. First I went to Pultusk, then on foot to Wyszki and then on foot to Długosiodło... Before Długosiodło I came upon a unit of the Polish army. They stopped me 'What are you doing here?' they asked. And I answered 'I'm going home, to Goworowo'. They were suspicious. I had to open my parcels. 'What's in there?' 'What do you mean, what?' - I said - things that I use for work as an apprentice.' They inspected everything and then sent me onto a sideroad, because the main road was taken by the army. I finally got to Goworowo on foot, but it took about two days [about 60km]. When I arrived in Goworowo, the town was full of refugees. They were running away, because there were supposed to be fights with Germans near the River Narwia. There were people from Rozan, Przasnysz, Maków Mazowiecki, even Miawa. Some people stayed at our house. Some of them slept downstairs, in the bakery.

A week later Germans came to the town. It was, I think... on 7th September 1939. I remember it was Friday morning. I was working for Father again, and I was wearing a baker's uniform - I was wearing a white hat and a white apron. They took all men out into the marketplace. Only those very old ones they didn't take. They didn't take women and girls either. We, the men, were standing on the marketplace, waiting. The Germans were guarding us. And when we were rushed and began to march, the women started to scream and cry. I remember as if it was today. And so, without any belongings, we kept walking. They drove us about 4-5 kilometers into some cowshed or barn of some squire who lived near Goworowo. There were no animals there. We slept in that barn, on the floor, but only for one night. Some sick ones started to cry, scream. I didn't. In the morning, when the Germans came and saw that I was wearing a baker's uniform, they picked me out from the crowd and said 'You go home.' They sent me and four other people home. We went there on foot and once we got to Goworowo we saw huge flames, like one fire (and we were only 4 kilometers from the town). One older Jew, a tailor who they sent home because he had syphilis, said 'Goworowo is on fire!'. We didn't believe it.

We couldn't go into the town. The German army was standing on the road to the town. It was the eastern road, the Germans were using it to go to Warsaw. What to do? We went around Goworowo. When the Germans spotted us, they put us in some barn, so that we were not on the army's way. We slept through the night there, and in the morning that older man started yelling: 'Warta, warta!' [Guard, guard!] to let us know we could go. We were afraid to go out, since the barn was right by the road used by the Germans. Finally, we opened the door - there was nobody outside. The German army had left. When we got outside, we went straight to Goworowo. I could see people there lying down outside on the ground, on the other side of the river Usz. They had been driven out of Goworowo. They were all there. Dad, my mom, my sisters... everyone who stayed in that

hell... I joined my family of course. I remember German Messerschmitts [fighter planes] flying above us. Everyone started to cry and scream. We thought they wanted to bomb us. We were just sitting there. There was nowhere to go. Everything was burnt down.

The story of the burning down of Goworowo was such: in the town there was one German, his name was Jung. When the war was about to break out, Goworowo gave money [to the Polish authorities] to buy arms. When the Germans came in, that Jung said that the Jews were traitors. So the Germans spilled gasoline all over the town. A lot of people were shot then. The Germans were going from one house to another. In our house they shot everyone who slept downstairs [That means the refugees from other towns that Grynberg's family took in. The owners who slept upstairs were not shot]. Those who slept upstairs were saved. When they were burning the town down, they moved all living Jews to the synagogue. They wanted to burn the synagogue down with everyone inside it. People were screaming. But one German officer arrived, came into the synagogue and said 'Zuviel Blutvergiessung!'. That means: 'too much bloodshed.' And he ordered everyone who was supposed to be burnt, to leave. Later the Germans left Goworowo, because they were heading to Warsaw. The German army came also from Mława, Eastern Prussia, and they marched through the town.

At the same time there were rumors that the Russians made it to the [River] Bug [11](#). We decided to cross onto the Russian side. We had no other choice – we had no house, no work, nothing. We were sentenced to starve, and we didn't want to go to the Germans. When the armies stopped marching, we left Goworowo. We walked on foot for a long time. We slept in Brok and Malkinia. We slept out on streets, under the sky. Finally Father paid for a horse-drawn cart, and we rode it from then on. And then we crossed the [River] Bug and went to Sniadowo near Łomża.... That took about three days. We stayed there for a longer period of time. We slept in public schools, or wherever we could.

We arrived in Sniadowo, and there was an invasion of refugees. Many Jews came from nearby towns: Ostrołęka, Ostrow Mazowiecka, Rozan, Maków Mazowiecki, Ciechanów, Przasnysz, Mława... everyone was heading east [to the territories occupied by the Soviet Union]. Russians were already in Sniadowo [Sniadowo is on the northern side of the River Bug. Those territories became occupied by the Soviet Union on 17th September 1939]. The Russian army didn't bother us. Everyone had to take care of themselves. The only thing they did – I remember as if it was today – they put up a huge screen on the marketplace in Sniadowo and they played a movie about the October Revolution. But they didn't try to convince us to join the army, nothing. I had no political views at the time. My only thought was to be safe and to survive. So I was saving myself.

Father wanted to get hired as a baker in Sniadowo. He managed to get a job at a baker's, but after about a week his intestines dropped from overexertion and he had to be taken to a hospital. Religious Jews, like my dad, didn't want to go to the army. They were afraid to eat non-kosher things from an army pot. In order to be relieved from army duty, they would cause a hernia to appear. Father got himself a hernia some time ago already, when they wanted to draft him into the tsarist army. Every day he wore a special belt that held the hernia. It was called 'bendl' in Jewish [Yiddish]. But during the war he forgot that belt and was walking around without it. He would hold his belly with his hands and could somehow bend. But at work he strained himself and got a hernia. He spent about four days in the hospital in Łomża. I wasn't with the family at the time, because I had a chance to go to Białystok. Alone, without brothers, without anyone. I liked to roam, wander. So I went to see what was going on there. There was gossip that trains were leaving from

Bialystok to Russia. When I came back, Father was in the hospital. 'Dad, we'll go to Russia. They're saying they'll take us to Russia'. And he said 'Son, I won't go with you. You all go without me'. Then Dad had surgery and he died. He was buried on the Jewish cemetery in Lomza. Some Jews came there to hold a small service for him.

After Father was buried, we went to Bialystok [Mr. Grynberg's mother, Mr. Grynberg and his siblings: Sara, Motl, Malka]. We got on a truck that was going in that direction. In Bialystok we stayed in a synagogue. There were people from all over Poland in that synagogue, who were running away from the Germans, even from Warsaw. We met people from our town and other towns there. We met, for example, the Rozen family with eight children. We all slept wherever we could. I remember as if it was today, we slept on benches. There were old women lying beside us. Every night someone died. People were dying from sickness and hunger. Every morning there were dead bodies around. There was nowhere to bury them. That is the truth. I remember it, as if it was today. There was one kitchen that was giving out hot soup, so children ate it. Mother only had bread and water. She didn't eat other things, because she didn't know if it was kosher. That's the way it was till 3rd January 1940. During those four months since September 1st, we went through a real ordeal.

Then they announced that people could sign up to go to Russia. The Russians provided trains with baggage cars. That was before the war [German-Soviet War 1941] [12](#). In front of these cars there was an office of the 'politruk' [political officer]. People were lined up there to sign up for the departure to Russia. Hardly anyone had documents, so the Russians were asking for our data. They wrote down whatever we told them: date of birth, profession. They gave everyone a piece of paper. They said we had to go with it to this and this car. And we went to Russia. Along the way, whenever the train stopped, everyone had to go out and get bread that they prepared for us. I got frostbite on my hands then. I cried terribly, curled up from pain, my hands hurt so much. Sometimes the train stopped somewhere so that we could go out to relieve ourselves, and then it kept on going. There were about twenty people in one car. There were bunk beds. Obviously, it was no luxury. We didn't know where we were going. That trip took about ten days. Finally we arrived in Magnitogorsk on the Ural River.

When we got to Magnitogorsk, some people, Russians, came up to us, and started asking again 'What's your profession? How old are you? What can you do?'. Some people were sent to Magnitogorsky Metallurgichesky Zavod [Russian: Magnitogorsk Metal Factory]. The main director of the factory was a Russian Jew from Moscow. His name was Rymshitz. (We knew he was a Jew. He behaved like a Russian though. They didn't draft him into the army, because they weren't taking such qualified men, Russians, who were managers in factories). I was sent to the stroika [Russian: construction]. They were building 2- and 3-story brick buildings. One man was working as a bricklayer, another carried cement, everyone was doing whatever they could. If someone was a driver, they gave him a car, and he became a chauffeur. I was sent to dig foundations. I was a very strong man, and became a leading 'stakhanovite' [in the years 1930-1950 in the Soviet Union, a leading worker, production rationalizer from the name of a miner from Donetsk, Aleksei Stakhanov]. Everybody worked, men and women, with no exceptions. Women pushed wheelbarrows, carried bricks. Brother Motl also worked on construction sites. Sara, when she said she was a photographer, got a job in a photograph shop with two other Russian friends. Mom didn't work. She was already 52 then.

We worked twelve hours every day. Hunger was killing us. We were getting some money, but it wasn't enough. I remember, once when I got paid, I immediately went to a market, bought milk, chocolate and bread. And I ate it right there. I didn't even manage to bring it home. There were some lessons organized, like before the war. I studied Russian there, and learned it quite fast. (I know this language until this day. Ia kak vstriechayu ruskih ludei, ia gavaryu: 'Zdrastvuyte grazhdani federatsiy rasyskey. A zdrastvuyte. A shto-vy – Ruskyi chelovek? A pa chemu vy sprashyvaytie? Vy otlichno gavarite pa rusky...' [Russian: When I meet Russians, I say 'Hello, citizens of the Soviet Union.' 'Oh, hello. Are you Russian?' 'Why are you asking?' 'Your Russian is perfect...']) I also went to flying club to become a pilot. They examined me, I was well suited to be a pilot. But they didn't accept me, because I was a foreigner. We also had political lectures. A 'politruk' used to come to lecture. But we weren't interested in it.

Magnitogorsk was a very big city. It was divided into several utchyastecks [utchyasteck is a city district]. There were long barracks for us. Each family got one room. At first we all lived together: Mom, Sara, myself, Motl and Malka. We were five people in one room. Near the barracks, I remember, there were stacks of fine coal. We used that for heating. Everyone took some to warm up. Otherwise we would have frozen to death. Water had to be carried, since there was no running water. There were no bathrooms, nothing. We had to go outside, in freezing temperatures. There were no telephones, no communication, it was even difficult to get letters. It lasted until Germans invaded Russia. That was on 22nd June 1941.

In mid 1942 they started drafting young people into the Russian army. They were mobilized to work. My brother Motl and I, as the ones belonging to stroitielni batalion [Russian: construction battalion], were taken to Ufaley, in the Ural Mountains. It was about 400 kilometers from Magnitogorsk. Altogether we were about 80 people, usually young people, from Magnitogorsk. On the way to Ufaley, we were given medical exams on the train. It was organized like this: the train stopped, we went to one compartment, took everything off and that was disinfected with heat to kill lice and other bugs. Because we wore dirty clothes, there was no soap, nothing.

After we arrived they assigned me to work at the Ufaleyski Nikelevy Zavod [Russian: Ufaley Nickel Factory]. This factory was producing nickel for the army, to make bullets and grenades. It was all: 'vsyo dlya voyny...' [Russian: everything for the war]. Our job usually looked like that: cars with ore arrived, that is with the material used to make nickel, and we unloaded them. We were usually unloading at night. The temperature was below 50 degrees Celsius. Awful! It was hard, physical work.

We were getting our paiok [Russian: food ration] – almost exclusively bread. Whoever worked, got 1 kilogram of bread, whoever didn't only 400 grams. If we worked physically, we also got soup (we were always careful to get thicker soup, more nutritious). And at home, when we went back, we'd make 'kipyatok', that is boiling water. There was nothing! No sugar, no tea. Many people got sick and died. Every once in a while we would get usilennyi paiok [Russian: strengthening ration]. We were also getting food coupons for meat. But they didn't give us meat. Instead, we would get some herrings, butter and flour. We ate it quickly, on the same day we got the coupons. We didn't celebrate any holidays. Nothing of the Jewish tradition was respected.

We lived at hozaykas, local housewives. Each hozayka that didn't want to go to the army, and had her own house, had to take in some soldiers. In our house there were five, six men in a single

room. We lived on 6 Tolstoj Street, a bit uptown when walking from the train tracks. Our hozayka took care of us – she did our laundry, made our beds. I wouldn't be able to sleep on a bed like that today, but when you're young, 19, 20, it's obvious, you could even sleep on a rock. You're healthy. I don't remember ever getting sick. In that part of the world and with no vitamins...

We had a radio at home and we kept hearing those words: 'Gavaritz Maskva, gavaritz maskva. Slushayte, slushayte. Nashe voiska ostavili gorod Zhytomyr, nashe voiska ostavili gorod Sevastopol.. ' [Russian: This is Moscow, this is Moscow. Listen, listen. Our army surrounded the city of Zhytomyr, our army surrounded the town of Sevastopol...]. And so we kept hearing about successes of the Red Army. But when they were losing, they would say nothing. What was happening to Jews in Europe, they didn't say anything about that, so we knew nothing. We learnt about the Holocaust in Poland. Because in Russia we were listening to the radio very superficially. They were saying 'German animals – that's how they called them – murder Jews, then take them away...'. But we weren't listening to the details and we didn't quite understand. We were so tired, we didn't feel like listening to it. We felt like doing nothing. We were poor, not properly clothed, had to fight for a piece of bread. I was hardly in touch with my family. Even though the distance wasn't that big, one letter would travel even a month.

Sara stayed in Magnitogorsk with Mom and Sister Malka. Sara got married there. She met her husband at the end of 1943. His name was Sender Izrael. They didn't take him to the army, just like us, because he was a tailor. And tailors were needed in Magnitogorsk. But his brother was with me in the stroibat [construction battalion, short for : stroitielni batalion], so Sara and Sender married under the chuppah. They didn't have to hide it, but it wasn't officially recognized. They also had a civil marriage. There were no celebrations, there was no money for it. (I wasn't at the wedding, because I was already mobilized to work at that time). They lived in the 5th uchastka [Russian: district]. His parents were elderly and they lived with them. There were no rabbis in Magnitogorsk. There were also no synagogues.

When my brother and I went to Ufaley, my mom, who was very religious, got a room in one small building. For those who wanted to pray, Mom set up a shtibl [Yiddish: room, where religious services are performed, prayers recited] there. It was illegal, but nobody bothered them. Whenever a Jew died, Mom would wash him or her and prepare the body for burial. She always got some money for it. She herself had nothing. There was a terrible famine. It was then that my youngest sister Malka came down with heart disease.

During our stay in Ufaley rules were becoming more and more strict. If someone was 21 minutes late for work, then, without a sentence, without a court, he was sent to prison for six months. I remember, my brother, who worked with me, was late once and they put him in prison. He got a six-month sentence. They put him in prison in a small town, about 60 kilometers from Ufaley. It was winter. In prison Brother got frostbite on his legs. When those six months passed, he couldn't come back because he couldn't even stand up. He was very weak. Whenever he got bread, someone who was stronger would take it away from him. Once I got a telegram from that prison. It said that Brother wasn't able to come back by himself, and asked me to come and get him. I had to ask for time off. I asked them to give me a few days off, so that I could go get Brother. They gave me time off. I went to catch a train, but at that time only the army was using trains. I couldn't get on it. I remember as if it was today, I was sitting at the train station and saying to myself: 'I have very little time.' I decided to walk. It was extremely cold. I took a backpack, bread, and a bottle of

milk, and I was trying not to eat it all on the way. I walked on foot day and night, and finally got there, but couldn't find the prison. I said to myself: 'I'll go to the train station, maybe I'll ask there.' I remember, I went to the train station, but found no one to talk to. There was only one handicapped man, a Russian, but he looked like a good man. I asked him where the prison was. I got lucky because he said: 'I live near the prison, if you want, you can follow me.' I told him I came for my brother, he let me spend the night at his place, and in the morning I went to the prison. I had the telegram, but when I went closer to the gate, they told me to move away. I was standing in the frost outside the prison. Then I saw a smiling face and heard: 'Have you come for your brother?' It turned out it was that nurse, Jewish, from Kiev, who sent me the telegram. Motl was telling her he had a brother in Ufaley, and asked her to notify me. And she did. If it hadn't been for her, nobody would have done anything for us. Brother would have died of exhaustion in that prison.

I waited for a while and she brought him out, holding him under his arms. He was so thin, his beard overgrown, and he couldn't walk. He started to cry. I picked him up and took him to that Russian, who let me stay with him the previous night. I gave Brother whatever I had – bread and milk. When he was eating, you could see how the food was going down his esophagus to his stomach. After he ate he felt sick. He couldn't digest any more. He stayed in bed one day, and the next day I said: 'We'll go to my place, to Ufaley.' We waited for the train, because I told myself: 'I can't walk, I can't carry him.' But the train that came was full of soldiers. Finally I picked him up, and got on between the cars. I was holding on to one car with one hand, and onto the other car with the other hand. I was standing stretched like that, and he was lying on my chest. That's how we got to Ufaley. In Ufaley we had to walk quite a bit, too. We walked for a few hours, and finally got to my place, and I put him on my bed. From then on I slept on the floor and gave him my bed. In the morning we went to the factory nurse. They started wrapping the frostbite on his legs. Two of his toes fell off then, it started bleeding... I went to work and told the manager that my brother was there and that he had no shoes. He gave him the shoes under the condition that Brother would come to work. I took the shoes, but Brother couldn't go to work yet. The manager was upset with me. But it took about two more weeks, and Brother went to work with me. He could move then, but he was very weak. He couldn't keep up. I was helping him. With time, somehow he got better. He got healthy again.

Later in Ufaley I got certified as an 'excavator machinist', that is as an excavator operator. From then on I worked on the excavator. I met my first wife then. Her first name was Matl, last name Zilberson. Later she changed her name to Miriam. She came from Lodz. She was practically nushn [Yiddish: an orphan]. I know that her parents died before the war. Her father used to trade, even trade abroad. But it wasn't going well for him, he got a heart attack on a train and died. When Miriam came to Ufaley, she was already married. She married her first husband before the war. Then they came to Russia. Then her husband was drafted into the army and no one heard from him since. He left her with a small child, a girl name Ania. She thought her husband would never come back. We met in 1944. And I was young... and I decided to be with that woman. These are all private matters, hard to talk about. It was simply love... We lived together, worked together in Ufaley. Till 1946.

After the War

In February 1946 my sister Sara gave birth to a girl, Szejla. And in the Spring that year, they organized a train to Poland. It was one year after the war ended. Before that no one could go

home. And, who would have had money for a ticket then?! So everyone went home – Sister with her husband and this small child, Mother, and Sister Malka. They went to Silesia [13](#) to the town of Swiebodzice near Swidnica. They got a house where some Germans had lived earlier. My brother and I, we went to Poland two months later. I remember as if it was today, when the war ended, one ‘politruk’ came and asked if we wanted to go back to Poland. I said yes. All Jews from Ufalety – because I wasn’t the only one there – got on the train. There were a lot of Jews from Poland in the Ural region. They were coming from all surrounding towns. They added three or four cars and put together one huge train going to Poland. When we were passing through Moscow, some young people ran away. They wanted to stay in Moscow. There was a rumor saying that in Poland they kill the people who are on trains coming back from the Soviet Union. They were supposedly those military forces fighting against the development of socialism in Poland. This was mainly going on in Eastern Poland. I saw, by myself, when someone left the train to get some water, and got beaten up. It was near Lodz. They were asking ‘You, Jew, what are you doing here?’ Some were taken away and others got lost without a trace. I saw Jews taken away in an unknown direction. They were saying that Russia was sending its own Jews. But we were Polish Jews! We were born here... It was the truth. [In the after-war Poland Jews coming from the Soviet Union were often accused of collaborating with the Stalinist regime and conspiring against the Polish state. There were murders and pogroms.] We crossed the Polish border at the end of May 1946. We got off in Swiebodzice. But we didn’t know where Mother and the rest were. But it turned out that we were living in the same town.

The population of Swiebodzice was maybe 10,000 or 15,000. That’s my estimate. The town is near Swidnica, between Walbrzych and Wroclaw. Those were so-called regained territories [territories which used to belong to Germany, claimed by Poland after WWII]. When we arrived in Swiebodzice, there was already a Jewish Committee [specifically: a branch of the Central Committee of Polish Jews, political representation of Polish Jews, founded in 1944.] We came from Russia with no clothes or shoes. That committee was receiving various goods from America [specifically: JOINT – The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee] [14](#). They were getting chocolate, coffee, tea, flour, rice, canned meat – everything kosher. Those were parcels from UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration – an American aid organization helping Europe after WWII]. They were also getting clothes. All clothes were put out on tables – there were dresses, pants, shoes, everything – and everyone could pick whatever suited them and take it. They were also giving out apartments. We got an apartment on Ogrodowa Street 2, on the first floor. (Russian soldiers lived there as well, since Russian army headquarters was there in town. The Russian army stayed in Swiebodzice probably until 1948. Then they withdrew.) The apartment I got used to belong to Germans. [Until 1945 Swiebodzice, in German Freiburg in Schlesien, was inhabited by Germans]. After the Germans ran away, I got that place. It was a big apartment – a living room, a room, another room, and a kitchen.

I married my first wife, Miriam, in Swiebodzice. (When we came to Poland, my wife decided to use the name Miriam in her documents, since she liked it better than Matl). That’s how it went. When I came to Swiebodzice, we registered as a married couple. During that time we found out that Miriam’s husband came back from the war. He came to us and took his and Miriam’s child, Ania, with him – supposedly for an hour – and he never gave the child back. We tried to get her back, but he pulled out a gun... and we had to accept it. But he gave Miriam a religious divorce. My brother, Motl, went for it to Lodz, found that man and got him to agree to a divorce. Those were very

upsetting moments for me. I'd rather not talk about it any more. Soon after that I married Miriam at the rabbi's. In 1948 our first daughter was born – Halina.

In truth, there was no real rabbi in Swiebodzice. But there was an older Jew who served as a rabbi. His name was Nusz Flejszer. He came from Włodawa. It's in the Lublin region. He was also in Russia during the war. He wasn't a certified rabbi, but he performed services, so that everyone could pray. There was no synagogue in Swiebodzice. Religious Jews – and several of them came to Swiebodzice after the war – turned one of the rooms of a building assigned for Jews into a synagogue. We could pray there, celebrate Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Pesach. Authorities didn't persecute it then. It wasn't a problem. [After 1948 religious and public life of minorities in Poland was becoming more restricted by the politics of the communist authorities].

I was active only within Jewish circles at the time. There were young people and we used to spend time together. There was a place we used to get together, a Jewish club. When I had some free time (and there was a lot of free time since I worked only eight hours a day), I played 'damka' [checkers] or chess. We also celebrated the founding of the state of Israel there. I found out from newspapers about the UN vote [the vote on 29th November 1947 approved the division of Palestine and the creation of the independent state of Israel]. I was very happy then, excited. I was very proud. Because I am a Jew, flesh and blood. I could have all citizenships of the world, but firstly I am a Jew. It's in my blood. I breathe it. I dreamt then about going to Israel one day.

There were about thirty Jewish families in Swiebodzice. There were two types of Jews. The first were Zionists. The second type belonged to UB [15](#) – just communists. I remember one meeting, as if it was today. I don't remember exactly what it was about. Maybe we were discussing what we would organize in the town. There were those who wanted to leave, and those who wanted to stay. Discussions were very heated. The communists protested. I remember, there was one Jew whose name was Sztajn. He served in the Kosciuszko Army [The 1st Kosciuszko Infantry Division] [16](#). It was a liberating army founded by Bierut [17](#) [editor's note: Mr. Grynberg is mistaken. The 1st Kosciuszko Infantry Division was founded by ZPP, the Union of Polish Patriots]. ... and all those communists. Sztajn was a representative of UB in the town. First I worked as an apprentice at one Polish baker's. I remember once after I left work, there was a corpse of a Polish militiaman on the street. Some group of opponents of the new Polish government came to town and shot him. Next day I heard they also killed Sztajn. I went to their funeral. A government representative spoke. Both corpses were lying on one table. They buried the Pole on the Catholic cemetery, and Sztajn on the Jewish cemetery. German Jews used to live in the town. And they had a small cemetery. This is where my sister's Malka Perl grave is as well.

The majority of Zionist families went to Israel. Sara with her husband and child left in 1946. Then my brother Motl and Mother left. Neither my sister nor my brother had permission to leave. It was illegal [18](#). Illegal emigration went like this: there was word among the Jews that they could help whoever wanted to leave Poland. There was no fee for such help. People from the Jewish Committee would come and say: 'Tonight you have to be here and here. We're going to Kłodzko where we'll cross the Czech border...' (I heard that there was this entire affair in Czechoslovakia related to the escapes of Jews. People who were helping Jews cross the border illegally were arrested). This was organized together with Polish authorities who were guarding the border with Czechoslovakia. Czechs would then let Jews go further, to Austria, and then they went from Austria to Italy. And there they stayed in camps until Israel would take them in.

At first I wanted to stay in Poland. But later I told myself I wouldn't stay. I had no peace. I only wanted to go. At first I didn't go because they wouldn't let me go. By the end of 1948 I asked for permission to leave, but I got a refusal. I pressed and pressed, but they didn't want to let me go. For some time I worked as an ironer in Swiebodzickie Zaklady Odzieżowe [Swiebodzice Clothing Factory]. They didn't want to let me go, because I was a very good worker. I was a 'model worker' [in the Eastern Block countries someone who produced over the set norm]. I was getting financial awards. I was also awarded holidays in Szklarska Poreba [popular spa resort in the mountains]. (Syndicate, that is labor union, was in Walbrzych. I went there and was distinguished as an outstanding employee. I also got an invitation to a guesthouse in Szklarska Poreba where I spent two weeks). Half of the factory employees were party members [19](#). I didn't join it. I used to go on May 1st demonstrations [demonstrations organized on International Labor Day], because they were mandatory. As a community service I used to put up posters about the production results of model workers. They kept trying to convince me to join PZPR. They were saying: 'When you join the party, you may get a better job, not just ironing.' But I paid no attention to it. I didn't want to. Later, in 1950, I applied for permission to go to Israel. As I was walking home from work, two undercover militiamen came up to me – one of them was Jewish, the other one Polish, they worked for UB. I knew that Jew from Magnitogorsk. They came, took me to a militia station and started to ask why I wanted to leave. For what reason? Am I not happy in Poland? Do I need anything? I told them then that Brother was in Israel, Mother was in Israel, and I wanted to join them. I wanted to go to Israel and that was it. I couldn't say too much... [During interrogations police often provoked testimony that could be later used against the interrogated person.]

That lasted for another year – year and a half, and I received notification saying I could leave. It was in 1951. I had to give up my Polish citizenship. When I got the permission, my brother was already in Israel. One of Jews in Swiebodzice told me about ships going to Israel. I went with my wife and daughter to Gdynia. There was a huge Italian ship 'Lavosier.' We took it directly from Gdynia to Israel. The ship was full. There were almost only Jews on it. The trip took about three weeks.

We got out in Haifa. There was terrible poverty there. We were to live in tents. There were food coupons. Some of my friends were drafted into the army straight from the ship. And they all died. There was a war in Israel then [Independence War, 1948 [20](#). Well, the war is still going on there. We got mobilized to a kibbutz, but I didn't want to live like that. My brother had a two-bedroom apartment in the Arab Yafo, where he lived with Mom. He gave one room to me. It wasn't in Yafo, but not far from it – in Bat Yam. Brother worked as a baker there. I started to do the same thing. It was in a big bakery near Tel Aviv – it was called Degania. Every day I cycled to work for about 12 kilometers.

One day a girl from America came to Yafo. I think it was in 1953. She was religious and she was looking for a husband. She came from a family of Eastern European Jews, who went to the United States. Her name was Miriam, but everyone called her Margy. Mother set her up with my brother Motl. They got married and got documents from a rabbi. When she went back to the United States, she was already pregnant. She gave birth to a daughter and invited my brother to Philadelphia. Brother spent three-four years in Israel altogether. When Brother went to the States, he also worked in a bakery. Margy, Brother's Wife, worked for the Ministry of Treasure. They had three daughters: Brenda, Sandra and Geraldine. Today they are all married and all live in Philadelphia.

Brother, because of the illness he went through in Russia, came down with Parkinson's disease. Brother's Wife died in 1991. She was constantly dieting and starved herself, they couldn't save her. A year later Motl also died.

I lived in Israel for a year and a half. My wife didn't want to stay there though. I was planning on going to Canada. My sister Sara, after she left Poland, lived in Montreal and sent me an invitation. The closest Canadian diplomatic post was in Paris, or in Belgium. I went to Paris from Israel and got a refusal. I was left with nothing. And then what? I had to work under illegally [without a work permit] at a baker's. I had a cousin, very religious, who lived near Paris. Her name was Chaja Sara Lis. I had to have an official address, so she registered me in the local yeshivah. I got a temporary identity card, that they renewed every once in a while. But I lived in a hotel near the Pere-la-chaise cemetery. I rented a room and lived there with my wife and daughter. I even wanted to stay in France, but when I said in the documents that I wanted to work, they told me to leave France. I waited then, wondering where I could go. There were Jewish committees then that were helping Jews leave [most likely HIAS committees] [21](#). I went to see them and asked for help. They took down my information and said: 'You can only go to Brazil.' So I went to the Brazilian consulate and got a visa. I left in 1954. That organization paid for my ticket. They couldn't leave me in a situation like that, because I would have starved. I promised I would return the money. That was the agreement. And that's what happened.

So I went to Brazil. I lived in Rio, in Copa Cabana. Back then in Brazil there were only rich or poor. There was no way to get a job. The earnings were very small. I was doing what all Jewish immigrants were doing. I was going from one village to another selling fabric for clothing. I went to each house and asked for double the price. I worked like that until I made enough. Then I was selling gold. Finally, I made a lot of money. Then I got a job in a hotel. I worked there as a cook and was making very good money. I wasn't a cook, but I told them I knew how to cook. I was very clever. I was observing the chief cook... I learned fast and soon I became a master, a big master! Cooking became my profession and still is until this day. I made a fortune, but I worked very hard for it.

I subscribed to two Jewish newspapers in Brazil. There was also a Jewish radio, which broadcast in Yiddish. My daughter and I used to go to the 'Hebraica' club. It was a huge, three-story building. Jews used to hang out there, play cards, there were some performances ... just for the Jewish community. I was always interested in what was going on there. There was one newspaper journalist, a Brazilian of Jewish origin. When the Six Day War broke out [1967] [22](#), he was sent to Israel as a representative of the Hebraica club. He took photographs there and sent them all to us. A meeting was organized at the club then - we were all told about what was going on in Israel.

My daughter went to an English school. After she graduated, she went to a university in Columbia. She was studying to be a psychiatrist. She got married in 1968. Her husband's name is Paulo. He was born in Brazil. He is a musician and plays the clarinet. She had a true Jewish wedding under the chuppah. After she married, she kept her maiden name - Grynberg. After a while my daughter started publishing. Because of her profession she got into 'Canaglob' in Rio de Janeiro. It's a television channel. This is where she gave lectures in psychiatry - twice a week for an hour. Now she lectures at a Catholic university in Rio de Janeiro. She lives in a very luxurious city - San Colorado. She's very well off. She had one son who is now 16. His name is Domingo Meir Grynberg. Meir is a Jewish name. My grandson is circumcised in a Jewish way, he had a bar mitzvah.

In 1972 my wife Miriam died. I couldn't live without her in Brazil. So I left the entire fortune to my daughter and left in 1973. I asked to be transferred to Germany. I worked for an American hotel concern, which had its hotels all over the world. They transferred me to Cologne, later to Dusseldorf. I prepared a hotel inauguration there and became the chief cook. When I came from Brazil, I missed my homeland, the place where I was born. I went to Poland for four days. At the time, everything was relatively expensive in Poland. The dollar exchange rate was unfavorable. So I couldn't stay long. I went to Goworowo for a day and a half. It wasn't a pleasant experience. I knew everything had been burnt down in Goworowo. But some local Poles, who used to work at my father's bakery, recognized me. 'Oh, you are Gdaluk's child!' [changed version of Father's name - Gedala]. There were two boys...'. They meant me and my brother. They helped me find Father's birth certificate and they let me spend the night at their place. Then I went back to Germany.

In the hotel in Dusseldorf I met my current wife, Krystyna. She was working there. When I saw how good she was with her hands I proposed. At first she didn't want to marry me, but eventually we got married. Wife was born on 25th May 1933 in Wyszogrod on the River Vistula. She's a Catholic. She has good memories of Jews in Wyszogrod. She used to go to them, and says that as a child she spoke Jewish [Yiddish] as well as Polish. My wife is very much in love with me. I am her entire world.

In 1976 we went to Spain for holidays. And I liked it there. I told myself: 'I have a wife now, I won't be an employee. I will be working for myself.' I met my future partner, Edward, there. He had a restaurant, but had no cook. He said: 'Let's start a company. You will be a cook, I will be a waiter.' That was our agreement, and all went very well. It was in Mata Lascania, by the Atlantic Ocean, near Portugal. A beautiful place. And I stayed there. I had some savings - 35,000 German marks. Based on this I received a permit for starting my own business. I worked with that Spaniard for a year, and then I told him I didn't want to do that any more. I was a known specialist by then. I wanted him to rent the restaurant to me. I signed a lease for five years. When he saw how well everything was going, he didn't want to renew it. He refused.

One day I saw three burnt restaurants between local hotels. They had been standing there for four years and nobody wanted to buy them. I told myself: 'I'll do it, I'll buy them.' I went to that Spaniard, the owner of the restaurants, and said: 'Listen, I want to buy it.' He looked at me as if I was a madman. But I knew what I knew. I took the walls down and made one big restaurant. I called it 'Alfonso', from the name of the Spanish king Alfonso. It was very popular. My previous partner, when my old clients were looking for me, would tell them that I had died. But they finally found me and came to me. I already had a good name. Everyone knew me. Usually there were no empty seats in the restaurant. You had to make a reservation. What was the house specialty? Everything was special! In the menu it said: 'with one day notice, you can order anything you want'. There were Japanese meals, Chinese, Hungarian, Spanish... all! There was nothing I wouldn't prepare. And so it grew... until I retired in 1987.

In 1981 my mom died in Israel. She lived to be 94 years old. She is buried in a very pretty place, on a cemetery in Bnei-Brak [a district in Tel Aviv, inhabited by ultra-orthodox Jews]. In the Jewish tradition there is a saying that after death everyone travels to Israel under the earth. Mother said that 'she doesn't want to travel under the earth'... so after my brother left, we tried to organize a life in Israel for Mom. We bought her a tiny one-bedroom house in Bnei-Brak. She just sat there and talked with God. She read religious books. She had a can for 'tsdoka', charity. Money she was

getting from her children she used to give away. It was a sort of mitzvah.

We always went to Poland for Christmas, to visit my wife's family. We bought an apartment in Warsaw 24 years ago. So, whenever we came from Spain, we didn't have to sleep at hotels. The rest of the year the apartment was locked. A neighbor had the key. We moved there for good in 1987. I could live anywhere, but stayed in Poland. My wife had family here, and I didn't want to move her away from her roots. I am happy here in Poland. I don't feel any discrimination. There were no problems to regain the citizenship. Today, my homeland is Poland and Spain. When I left Poland, I forgot the Polish language. I remembered only a little. My wife kept correcting me, correcting, correcting. Now I speak better and better.

We celebrate all Jewish holidays at home. We invite our Jewish friends. I am a qualified cook, so I make challah, fish, purely Jewish food. They like it. On Sabbath my wife lights candles, but she doesn't pray because she doesn't know how. When I go to the Nozyk Synagogue in Warsaw [23](#), my wife always accompanies me. My wife was born in a Catholic family, but, if I may say - she's as if Jewish flesh and blood. She is more concerned about Jewish affairs than I am. She doesn't like it when someone, God forbid, attacks Jews. She immediately condemns it. When we were in Brazil, Canada, Budapest, New York, she always went to the synagogue. She would put a scarf on her head, take a prayer book in the given language and pray with me. I am very happy about it. She is an extraordinary woman with a Jewish heart, despite not being born a Jew. I wouldn't tolerate another woman. But I don't tell her she shouldn't be a Catholic. When she wants to, she goes to church. But if we had a child together, I would like for it to be a Jew. I would never let my child be baptized. Never! My wife trusts me. If I didn't want our child to be baptized, she would immediately agree.

I meet a lot of Jews who changed their last names to Polish. They are simply running away, they say that they 'can smell anti-Semitism in Poland.' I don't really notice it. I feel well among Poles, I have a lot of Polish friends, but there are all types of people in every nation. I like Poles... but I like decent Poles. I don't like anti-Semites, I don't like those who act against Jews. Like that priest Jankowski [Rector of the Saint Brygida parish in Gdansk, known for anti-Semitism in his sermons] or priest Jan Sikora in Wolomin... I wrote a letter to priest Sikora. I asked him: 'Why aren't you fulfilling the Pope's teachings, that ask all peoples to reconcile? You don't abide by it, but in your sermons you blame Jews for everything that's wrong in Poland.' I never got a response to this letter. I wrote the same to priest Jankowski.

I subscribe to two Jewish newspapers: 'Slowo Zydowskie' ('Jewish Word') [Jewish bi-weekly magazine, published in Polish and Yiddish, created in 1947 as 'Folkssssztyme'] and 'Midrasz' [Jewish social-cultural magazine, published since 1997]. I often go to the Jewish community. I am a member of the Social and Cultural Society of Polish Jews [24](#). I am always very interested whenever there are some talks or performances. But I think that Jewish life doesn't have a bright future in Warsaw. Recently I speak about it often in the Jewish club on Grzybowski Square. I go there, but there are only gray-haired people there. There is no Jewish youth. It doesn't seem they are interested in Judaism. I asked the editor of 'Slowo Zydowskie': 'Where are your children?' Because there are 70% of Poles and 30% of old Jews at those meetings. People of my generation, and maybe 5-10 years younger. But in a few years it will all disappear. There isn't even minyan on Saturdays! I went to the Jewish community recently. I met three girls, typical Jews. I asked them if they were Jewish. And they say: 'No, do I look like a Jew?' And I say 'All Jews look like you.' I said so,

because they had typical Jewish features. I lived in various parts of the world and I can recognize that. Why is it like this in Poland? I think it's the only country in the world where people are afraid to say they are Jewish. My opinion is that in Poland there will be a Jewish community, Jewish culture... but will there be Jews? I am a pessimist when it comes to that...

Glossary

1 Gora Kalwaria

Located near Warsaw, and known in Yiddish as Ger, Gora Kalwaria was the seat of the well-known dynasty of the tzaddiks. The adherents of the tzaddik of Ger were one of the most numerous and influential Hasidic groups in the Polish lands. The dynasty was founded by Meir Rotemberg Alter (1789-1866). The tzaddiks of Ger on the one hand stressed the importance of religious studies and promoted orthodox religiosity. On the other hand they were active in the political sphere. Today tzaddiks from Ger live in Israel and the US.

2 Hitler coming to power

In July 1932 NSDAP won the election to the Reichstag, despite not having received majority of the mandates. In January 1933, after forming a coalition with a center party, General Hindenburg, the president of the Weimar Republic, appointed Hitler for a chancellor on January 30th. Fire of Reichstag in February of that year, considered after Goering to be an act of communists, gives Hitler a pretext to arrest his political opponents (communists, socialists, liberals), as well as to pass a bill giving him legislative power. On March 5th 1933 during the next Parliament election NSDAP received 44% of votes. After the death of General Hindenburg in 1934 Hitler becomes a president and appoints himself to be a Fuehrer – a commander-in-chief – of the German nation. This way he becomes a factual dictator of the Third Reich.

3 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.

4 Agudat Israel

Jewish party founded in 1912 in Katowice, Poland, which opposed both the ideology of Zionism and its political expression, the World Zionist Organization. It rejected any cooperation with non-Orthodox Jewish groups and considered Zionism profane in that it forced the hand of the Almighty in bringing about the redemption of the Jewish people. Its geographical and linguistic orientation made it automatically a purely Ashkenazi movement. Branches of Agudat Israel were established throughout the Ashkenazi world. A theocratic and clericalist party, Agudat Israel has exhibited intense factionalism and religious extremism.

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 Betar

Brith Trumpledor (Hebrew) meaning the Trumpledor Society. Right-wing Revisionist Jewish youth movement. It was founded in 1923 in Riga by Vladimir Jabotinsky, in memory of J. Trumpledor, one of the first fighters to be killed in Palestine, and the fortress Betar, which was heroically defended for many months during the Bar Kohba uprising. In Poland the name 'The J. Trumpledor Jewish Youth Association' was also used. Betar was a worldwide organization, but in 1936, of its 52,000 members, 75 % lived in Poland. Its aim was to propagate the program of the revisionists in Poland and prepare young people to fight and live in Palestine. It organized emigration, through both legal and illegal channels. It was a paramilitary organization; its members wore uniforms. From 1936-39 the popularity of Betar diminished. During the war many of its members formed guerrilla groups.

7 Hahalutz

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

8 British certificates

On June 18th 1922, the government of the Great Britain published the first 'White Book' limiting Jewish emigration to Palestine. After that British authorities were giving Jews certificates for a limited number of immigrants. The Jewish Agency was responsible for distributing those certificates. That is why the majority of them went to the members of the Zionist Organization. In 1930s this was the only legal way to settle in Palestine, other than studying at the Hebrew University in Jerozolima, or marrying a person living within a British mandate.

9 Beit Yaakov (Yiddish

Bejs Jankiew): the world first system of religious Jewish schools for girls started in Krakov. Raised in a Hassidic family Sara Schnierir in 1918, with the approval of tzaddiks, like Gere rebe and Belzer rebe, turned her seamstress shop into a religious school. The school program covered both religious and secular subjects. Some time later the patronage of the schools Beit Yaakov was taken over by an orthodox organization Agudat Israel. In 1935 there were 248 schools Bait Yaakov in Poland. 35000 students were attending the schools.

10 German occupation of Poland (1939-45)

World War II began with the German attack on Poland on 1st September 1939. On 17th September 1939 Russia occupied the eastern part of Poland (on the basis of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact). The east of Poland up to the Bug river was incorporated into the USSR, while the north and west were annexed to the Third Reich. The remaining lands comprised what was called the General Governorship - a separate state administered by the German authorities. After the outbreak of war with the USSR

in June 1941 Germany occupied the whole of Poland's pre-war territory. The German occupation was a system of administration by the police and military of the Third Reich on Polish soil. Poland's own administration was dismantled, along with its political parties and the majority of its social organizations and cultural and educational institutions. In the lands incorporated into the Third Reich the authorities pursued a policy of total Germanization. As regards the General Governorship the intention of the Germans was to transform it into a colony supplying Polish unskilled slave labor. The occupying powers implemented a policy of terror on the basis of collective liability. The Germans assumed ownership of Polish state property and public institutions, confiscated or brought in administrators for large private estates, and looted the economy in industry and agriculture. The inhabitants of the Polish territories were forced into slave labor for the German war economy. Altogether, over the period 1939-45 almost three million people were taken to the Third Reich from the whole of Poland.

11 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 Ukranian and the Belarusian Soviet Republics.

12 The German - Soviet War

On 22nd June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring war. This was what the Russian historiography calls the Great Patriotic War. The German blitzkrieg, known as Operation Barbarossa, nearly succeeded in breaking the Soviet Union in the months that followed. Caught unprepared, the Soviet forces lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November 1941 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The war ended for the Soviet Union on 9th May 1945.

13 Settlers in Lower Silesia

Evacuation of Poles from the USSR: In 1939-41 there were some 2 million citizens of the Second Polish Republic from lands annexed to the Soviet Union in the heart of the USSR (Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Lithuanians). The resettlement of Poles and Jews to Poland (within its new borders) began in 1944. The process was coordinated by a political organization subordinate to the Soviet authorities, the Union of Polish Patriots (functioned until July 1946). The main purpose of the resettlement was to purge Polish lands annexed into the Soviet Union during World War II of their ethnic Polish population. The campaign was accompanied by the removal of Ukrainian and Belarusian populations to the USSR. Between 1944 and 1948 some 1.5 million Poles and Jews returned to Poland with military units or under the repatriation program. Between the wars Lower Silesia was part of Germany. Jews emigrated from the region during the fascist period to escape persecution. 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, 10,000 settled in Wroclaw (formerly Breslau). Jews also moved to Legnica (formerly Liegnitz), Dzierzoniow (Reichenbach) and Walbrzych (Waldenburg).

14 Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)

The Joint was formed in 1914 with the fusion of three American Jewish committees of assistance, which were alarmed by the suffering of Jews during World War I. In late 1944, the Joint entered Europe's liberated areas and organized a massive relief operation. It provided food for Jewish survivors all over Europe, it supplied clothing, books and school supplies for children. It supported cultural amenities and brought religious supplies for the Jewish communities. The Joint also operated DP camps, in which it organized retraining programs to help people learn trades that would enable them to earn a living, while its cultural and religious activities helped re-establish Jewish life. The Joint was also closely involved in helping Jews to emigrate from Europe and from Muslim countries. The Joint was expelled from East Central Europe for decades during the Cold War and it has only come back to many of these countries after the fall of communism. Today the Joint provides social welfare programs for elderly Holocaust survivors and encourages Jewish renewal and communal development.

15 Office for Public Security, UBP

popularly known as the UB, officially established to protect the interests of national security, but in fact served as a body whose function was to stamp out all forms of resistance during the

establishment and entrenchment of communist power in Poland. The UB was founded in 1944. Branches of the UBP were set up immediately after the occupation by the Red Army of the Polish lands west of the Bug. The first UBP functionaries were communist activists trained by the NKVD, and former soldiers of the People's Army and members of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR). In many cases they were also collaborationists from the period of German occupation and criminals. The senior officials were NKVD officers. The primary tasks of the UBP were to crush all underground organizations with a western orientation. In 1956 the Security Service was formed and many former officers of the UBP were transferred.

16 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.

17 Bierut Boleslaw, pseud

Janowski, Tomasz (1892-1956): communist activist and politician. In the interwar period he was a member of the Polish Socialist Party and the Communist Party of Poland; in 1930-32 he was an officer in the Communist Internationale in Austria, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. Starting in 1943 Bierut was a member of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party and later PZPR (the Polish United Workers' Party), where he held the highest offices. From 1944-47 he was the president of the National Council, from 1947-52 president of Poland, from 1952-54 prime minister, and in 1954-56 first secretary of the Central Committee of the PZPR. Bierut followed a policy of Polish dependency on the USSR and the Sovietization of Poland. He was responsible for the employment of organized violence to terrorize society into submission. He died in Moscow.

18 Briha [Hebrew

escape]: a code name of an illegal escape action from the Soviet Union and Poland during the years 1944-1950. It was initiated by Abba Kovner, and with time became an organized institution. People were leaving through the Czech Republic, Romania, later also through Germany. The fugitives were first placed in camps for immigrants, and later went to Palestine, United States and other countries (in 1945 and 1946 about 20 thousand people yearly). The number of people who used this way to go to Palestine is estimated for 85 thousand to 250 thousand.

19 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.

20 The War For Independence

broke out on May 14th 1948, on the day of proclamation of the country of Israel, and withdrawal of the British army from the mandate territory of Palestine. Units of Egyptian, Iraqi, Syrian and Transjordan army moved onto the Palestine territory. Those countries, not having accepted the proposed by the UN partition of Palestine, planned on destroying the new Jewish country. The Israel forces, weaker in numbers, dislodged the Arab army. In 1949 a treaty was signed between the fighting forces. Israel extended its territory, relative to the area assigned by the UN, by the western Galilee, western Negev and a part of Jerusalem. The West Bank of Jordan remained under the control of Transjordan, and Egypt kept its position in the Gaza Strip.

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

22 Six-Day-War

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

23 Nozyk Synagogue

The only synagogue in Warsaw not destroyed during World War II or shortly afterwards. Built at the beginning of the 20th century from a foundation set up by a couple called Nozyk, it serves the Warsaw Jewish Community as a house of prayer today. The Nozyk Synagogue is near Grzybowskiego Square, where the majority of Warsaw's Jewish organizations and institutions are

situated.

24 TSKZ (Social and Cultural Society of Polish Jews)

founded in 1950 when the Central Committee of Polish Jews merged with the Jewish Society of Culture. From 1950-1991 it was the sole body representing Jews in Poland. Its statutory aim was to develop, preserve and propagate Jewish culture. During the socialist period this aim was subordinated to communist ideology. Post-1989 most young activists gravitated towards other Jewish organizations. However, the SCSPJ continues to organize a range of cultural events and has its own magazine, The Jewish Word. However, it is primarily an organization of older people, who have been involved with it for years.