

Dawid Bachner During The War



This is my brother Dada. This photo was taken at a photographic studio in Warsaw at the beginning of the 1940s.

My brother Dawid was born in 1918 in Warsaw. He was always called Dada, just that, even later. My brother was a good boy, really. He went to a secondary school where most of the students were Jewish, too. The school was called 'Spojnia' and was a teachers' cooperative, somewhere at Długa [a street downtown, on the border of the Jewish district]. It was a school for boys, rather leftist. My brother didn't want to go to college, because he didn't like studying, but he did graduate from high school. I remember I went to stand at the door of his school when he was taking his matriculation exam, because I was very worried about him. Until the war he worked in our father's leather store at Franciszkanska.

My brother was in Zakopane in August 1939. I was in Muszyna [a resort in the south of Poland, in the Beskid hills] with this friend of mine from the print shop. On 1st September 1939 I went back to work at 'Linia i Litera' [on 1st September 1939 the German army crossed the Polish border and World War II began]. One of my bosses said they were putting up posters about the draft, so I started crying. So this son-of-a-bitch, one of the owners, says, 'What are you crying for?' So I said 'What do you mean, what for? I have a brother who is 18.' My brother responded to the Umiastowski order in September, I think. A whole group of my friends went as well.

He came back to Warsaw. I wrote to my friend Lidka, because she lived in the East, and Kolomyia [now Ukraine] was not yet taken by the Germans, asking if my brother couldn't hide with them. But her husband wrote back that the entire family came to stay with them. That was the beginning of a miserable life.

We lived at Leszno: my mom, my brother and I. My father cut it short and committed suicide, through the window in his sisters' apartment... That may have been in 1940, before the Ghetto [before October 1940].

The year was 1942. We remained at Leszno until the deportations began. Two Germans entered the house and yelled: 'Alles raus!' [Ger.: everybody out!]. We were all scared, so we all went out. Only we took bedclothes with us, to have something to sleep on. We got an apartment at 16 or 18 Mila. I wasn't there long, only a few weeks; then I got out of the Ghetto. It was September 1942, a few days before the big deportation [Grossaktion]. I got up and left. I hid a few pictures in my purse: my mom's, my brother's (including this one) and sister's, her son's and my own.

I was in hiding in various places in Warsaw. My brother had been in hiding, but the Germans caught him and sent him to work. He worked outside the Ghetto, they took him to work in Skaryszewski Park. My friend Marysia went to visit him twice, but later she said to me, 'You know, I won't go there anymore, because this woman stopped me after one visit and asked, 'Why do you come visiting those Jews, are you Jewish too?'' So she must have been scared to go there.

I wrote to my brother that I wanted to get out [get back to the Ghetto], and he wrote back that a woman would come and take care of me. And indeed, a woman came. She was in mourning. It turned out her father committed suicide by hanging himself. She was a friend of my brother's, Zaba, from Konskowola [around 100 km south-east from Warsaw]. I have no idea where he met her. The year was 1942. So I went with her to Konskowola and I actually was very comfortable there.

My brother sent me letters by mail addressed to Zaba [toward the end of 1942]. My mom no longer added anything. He lied to me that she had bad legs, but what could legs have had to do with writing? Probably she was already gone. They took her out of the house and just took her away. I don't even know where and when she died. To this day I can't forgive myself that I wasn't there. I got the last message from my brother on 14th April 1943. He wrote: 'I am well, don't worry about me, think about yourself.' Zaba went to Warsaw to get him out, even though we didn't have a hiding place for him. But when she got there she saw that all of the Ghetto was burned down. He was a wonderful brother and a wonderful son...he loved our mother very much.