

Hanna Feldman During The War



This is my sister Hanka. This photo was taken at the beginning of the 1940s, probably at a photographic lab in Warsaw. She is wearing my jacket. The cloth was given to me by her husband. He had a jacket from the same cloth.

My sister Hanka was born in 1912, the first child in the family. She did not finish school; she was the lazier one, that is. She went to a Polish school, to Matyskowa. The school was near Koszykowa Street [in the center of Warsaw, outside the old Jewish district], but I don't know what the name of the street was, because it was quite far away from us. In the 5th grade something came over my sister and she said she wouldn't go to school any more and nothing could make her. I remember how my mother screamed at her for not wanting to study or read.

She took some accounting courses and found a job. She worked for a few years. Then she got sick, mentally sick, I should say. She was afraid to go out on the street. She once fainted on the street, so she later had these fears. But finally she got married in 1937. I don't know how they met, they dated for a short time. His name was Abram Feldman and my sister renamed him Adam, though at the beginning she did call him Abram. I know very little about him, because he was from Radom. I know he was a tradesman dealing in metal products, ovens for farmers or something like that. I have to say that at their wedding I was only a spectator, I didn't take part in all that commotion. The wedding took place in a room rented from a rabbi from Norway or somewhere. That rabbi, if he was a rabbi at all, was wearing plain clothes, no robes or anything, only, I have to say, he did wear

a hat. I don't know, I guess he prayed in Hebrew. It was a very secular wedding because my brother-in-law was a leftist and he didn't go in for that stuff. (He didn't say the Kaddish for his mother when she died, for which his sisters never forgave him.) I know he did break the glass at the wedding. My sister was wearing a beautiful white striped suit. It's difficult for me to say what kind of people came, because I hardly knew anyone.

After the wedding, my sister and her husband went to Lublin. In 1937 or 1938, more likely 1938, my nephew Gucio was born. He was born in Warsaw, because it was a complicated delivery. Then they went to Lublin, but not right away. They stayed in Lublin until the war.

In September 1939 my sister's little son moved in with us, because at the time [when the war broke out] he was spending his holidays in Srodoborow with my mother. So my mom walked back to Warsaw with this child in her arms under the falling bombs. I remember she told me how she walked across the bridge with him, scared to death.

Then I went looking for my sister and my brother-in-law. I went to Bialystok [a town in north-east Poland, approx. 200 km from Warsaw], because everybody who was leaving went through Bialystok. The cafes in Bialystok were all covered with slips with names written on them. One of those slips told me my brother-in-law and my sister were in Luck. From there they were planning to go to Lwow, because my brother-in-law wanted to look up his brother, who was somebody important in the Soviet army. I stayed with them for a month and then signed up to go back to Warsaw-with my sister, because, after all, her child was there without his mother.

At the Russian-German crossing-there was no special border there, only a table where Germans sat on the one side and Poles on the other-my sister tried to cross with me. Everything was going well, only when you took a step forward you heard 'Jude raus!' [Ger.: 'Jew - out'] and then shots in the air. She couldn't take it; she pulled her hand out of mine and ran back. She hid somewhere in a kennel or sty and landed up back in Lublin. She went back to Lublin, because that's where they used to live. I crossed and went back home to Warsaw. My mother was very surprised, because I should have stayed on the other side. Then my sister reappeared, a few months later, infested with lice. It was terrible. That was a very difficult time. She escaped from Lublin because it was even more dangerous there. So she stayed with us for a while with the child; then she left again and the child stayed behind. Then a Polish woman came and took him to Lublin.

I got out of the Warsaw Ghetto in September 1942. I hid a few pictures in my purse: my mom's, my brother's and sister's (including this one), her son's and my own. At first I was in hiding in Warsaw, then in Konskowola [around 100 km south-east from Warsaw] at the home of a woman called Zaba, one of my brother's friends.

When I was there I still got messages from my sister. She was taken from Lublin to Majdanek. From Majdanek she apparently sent me a diamond, through a man who undertook to give me some of the money for that diamond. For a while that was the only money Zaba and I had to support ourselves. In the meantime, my sister's husband-who they didn't take to Majdanek and he was still in Lublin-wrote to me asking if Zaba could organize a hiding place for him. It was hard to read what he said, he'd gone completely crazy. He was wealthy. If he'd given her some money, maybe Zaba would have managed to help. But he only liked making money and didn't know how to use it. Sometime earlier my sister wrote us that we should remember about this man who could save her husband. So Zaba and I went to Lublin, which was rather dangerous as we later found out. The man

said he didn't know my brother-in-law, though he was wearing my brother-in-law's jacket... I recognized it because I had a jacket from the same cloth (the one my sister is wearing on this photograph). It's all so strange. My brother-in-law really had a chance of surviving: he didn't have black hair, he had brown hair and blue eyes, he spoke Polish well. I'm not even talking about the rest of his family but himself. Because he was basically alone by then. His little son Gucio and my sister died in Majdanek, the child before her. I figured that out from the letters I got from my brother-in-law: there was no mention of the child.